



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Walsham le Willows Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Wattisfield Road, Walsham Le Willows, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP31 3BD

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

Good

The impact of collective worship

Good

School’s vision

With God’s Blessing, we DISCOVER, INSPIRE, GROW

“As God’s children, each of us takes a unique path through life but where we spend our childhood we soak up community, goodness and knowledge; learning what we need for the future, and the fruit our lives will produce. Our Christian Values enable us to become the best we can be.”

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither — whatever they do prospers. Psalm 1:3

Key findings

- Pupils and staff know and live out the vision, ‘With God’s Blessing we DISCOVER, INSPIRE and GROW. It underpins the strategic work of the school. The Bible verse which supports the vision (Psalm 1:3) is not as well-known and understood across the school community.
- Pastoral support is a strength of the school. Provision for the mental health and wellbeing of staff and pupils is given priority.
- Collective worship is invitational and inclusive. Pupils enjoy this special part of the school day. Although they have some involvement in delivering collective worship, opportunities for them to regularly plan, monitor and evaluate it are not yet embedded.
- The religious education (RE) curriculum is rich and engaging, Pupils produce high quality work as a result. They learn about world faiths and different beliefs in RE. Further exploration of difference and diversity is not as evident across the wider curriculum.
- Work has begun on developing areas for reflection and prayer around the school. There is not yet a shared definition of spirituality linked to the curriculum, and opportunities for spiritual development are not explicitly planned in.

Areas for development

- Ensure that the Bible verse which underpins the vision is known and understood by all.
- Enable pupils to plan, monitor and evaluate collective worship on a regular basis
- Develop a shared understanding of spirituality that is explicit to the school. Ensure opportunities exist for spiritual development across the curriculum which are distinct from social, moral and cultural ones.

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

Leaders ensure that the school's Christian vision, 'With God's blessing we Discover, Inspire and Grow' is well established, known and valued by the school community. The headteacher's inspirational leadership has a positive impact, promoting the vision to all. They are supported by a strong team, including governors, who share a desire to enable all pupils to flourish. The vision is at the heart of strategic decision making and impacts on school development planning and the budget. Pastoral care is a strength of the school. The friendly, family atmosphere is valued and the Christian vision has fostered a belief that every child deserves a chance to flourish. Pupils are encouraged to think and act for others. Thus, the school community is inspired by the vision every day. The theological underpinning of the vision, the Bible verse Psalm 1:3 which likens flourishing to 'a tree planted by streams of water' is less prominent or widely known and understood.

Visual evidence of the importance of the Christian vision is made obvious through inspiring mosaics, murals and displays around the school. Pupils have time for reflection and prayer in class and at key points in the school day. They are excited to develop new spiritual areas especially in outside spaces. They talk about the awe and wonder they experience around the school grounds, especially in the nature area, showing delight in a duck on her nest, for example. The school has a definition of spirituality but this is not widely shared or understood. Opportunities for spiritual development are sometimes recognised within the curriculum, but these are not distinct from social, moral and cultural development.

Pastoral support offered to pupils and their families is of high quality and valued by all as prompt, relevant and well managed. Weekly well-being activities, devised by leaders, give all pupils the opportunity to practice strategies which support their mental health. These are also shared with home. The behaviour policy encourages consistent and fair actions. Clear displays in every classroom ensure pupils know what to do if they have a problem. Behaviour, particularly learning behaviour, is exemplary. Pupils speak of the need for forgiveness and reflection to maintain positive relationships. The school is welcoming and inclusive and is successful at transitioning pupils into the community at any point in their school journey. Many parents continue to bring their children to this school even after moving from the catchment area. Parents new to the school are made to feel welcome and their children supported. Parents of pupils with additional needs appreciate the support and help they and their children are offered. This is a school with a heart for inclusion and supportive practice is endemic. The leadership team enable pupils and staff to flourish through sharing and supporting one another. Kindness and how people are treated is at the fore. Staff feel valued and are encouraged to continue their professional development. Support for adults is in place when needed and this is handled professionally and sensitively. The school has a strong collegiate spirit. One staff member said, 'We're in tune and wouldn't let people fail'

Opportunities for pupil leadership are in place through a variety of school councils. These include the Echo council (Every Child Has an Opinion). Pupils have an impact by making suggestions and recommendations to leaders in response to consultations. They support a variety of charities. Leaders are responsive to pupils' courageous advocacy, so they are encouraged to discuss and campaign for causes they feel passionate about. One parent commented, 'Every child is given the chance to grow, flourish and find their feet.'

Collective worship is carefully planned around Christian values. There is clear structure and routine, with opportunities for prayer and reflection. It is much appreciated by pupils. They devise prayers and have opportunities to sing and act in whole school collective worship. Every class leads an act of worship each half term following the same structure and Christian value. The liturgical year is followed and represented through coloured altar cloths helping pupils understand Christian traditions. Religious symbols such as a cross, bell and bible are used every day as a focus for this special time. Their significance is understood by pupils. Worship follows a pattern which enables all pupils to greet each other, engage and respond. Pupils demonstrate their understanding of the concept of the Trinity through analogy to water, steam and ice. The vicar is actively involved with the school, linking it to wider community activities. The strong links between the school and the church are important to both. This partnership with the church is strengthened by joint celebrations for Christian festivals, most recently Easter. During the pandemic parents and pupils treasured the opportunity to meet virtually or outside in the school grounds and participate in collective worship together.

The carefully designed thematic curriculum has the school's Christian vision and values at its core. It is creative and designed to enrich and inspire pupils as they move through the school. Biblical verses underpin the curriculum strands but these are not widely known. These curriculum drivers aim to shape the direction, development and experience of pupils. School life is threaded through with enrichment opportunities such as learning through a Victorian school day and a recent visit to a zoo.

RE is well planned, engaging and is given sufficient curriculum time. It balances the teaching of Christianity with world faiths. Exploring big questions is planned into lessons. As a special lesson, atmospheric lighting and music are used to underline this. The Emmanuel RE scheme supports the delivery of focused lessons which engage the pupils. Impactful professional development from the diocese has been accessed by the enthusiastic RE lead and cascaded to staff, who are confident in their teaching. Every class gives RE prominence and each room has an RE working wall. Class scrapbooks, floor and individual books demonstrate the thoughtful responses made by pupils to their learning.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	14 June 2022	URN	124717
Date of previous inspection	17 July 2015		
School status	Voluntary controlled	NOR	129
Name of MAT/Federation			
Diocese	St Edmundsbury and Ipswich		
Headteacher	Maxine McGarr		
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 above national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)	The headteacher has been in post since September 2021.		
Inspector's name	Lynne Golding	No.	C161719