



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Winterbourne Valley Church of England VA First School	
Address	Winterbourne Abbas, Dorchester, DT2 9LW
School vision	
<p>We all want to be nurtured in our learning and personal development according to the beliefs of the Christian faith so that we can be the best we can be. We strive to grow strong roots so that everyone, children and adults, can succeed.</p> <p>To have good fruit you must have a healthy tree. A tree is known by the kind of fruit it bears. Matthew 12 v33 -35.</p>	
School strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school’s vision and values are rooted in biblical text. They are widely understood and used in the daily life of the school. Policies are underpinned by the vision and the revised behaviour policy is having a positive effect upon pupils. • The vision has had a significant effect on outdoor learning. The woodland curriculum is extremely thoroughly mapped against the vision. Pupils celebrate the awe and wonder of the natural world. They develop their self-confidence, communication and relationship skills as a direct result. • The focus on the well-being of all is a strength of the school. Leaders ensure all are cared for. The school is an inclusive and caring community where everyone is accepted. • Pupils’ spiritual development is fostered well through collective worship. Reflection, deep questioning, prayer and the use of music all enhance this. It is inclusive and invitational. • The planning and curriculum in religious education (RE) is very thorough. It logically leads to progression as pupils move on to their next school. Pupils enjoy their RE and make good progress. The interesting activities which they undertake deepen their understanding of a range of faiths. 	
Areas for development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop governors’ practice in the formal evaluation of the school’s Christian vision. This will enable them to recognise and further the impact of the vision. • Extend the planning to include opportunities for spiritual development across all curriculum subjects. This is to enhance pupils’ ability to consider the wider dimension to their lives. • Ensure that new staff who are teaching RE are given professional development in order for them to gain an in-depth knowledge of the Understanding Christianity resource and how to use it effectively. 	
Inspection findings	
<p>A vibrant collage of a tree with roots, fruits and branches representing those in the school greets visitors. This is an indicator of how the vision has been thought through. Its meaning and intention are well known by staff and are lived out daily. Leaders have a clear understanding of its biblical</p>	

underpinning. The associated values of kindness, respect and courage are rooted in the vision. They are seen as nutrients to the tree, which the pupils need to enable them to flourish. Each of these are associated with a biblical story or verse. Pupils consider them highly important, and they are woven through the teaching and learning. This vision is entirely suitable for the rural context of the school. The governors are fully committed to ensuring pupils develop strong learning habits for future life and succeed. In this they are successful. They make decisions based on the need for the vision to succeed. The governors are regular visitors to the school and monitor its work closely. However, they are less effective in evaluating how far the vision has had an impact.

Pupils in the school flourish. In line with the vision, teachers talk of providing pupils' with experiences and opportunities. There are many of these within the curriculum and outside of it. The outdoor learning or woodland curriculum, which all pupils experience as part of their week, is a particular strength of the school. The vision has driven its curriculum. Each part of the planned learning is carefully mapped against the vision and values. It develops pupils' confidence, their feeling of self-worth and resilience and gives them a strong foundation upon which to build. Pupils speak with extreme enthusiasm when describing their learning outdoors. Opportunities for them to develop spiritually are very evident here. They question what they see around them. Recently the discovery of a dead mouse encouraged much discussion about the nature of death. However, although the school has a shared understanding of spirituality, it is currently not well enough developed.

The living out of the vision and values means relationships within the school are very good. Pupils are treated with respect, as are adults. There is a strongly inclusive atmosphere. Pupils talk about becoming the good fruit from the tree because of acts of kindness. Staff listen to pupils well and respond to their needs. All show care for one another. Reception pupils are buddied by Year 4 pupils. They consider this an important responsibility. The school adapts its environment when it recognises a pupil has a need. The governors have employed two support assistants to help a growing number of pupils who have emotional needs. This has had a positive impact upon pupils who have faced challenges in their lives. A lay minister, who is also a school therapist, brings 'Barnabas bear' into school. This allows pupils to talk feely with him and to ask questions which trouble them. In turn he draws on Jesus' example and the vision to help guide them. The policies of the school are also well rooted in the vision. The new behaviour policy which relies on respect has changed the attitudes and behaviour of pupils. They now talk about kindness, forgiveness, and reflection in restoring and repairing relationships. The policy has had a significant effect on how staff and pupils view and address poor behaviour. Provision to ensure positive mental health is a high priority. Staff are well supported and help one another. They are a cohesive team. The headteacher is noted for being very considerate to the staff and nurturing their needs in line with the vision.

Pupils consider collective worship as an important part of the day. They report that it is a time to be quiet, to reflect and to talk with God. This indicates it is helping their spiritual development. The topics covered make them think and, as one pupil said, 'it refreshes you and makes you a better person'. It is carefully planned by the headteacher. Teaching staff take turns in leading it. Local clergy from nearby churches also lead worship. The hall is prepared carefully to be a spiritual place and music and slides encourage reflection on entry. Questions and reflections are encouraged. Pupils' sense of spirituality is enhanced by joyous singing. The content of worship is centred around values and Bible stories or links to the Bible. Prayer is also an important part of collective worship and is invitational. Pupils write prayers which are used when the school visits local churches at special festivals. On occasions a member of the local clergy leads a Taizé service. Here pupils are invited to think about God through community prayer, song, silence, personal reflection and sharing. Pupils and staff value these times. The importance the school places on collective worship

can be seen by a questionnaire to parents designed to encourage more parental engagement. Parents who attended the recent carol services and nativity plays spoke warmly of them being spiritual experiences.

The school has good partnership working with local churches and the diocese. It has been supported in developing its RE curriculum by the diocese. Pupils recognise the needs of other pupils. The school council have worked on seeking better road safety outside the school. They show awareness of their social responsibility towards the planet. They help others less fortunate through charity fundraising. They understand the idea of seeking justice for all.

RE is very well planned and has a high profile within the school. The curriculum is coherent, interesting and covers a variety of faiths. It is highly relevant to the school's context. Training in the resource of 'Understanding Christianity' was undertaken by the headteacher, who then trained other teachers. However, there has since been a high turnover of staff. Consequently, current teaching staff are less confident in using these materials. They show good understanding of a selected number of faiths and worldviews. Until her retirement, RE was monitored by the link governor who was the incumbent. She visited lessons. She often discussed issues which pupils posed. The curriculum in RE prepares them well for their transfer to their next schools. The RE lead has worked with schools in the locality to ensure that the RE curriculum in the area develops as pupils move up the age range.

Teaching and learning in RE allow pupils to make good progress. Teaching is stimulating with interesting activities such as making a dreidel to illustrate games played at Hanukkah. Pupils feel confident and are encouraged to question the nature of faith. Learning is regularly assessed through both formative and summative work. This is moderated internally.

The inspection findings indicate that Winterbourne Valley Church of England First School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
Inspection date	10 January 2024	URN	113820
VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary aided	Pupils on roll	58
Diocese	Salisbury		
MAT/Federation			
Headteacher	Rachel Horne		
Chair	Peter Steel		
Inspector	Marcia Headon	No.	761