

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

| Cerne Abbas Church of England VC First School   |   |
|---|---|
| Address   | Duck Street, Cerne Abbas, Dorchester, DT2 7LA |
| School vision   |   |
| <p>Our vision is 'To be the best that we can be.'</p> <p>We live by the story of when God called Samuel. Eli was Samuel's teacher who taught him how to live and work in the temple of the Lord. In the same way the adults in school teach us how to live and learn through our values of peace, friendship, trust, forgiveness, courage and joy. One night God called Samuel and he listened to what God had to say. In the same way we should listen to God, or our inner voice (some people call this a conscience) and be led to do the right thing. By listening to our teachers together with living out our values and listening to God we will make good choices and this will therefore help us to 'be the best we can be.'</p> <p>'Teach children how they should live, and they will remember it all their life'. (Proverbs 22: 6)</p>  |   |
| School strengths  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has a strong, well developed Christian vision that is very relevant to the local context. This is well known to pupils, their families and the wider community and promotes moral and spiritual development</li> <li>• A strong sense of a caring family pervades the school and wider community. This has a significant positive effect on everyone's mental health and wellbeing.</li> <li>• High quality and effective Christian leadership and governance gives clear direction to staff and pupils alike. This is seen in the impact of Christian distinctiveness, and consideration of future strategic development as a Church school.</li> <li>• Collective worship is well planned and executed, with high levels of pupil involvement and evaluation. Collective worship inspires action and pupils readily involve themselves in prayer and reflection.</li> <li>• Effectively organised religious education (RE) produces articulate pupils who speak confidently about Christianity and world faiths. The impact is seen in a high level of knowledge and a depth of understanding.</li> </ul> |   |
| Areas for development   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen confidence amongst all staff in handling opportunities for spiritual development. This will ensure pupils understand that spirituality pervades all areas of life.</li> <li>• Develop understanding of different Christian religious practices around the world. This is so pupils appreciate God may be recognised in various ways.</li> </ul>   |   |
| Inspection findings   |   |
| <p>The school has a strong Christian vision lived by staff and pupils alike. It is relevant to this rural community through an imaginative agricultural image. Pupils know the story of their vision well, and are enthusiastic in telling it. They also understand the biblical foundation, and readily link it to</p>   |   |

their lives. As a result, they are enriched and flourish well imagining themselves as caterpillars turning into butterflies. The school is in an informal partnership with other small schools which provides mutual support. In their vision story the pupils see the governors as the sun that lights the way. Governors live up to this ideal with an impressive set of skills. Minutes of meetings show regular monitoring of the vision's impact, and serious consideration of strategic development as a Church school. Governors make regular visits, and their impact is seen in reports driving future planning. There is a very good relationship with the Diocese of Salisbury. All leaders participate in training, which results in a mutually beneficial professional partnership. Leadership decisions are prayerfully rooted at each meeting.

There is a broad curriculum following the image of fertile soil in the vision parable. Through observation it is evident that pupils are effortlessly reflective learners. They are articulate, and their interest is expressed in lively responses to questions in class. This extends to all learners, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders speak of the 'golden threads' of spirituality woven throughout the curriculum. A shared understanding of spirituality is evident with every pupil from Year 1 onwards maintaining a reflection diary. Within these they record spiritual moments in their lives, and their response. However, although the system for spiritual development is in place, not all staff are completely confident in discussing these matters. Reflective spaces support learning and are used and understood by pupils.

Collective worship is well organised, and has clear impact seen in the eager willingness of pupil participation. There is an enthusiastic pupil worship group which makes explicit links with the vision and values. Other pupils are encouraged to be involved in a variety of ways. The worship group is involved in planning, and delivery of worship. Inspiring examples of pupil led worship on the website demonstrate their impact. Pupil evaluation of worship is recorded and drives future planning. Many pupil comments on worship show its impact on spiritual development. Particularly evident is the centrality and understanding of prayer. As a result, pupils are keen to pray spontaneously in collective worship. Opportunities for prayer throughout the day are always invitational and inclusive. Many pupils choose to write prayers in reflective spaces. A spirit of thankfulness for God's world and creation is evident in their reflections. This fits appropriately with the vision and rural context. The vicar regularly leads worship, and pupils are familiar with the church building through frequent visits. The impact of this is evident in a knowledge of Anglican practice, and the use of simple liturgy. Pupils are inspired through worship, exemplified in many ways. An Easter bonnet parade and a Hogwart's style Lent lunch in church are a couple of examples. As a result, the clear church and school link spiritually benefits the whole community.

The vision promotes the idea of teamwork, and as a result pupils care for one another. They behave well and are very considerate. The school council speaks of the importance of 'peacemakers'. These are pupils who wear a special yellow cap at break times. Their role is to help resolve playground disputes in a Christian manner. As a result, pupils really understand the Christian ideals of forgiveness and reconciliation. Similarly, staff have an aide-memoire on the back of their identification badge to help them administer restorative justice. The result of all this is that the school community lives exceptionally well together. Pastoral care of everyone is outstanding. Staff speak appreciatively of the 'Golden Ticket' system which allows them a periodic day off. This promotes their positive mental health and wellbeing. Support for pupils, parents and carers is evident in turn through caring staff. Parents and carers also value regular communications from the school. As a result, they feel thoroughly involved in events. This includes a termly 'Crosslinks' meeting to discuss school issues with leaders. They also speak enthusiastically of the Church school ethos and its impact on their children. This is especially evident in the way vision and values are discussed at home.

Pupils have limited understanding of the Christian quest for justice. Some can link this with the

vision. However, pupils are very active as agents of change in local, national and global work. Links with a child in Togo gives pupils knowledge of deprivation. They send and receive letters from Eliora and regard her as a friend they walk with. As a result, they are active in supporting her. Pupils are also involved with 'Heart Response.' This is a small Christian charity set up to follow Jesus' example of selfless love and support. Pupils have a strong sense of community, and this is evident in their involvement in local events. Examples include joint fetes with the village and church, and organising a talent show.

RE is well organised throughout the school. The subject meets statutory and church requirements. Staff involvement in diocesan training strengthens teaching and learning. The subject lead also assists in the delivery of training beyond school. RE has clear impact on the lives of the pupils and their personal spirituality. As a result, they are articulate and knowledgeable about Christianity and world faiths. They understand the effect that religion might have on peoples' lives, as well other worldviews. Good recall of prior learning is evident in class discussions. As an example, pupils explain how the many commandments of the Torah are expressed differently in Christian thinking. High quality reflection on the name and nature of God is evident in written and oral work. There is good evidence of learning in RE books. Verbal and written feedback on work stimulates progress. A rigorous half termly monitoring system allows teachers to be certain of how and what pupils are learning in RE. This system informs future lesson planning. As a result, all pupils make good progress in developing skills. Pupils understand Christianity as a living faith and speak about its effect on society. However, there is limited understanding of Christianity as a multicultural world faith. As a result, pupils only have a vague idea of the rich variety of Christian approaches in other cultures.

The inspection findings indicate that Cerne Abbas Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

| Information     |                      |                |        |
|-----------------|----------------------|----------------|--------|
| Inspection date | 14 November 2023     | URN            | 113759 |
| VC/VA/Academy   | Voluntary controlled | Pupils on roll | 65     |
| Diocese         | Salisbury            |                |        |
| MAT/Federation  |                      |                |        |
| Headteacher     | Catherine Cresswell  |                |        |
| Chair           | Barbara Southcott    |                |        |
| Inspector       | Jeremy Hellier       | No.            | 899    |