

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Deerhurst and Apperley Church of England Primary School	
Address	Apperley, Gloucester, GL19 4DQ
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	Good

School's vision
<p>Learning and living as children of God (Ephesians 5:1)</p> <p>You are God's children whom he loves. Try to be like God.</p>
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This school is a community overflowing with joy, compassion and love, where the Christian vision and values transform lives. Pupils are confident to articulate the vision and range of values, but are less sure of the biblical origins of the vision. • A deep connectedness binds the school, local churches and village community together. The school serves, and is served by, its local area and is an inspiring example of Christian-based leadership. • The vibrant curriculum and extra-curricular offer develop pupils' interests and talents. This shows the vision is a lived reality. Each pupil is nurtured with the utmost care and respect so all flourish in their academic and personal lives. • Religious education (RE) makes a profound difference to the lives of pupils. It is exceptionally well led and taught so that pupils are excited and inspired to learn. • Collective worship is a highlight of the day and reinforces the message to love others. Currently, pupils are familiar with a limited range of prayers for use throughout the school day and this limits opportunities for spiritual growth.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider using a wider range of prayers, including those written by pupils and that may be more contemporary in style, to enhance the spiritual growth of all ages. • Explore the teachings of Jesus and his followers so pupils are more confident to articulate the biblical context of the Christian vision and values.



Inspection findings

It is rare to encounter a Christian vision that is so fundamental to the lives of pupils and adults. All ages flourish as cherished children of God. Deerhurst and Apperley is a school bursting with joy and love. Upon greeting individual pupils every morning, leaders invite them to choose a glass bead as a symbol of the forgiveness, kindness and happiness they intend to show that day. Awards called 'Flourishing Feathers' are presented to pupils who have gone the extra mile in the service of others. The Christian concept of living and learning as children of God flows through the school. What makes the school an excellent Church school is the exceptional quality of the relationships between all ages. The vision lifts up hearts and minds. Leaders demonstrate truly 'godly characteristics' to quote a member of staff. As a result of the vision, pupils who have moved to the school are fully welcomed. This includes those who have joined from overseas and those who have experienced difficulties in their previous schools. Sunflowers and a welcome sign in Ukrainian are an example of how the school reaches out to newcomers. Pupils are transformed by this culture of total inclusivity. They are good-humoured, caring and courteous. Pupils talk with great confidence of the vision and its accompanying values. They explain how the values help them to be who they are and of how the vision comes from Christian teaching. Pupils are less aware of the biblical context of the vision, based on Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Nevertheless, they know, 'that God is there for everyone'.

Great care is taken to support pupils with additional needs. In this small school, the provision for learning, emotional and social needs is remarkable. Staff are unwavering in their compassion when pupils may not be their best selves. Nurture is provided in creative ways, for example through sunshine and kindness clubs, play therapy and 'bubble room' sessions. Experienced special educational needs staff (SEN) supply expertise to colleagues. Leaders campaign tenaciously when more specialist support is required. The culture of nurture is widely recognised as the school received a national award as a 'Mental Health Champion'. It is no surprise, therefore, that behaviour is outstanding.

The curriculum is enriched by an impressive number of extra-curricular activities. Pupils participate in engineering, sports, art and musical events. Individual interests and talents are fostered so pupils' learning is extensive. The school provides rich experiences which enable pupils to think beyond themselves. Often, innovative projects stem from pupils and these make a difference to the lives of others. A stunning example of this is that a pupil designed a solar powered blanket for the homeless. Within the curriculum, reflection tasks demonstrate that pupils have a mature understanding of spirituality. Governors note this in their insightful work to safeguard the Christian aspects of the school. Older pupils tend their own garden in memory of a former pupil. Forest school sessions spark interest in environmental issues. The spiritual garden provides pupils with a space to ponder and be still. Staff and pupils express their shared view that spirituality is the awareness that there is something bigger than themselves. This is a telling indicator of a small, rural school that has a big impact.

The spiritual life of the school is carefully woven into times for worship. These are consistently Christian in features and themes. Pupils and staff delight in coming together. They share their thoughts while learning about examples from the Bible. Pupils independently plan and lead worship each week and this means engagement with the themes is high. Singing, movement and music are powerful expressions of the vision. Here the 'children of God' sing with one united voice, and it is joyous to hear. Local clergy and volunteers enrich worship with practical support. Governors attend worship and evaluate its impact. As a result of input from a member of the local church, the school developed a blessing with actions. This is now integral to daily worship. The impact of worship is long lasting. Several former pupils

and families attend school services in church to mark key Christian festivals. Many also maintain their connections with the school as volunteers. Pupils are familiar with a limited range of prayers. These are used across the school day and support spiritual development. Some prayers are used to say grace and to end the day, in addition to those used in worship. These are long-cherished words that have endured for many years. However, as the range of these is limited, pupils are not familiar with alternative words or forms of prayer. Care is taken for pupils to feel invited to pray or reflect. Pupils know that ‘hands together, eyes closed’ does not mean they have to do so. They are clear they should act with respect for those who wish to pray. Pupils and staff state that worship helps them feel connected to God as it ‘shows our Christian heart’.

Deerhurst has a very close partnership with the local churches and the wider village community. Pupils support the cricket club that in turn raises funds for the school. Pupils and family members also perform in the local pantomime. Care home residents join pupils for lunch on ‘fish Friday’ and intergenerational friendships are the result. It is clear that the school is the beating heart of the community. Those who feel loved as ‘children of God’ are far greater in number than the number of pupils on roll. The school also benefits from a good working relationship with the diocese and engages with its RE network, sharing best practice.

Religious education (RE) makes a significant difference to pupils’ learning and personal development. The subject is exceptionally well led and taught. Leaders are rightly proud of the RE Action awards received for the impressive quality of work. Staff are developed as leaders of RE and worship and this reflects the commitment for all to thrive. Pupils are clear that RE helps them to understand different beliefs and cultures. They are inspired by the creative aspects of the subject and especially love the artwork that deepens their knowledge of the religious themes studied. Work in books is of very high quality. It is carefully assessed to develop learning. Pupils respond to ‘big questions’ and demonstrate a respectful view of similarities across religions.

Deerhurst and Apperley is an excellent Church school. The school community flourishes because of the effective Christian vision of love.

Information			
School	Deerhurst and Apperley Church of England Primary School	Inspection date	21 March 2023
URN	115619	VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary controlled
Diocese/District	Gloucester	Pupils on roll	74
Headteacher	Jayne Neveu		
Chair of Governors	Chris Davis		
Inspector	Allyson Taylor	No.	768