

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Exford Church of England VC First School	
Address	Exford, Minehead, TA24 7PP
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
<p>'Let your light shine.' Matthew 5 v16</p> <p>Our Christian ethos underpins how and what we deliver in the school's curriculum and how we live our daily lives, as all children are created in the image of God and are therefore entitled to the very best of everything.</p>
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The vision inspires leaders to deliver high quality provision to meet the needs of all pupils, raising their aspirations. The school makes an impressive contribution to the community with its nurture for families and concern for their wellbeing. • Leaders are passionate and dedicated to the work of this Church school and are relentless in identifying best practice. The Moorland Federation, of which the school is part, enriches provision through growing future leaders. • The church's partnership with the school is exemplary, enriching pastoral support. 'Church Guardians' increase the impact of collective worship and religious education (RE). However, opportunities for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate collective worship are limited. • The vision drives leaders to create a unique curriculum reflecting the locality and deepening pupils' understanding of caring for God's world. Opportunities to enrich pupils' spiritual flourishing through the curriculum are not identified. Neither does it provide opportunities to develop a vocabulary to express their spirituality. • Pupils have a growing understanding to be independent advocates for change with regard to local issues. However, their knowledge of global communities is less well developed and they are not confident to raise awareness or take action to show their compassion.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure opportunities for pupils to flourish spiritually are identified across all subject planning. Support pupils in developing vocabulary which will enable them to express their thinking clearly. • Extend pupils' knowledge of global communities. Develop skills to enable them to become confident advocates for positive change, relentlessly showing compassion for God's world. • Enable pupils to take a greater role for planning and leading worship whilst creating opportunities for evaluation. This will ensure pupils have greater ownership and lead improvements in this area.

Inspection findings

The school's distinctive Christian vision is influential, shaping daily life. It effectively addresses the needs of the community. The vision enthuses leaders to provide opportunities which widen pupils' experiences and enhance aspirations. Leaders at all levels articulate a thorough understanding of the theological principles underpinning the vision. They talk of their responsibility to show God's love to all. This enables each individual to become the best person God made them to be. The vision consistently drives improvements. This is demonstrated through the extensive care for families and shaping a unique curriculum which reflects the locality. Senior leaders are passionate and dynamic, relentlessly seeking the very best provision and leading by example. A cohesive staff team are fully committed to living out the vision. Leaders' evaluations are ongoing, shaping initiatives to raise the impact further. The new federation structure enables dedicated governors to adopt a systematic approach to monitoring all aspects of being a Church school.

The vision inspires leaders to develop a range of high quality support to meet the diverse needs of pupils. This is a strength of the school as it allows pupils to flourish. There is an inclusive culture, welcoming all. Federation leaders work well together, recognising which school will meet a pupil's needs best. The relationships with families is a particular strength, where the school is a beacon of hope. Staff go beyond the expectations of the community to nurture all. Staff ensure pupils experience a variety of additional activities, such as sport and dance, to enrich learning and widen horizons. Nurturing pupils to recognise their emotions has a high priority. Pupils are confident to identify and share their feelings so they can be readily supported. Staff work with pupils, agreeing individualised strategies which help them to be calm. Mindfulness approaches enrich this, so all develop skills they find valuable. Mental health and wellbeing is a priority ensuring that staff feel valued. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the vision and how it encourages them to shine. They explain how this encourages others to do the same. Staff stimulate a love for learning through outdoor activities. Visitors from different careers extend this culture of aspiration. There is an understanding of being the best you can be. Mistakes are seen as opportunities to learn even more, and extension activities are positive challenges.

Leaders make bold decisions to create a unique curriculum which prepares learners to be future citizens. A partnership with the Exmoor National Park creates rich experiences, exploring the diversity of the locality. Weekly investigations deepen pupils' understanding of the wonder of God's creation. This raises their responsibility for its care. Regular farm visits extend this appreciation of the beauty and mystery of the world. This drives pupils to become involved with projects to care for their community, through beach cleans and challenging all on the use of plastics. Pupils' knowledge of difference and diversity is strengthened by visits to Bristol, exploring cultures and their importance. Learners use the phrase 'all different, all equal' to reinforce the importance of individuality. There is a growing understanding of global communities through studying rainforests and countries such as Kenya. However, this is not fully developed. Some pupils are beginning to become independent agents for change regarding local concerns, raising awareness of food banks. However, this does not extend to global issues. There are opportunities which support pupils to flourish spiritually. However, experiences are not identified in planning nor do they have a clear purpose. Pupils are not confident to verbalise their thinking.

The vision of letting your light shine and enabling others to do the same is reflected in partnerships. The federation is astute at recognising staff expertise, growing them as 'champions' who cascade best practice to others. Leaders are effectively developed, enabling them to take on further responsibility in Church schools. Federation leaders deepen



evaluations and guide improvements, with a focus on the latest research. The relationship with the church is an example of high quality practice. Pupils' understanding of Christian festivals is enhanced through workshops. Pastoral care for staff and families is enriched by joint support. 'Guardians', a group of church workers, are influential in evaluating the impact of being a Church school. They are creative in suggesting new initiatives and contribute to their implementation. These include work on mindfulness through art. Their relationship with pupils and families is highly valued.

Learners explain that 'shining your light' means showing others how all can live together well. All feel part of a family, showing a high degree of dignity and respect. Christian values inform relationships, so pupils use Jesus' teaching of forgiveness when mistakes happen.

Collective worship is central to deepening pupils' understanding of the vision. Christian values of care, respect and perseverance show what this looks like in daily life. Planning is secure and leaders work to ensure this deepens pupils' understanding of values as they move through the school. Learners show a thoughtful understanding of prayer and use different types to share thoughts. Pupils are confident to pray spontaneously on themes explored during collective worship. This time can be used to think about other world issues. Changes made to practice raise the impact which collective worship makes. This includes giving pupils time to reflect on the significance of themes being developed to their daily lives. This has led to pupils taking action to support the local foodbank and a project to protect dormice. Staff confidence in leading worship is growing through using an agreed structure. However, pupils have limited opportunities to plan and lead collective worship. They do not evaluate worship, nor make suggestions on how it can be improved. Learners talk sensitively about the Christian concept of the Trinity, linking ideas to images. Monitoring by governors supports improvements, including pupils welcoming peers to worship and the addition of a wider range of worship songs.

New approaches to teaching RE engage pupils who enjoy a hands on experience to learning. They take greater ownership for their work, exploring areas which particularly interest them. Planning is secure, with key vocabulary identified. This enables pupils to extend their understanding. Their knowledge of core religious concepts is growing. Learners' discussions of big questions enriches their understanding and they confidently share ideas and listen to others. World views are thoughtfully explored, with pupils making informed connections. Assessment systems track pupils' progress, so those needing additional support are identified. Staff identify pupils who need further support and determine actions to be taken. The RE lead draws on expertise from the diocese and as 'champion' across the federation shares good practice with other schools.



Information			
School	Exford Church of England VC First School	Inspection date	28 April 2023
URN	123756	VC/VA/ Academy	Voluntary controlled
Diocese/District	Bath & Wells	Pupils on roll	29
Head of School	Nicola Stenner		
Chair of Governors	Frances Nicholson and Helen Jenkinson		
Inspector	David Hatrey	No.	844