



# Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

## Elmley Castle Church of England First School

Address Main Street, Elmley Castle, Pershore. Worcestershire. WR10 3HS

How effective is the school’s distinctive Christian vision established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish

**Overall grade**

**Excellent**

**The impact of collective worship**

**Excellent**

### School’s vision

A little piece of Heaven on Earth

‘May God give you heaven’s dew and earth’s richness.’ Genesis 27:28.

‘As a community we grow and flourish together. Through our core values, we seek a lifelong love of learning, pursuing wisdom and excellence so everyone achieves their best. We create opportunities to explore our own sense of spirituality and encourage all to live with thankful, forgiving hearts, respecting the preciousness of our world.’

### Key findings

- Inspirational leadership by the headteacher has transformed Elmley Castle into ‘*A little piece of Heaven on Earth*’ where this vibrant school now thrives as the hub of the community. A passion for inclusion, draws the community together, ensuring all families are deeply valued, included and loved.
- Leaders at all levels demonstrate an unrelenting desire to live out their authentic Christian vision. This has created a supportive learning community who take collective responsibility for high expectations and a deep sense of wellbeing that transcends beyond the school day.
- Collective worship is highly inclusive and deeply embedded at the heart of the school, creating a powerful sense of community. Pupils reflect with exceptional maturity and enthusiasm on Bible teachings making insightful connections to present day issues. They apply their learning by responding thoughtfully and compassionately with action.
- Pupils and adults make the most of the rich opportunities for spiritual development which are both planned and spontaneous. A common language of spirituality is not yet established to enable both adults and pupils to share experiences and learning.
- Pupils are passionate about their religious education (RE) lessons and have a deep knowledge of Christianity and different faiths. They consistently apply their learning through demonstrating an unwavering respect for diversity, both within and beyond their own community.

### Areas for development

- Establish a secure and consistent common language of spirituality so that pupils and adults can share, and respond to their experiences, thus enhancing their spiritual growth.
- For leaders to continue to share their passion and knowledge of effective leadership with other schools so that the excellent practice impacts on the wider church school family.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

### Inspection findings

Transformational leadership by the headteacher has grown Elmley Castle into '*A Little Piece of Heaven*' in the heart of the community where pupils and adults are flourishing. Ethical and compassionate decisions, taken by leaders, in line with the deeply Christian vision are inclusive. This ensures that vulnerable pupils are embraced by the community. Everyone is treated with great dignity and respect which means that they feel a deep sense of belonging. One pupil said 'I finally found somewhere I belong'.

High expectations for all and a bespoke curriculum that is inclusive and adaptive, enables all pupils to '*achieve their best*'. This includes those pupils who are more vulnerable or those with special educational needs and disability (SEND). Passionate and diligent leadership of SEND ensures that no child falls through the net. The school's strong practice in supporting effective teaching and learning shines through the pupils in their love of learning. Robust monitoring and evaluation systems ensure that, regardless of their starting points, pupils routinely surpass expectations, including those who are more able.

Spiritual development is woven through the curriculum promoting personal reflection, exploration and growth. Class prayer areas, collective worship and forest school lessons provide excellent opportunities for pupils across the school to appreciate their relationship with the '*preciousness of our world*'. Older pupils are grateful for this experience throughout their time at school. Whilst opportunities for spiritual development are planned and spontaneous, pupils and adults are not able to articulate their experiences through a common language.

Inspirational and highly inclusive collective worship is at the heart of the school. Pupils engage joyfully and wholeheartedly in their singing and signing. Throughout the week, worship is offered in a variety of ways enabling pupils of all faiths to actively choose how to respond. Pupils who are not Christian feel fully included. Pupil worship leaders are enthusiastic in ensuring that the younger children love worship and enjoy learning about the Bible stories. To address this, they perform puppet shows and plays to the children in reception class. Big questions introduced during worship, designed to embrace difference and diversity, are sensitively explored. Bold and carefully thought through topical issues, challenge all, whatever their background or faith, to think beyond their experience. As a result, pupils are articulate advocates of change, passionately challenging injustice and inequality. One example of this is when pupils were impassioned to respond to the injustice they saw in Ukraine by writing to parents asking for donations. The community responded with generosity and compassion and supplies were collected, sorted and sent to support refugees.

