

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Farnham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Farnham Rd,
Farnham,
Bishops Stortford,
CM23 1HR

Diocese: Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex
Date of inspection: 02 February 2012
Date of last inspection: 07 October 2009
School's unique reference number: 881/3700
Executive Headteacher: Helen O'Brien
Inspector's name and number: Andrew Binnell N665

School context

Farnham is a small village school that admits pupils from the surrounding rural areas as well as from Farnham itself. There are three classes in the morning and two in the afternoon. Girls make up one third of the pupil population and the percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is low. There are no pupils attending the school from ethnic minorities. The school has recently moved to a hard federation with another small Church of England School, Rickling. The Headteacher from Farnham School manages both schools and they now have a joint governing body.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Farnham as a Church of England school are good

Farnham is a good school because all of its children are valued as special individuals. They are safe, secure and are well cared for. The school is at the very heart of the village.

Established strengths

- Children are valued as special individuals and are fully involved in all aspects of school life.
- The partnership with the local church and the village community.
- Christian values are evident in all relationships across the school: Between adults, between adults and pupils and between learners.
- The centrality of collective worship to all aspects of school life.

Focus for development

- To further develop the role of the RE (Religious Education) leader to impact more on the quality of RE teaching across the school.
- To refine the RE curriculum, as planned, and use this to extend opportunities to utilise the parish church as an educational resource.
- To engage as a school with other church schools locally in order to moderate pupils' learning outcomes and share successful practice.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners

Children feel valued and special at Farnham School. All connected with the school work to create a special and safe place where the children are secure. One child summed up the school saying, "It is a small school and I know everyone". Children at the school show great respect and consideration for each other both in and out of the classroom. This is evidenced

through the exceptionally strong relationships between pupils, between pupils and adults and between adults. Older children readily support the needs of younger pupils in and out of the classroom. The Eco Team is an excellent example of how learners from across the age range are working together as well as showing how the school is developing its pupils as citizens. The school environment makes a major contribution to the spiritual development of all learners. This is evident in the form of high quality displays, the faith table in the hall and in the general care given to the teaching and learning environment throughout the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school is good

Worship has a centrality to all aspects of school life. Pupils are actively involved in the planning and evaluation of worship. The faith group, consisting of children and adults, meets to plan the worship programme for each year. Regular surveys take place to monitor the successes of the spiritual programme in an effort to make worship activities even better. The worship programme is well planned around the Anglican year and plays a key part in developing the children's understanding of the Anglican faith and practices.

In an act of worship observed, 'Candlemas' was focussed upon. The well resourced faith table provides an excellent focus for all present and the leader sensitively encourages all present to participate through high quality questioning. The talk partner approach is effectively utilised to maximise the quality of pupil participation in worship. Pupils talk positively about their opportunities to contribute to worship in this way; one which clearly works so effectively in this small school environment.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The school has responded positively to the area for development for religious education (RE) highlighted in the 2009 SIAS inspection. The subsequent appointment of a new RE Subject Leader has given added impetus in terms of enhanced provision across the school and added capacity to the leadership of this core subject. It is now judged to be good. Both the quality of teaching and the quality of an enriched curriculum show clear improvements since the previous inspection. There is now a clear and well written RE policy in place, which has given class teachers greater levels of confidence in their teaching of this subject. Learners enjoy the subject and standards attained by pupils are above average across the school. The school is now ready to further develop the subject leader role in order to impact more on the quality of teaching across the school and to extend the curriculum further following planned support from an adviser from the Diocese of Chelmsford. The school could use the parish church more effectively as an educational resource and that this could be planned in to an evolving RE curriculum for the future.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good

The leadership and management of the church school is good. The hard federation with Rickling Church Of England Primary has had clear benefits. These include opportunities for the RE and collective worship leaders to evolve common approaches across both settings. A good example of this collaboration has been the evolution of Religious Education and Collective Worship policies across both church schools. The joint governing body will provide additional support to both schools now it is in place (as of January 2012). Governors have worked in close partnership with the school and provide effective challenge and support. They know their church school well and have good ideas for future development. These include an opportunities for the school to work more closely with other church schools locally in order to moderate pupils' outcomes and share successful practice. The school is now in a very good position to move forward still further from this firm foundation.