Partnerships are highly valued and strengthen this vibrant school community. A strong bond with the local church, developed over many years, is central to every part of school life. In remembrance of the late vicar, pupils planted a tree, so that together with his family they see how the seasons change but God's love never wavers and loving memories remain. Pupils' experience of worship is enhanced through visits to the church for key events throughout the school year, many attending the church outside of the school day with their families. The recently appointed vicar is committed to complimenting the deeply Christian narrative that underpins the vision. Much work has taken place between the Diocese and school leaders, including governors, to ensure robust monitoring systems are in place to evaluate the school's effectiveness as a church school. Governors are fully committed to ensuring the school continues to grow and serve the community.

As an outward facing school, carefully chosen charity work is integral to the living out of the vision. By supporting the charities of Compassion and T4U, pupils understand that through their actions, they can express their values of thankfulness, compassion, forgiveness, respect, perseverance and generosity. The community benefits from the pupils' innovative thinking and application of thankfulness and generosity. By using God's gift of '*heaven's dew and earth's richness*', pupils requested to buy an apple press to juice the abundance of apples harvested and this was then sold in the community.

Relationships and sex education (RSE) are a strength of the school and as a result, character development is excellent. Relationships are underpinned by a deep understanding of dignity and respect, creating an environment of safety and trust in which pupils thrive. Parents give powerful examples of the school being instrumental in transforming their children's lives. Through the school's approach to inclusion, children feel safe, valued and empowered to grow. Pupils describe Elmley Castle as a family. The older pupils naturally take care of the younger ones and seek to find ways to

ensure everyone is accepted and valued for their uniqueness. Friendship is cherished by pupils so fall outs are rare but when these do occur forgiveness is given to ensure reconciliation.

The lived vision for all to *'grow and flourish together'* means that mental health and wellbeing is a priority. This is because the headteacher has nurtured and shaped a highly skilled and motivated staff team. Adults speak warmly about the support and care that they receive from both leaders and each other. All those involved in the school, even if only for a short while, feel part of something special where they are valued, heard and supported. From this has come professional, personal and spiritual growth. Because pupils are so well known by adults in school, any change in behaviour is quickly noticed and support put in place.

Religious education (RE) is a highly valued and strongly led core subject where teaching and learning is well supported through the subject expertise of the headteacher. Pupils are passionate about their learning, talking with enthusiasm and pride about their knowledge of Christianity. They talk confidently and eloquently about how they apply their learning from parables and the teachings of Jesus, to their daily life. A deep sense of acceptance and understanding of a variety of faiths is harnessed by families within the community coming into school and leading learning. Pupils articulated that this was important so that they knew how to respond and how not to respond when they meet people from different cultures who may have differing beliefs. This innovative and creative approach, where the vision remains central, provides a rich and meaningful context to their learning.

As a school community Elmley Castle is flourishing. This is because, through inspirational leadership, the vision is deeply embedded and intrinsic to all they do. It is lived and breathed each day through their relationships with one another and their outward facing approach to preparing pupils to live in the modern world. The exceptional work of the school means that their gift is to share even more widely their *'little piece of heaven'*.

### Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	16 <sup>th</sup> March 2022	URN	116808
Date of previous inspection	11 <sup>th</sup> December 2015		
School status	Voluntary controlled first school Years R-5	NOR	71
Name of MAT/Federation	N/A		
Diocese	Worcester		
Headteacher	Nadia Underwood		
Pupil profile	The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages.		
	The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)	Under the current leadership, the school has nearly trebled in size. In addition, the governor led pre-school has 18 children.		
Inspector's name	Charlotte Taylor	No.	C2013