



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Potten End Church of England Primary School	
Address	Potten End, Berkhamsted, HP4 2QY

School vision
<p>Rooted in faith, we nurture, grow and flourish</p> <p>Our school vision and ethos is rooted in the Parable of the Mustard Seed.</p> <p>“What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”</p> <p>Mark 4.30-32</p>
School strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Christian vision, illustrated by the biblical parable of the mustard seed, is well known by pupils, staff and governors. It inspires provision and sits at the heart of this highly inclusive school community. • Parents and carers appreciate the caring, dedicated and approachable staff. Relationships are strong, and as a result, the wellbeing of families is enhanced. • Governors and school leaders are passionate about the nurture and support which the school provides. They consider the changing needs of the school community and develop provision which enables pupils to grow and flourish. • Collective worship is valued by pupils and staff alike. It provides a calm space in each day, and a meaningful opportunity for the development of personal spirituality. • Religious education (RE) is carefully planned. As a result, the development of knowledge is well-sequenced and contains appropriate challenge.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop the RE curriculum through a further focus on key skills. This is in order for pupils to have a richer experience of the subject. • Extend current work on spirituality across the curriculum. This is so that pupils have a deeper understanding and experience. • Develop pupils’ understanding of injustice in the world. This is so that they are equipped to take actions and make a difference.
Inspection findings
<p>Potten End is a highly valued school, and described by many as the ‘heart of the village’. The well-established Christian vision was created collaboratively with the local church and school community. It is confidently articulated by governors and staff. Inspired by the biblical image of the mustard tree’s protective branches, staff and governors seek to provide nurture for all. The vision is</p>

used effectively when evaluating the school's provision and in strategic planning. Inspired by the vision, governors respond to pupils' changing needs, by introducing much-needed provision, such as wraparound care. Staff talk with real passion about the provision for individual pupils in order that they can grow and flourish. Parents are justifiably grateful for strong relationships with teachers and the warm welcome for all. The school's ethos is driven by its focus on core Christian values. Pupils talk about these at home, and one parent explained how these conversations influence parenting and wider family relationships.

Governors know their school exceptionally well. Observations from regular visits are recorded in detailed documentation, alongside notes from conversations with pupils, and next steps suggestions. Governors and leaders use questionnaires and half-termly forum meetings to ensure they understand the views of staff and parents. This enables the school's development journey to be wisely led and well-communicated. Governors are also instrumental in creating links with the local community, including local churches and a retirement home. Staff are deeply committed to their school community and to the nurture of the school's pupils and their families. They describe, with justifiable pride, the achievements of pupils and the different interventions which enable individuals to flourish. This includes support and interventions for pupils who are vulnerable or who have additional needs. The professional development of staff members is prioritised, enabling them to feel well-supported by school leaders and governors. Thoughtful policy decisions, which limit workload and support the wellbeing of staff, have been effective.

School leaders have created a carefully sequenced curriculum. It focuses on core facts which pupils need to know and remember. Observations and progress data are wisely used by leaders in assessing the quality of provision. The programme of enrichment visits and visitors has been carefully developed to provide pupils with a rich cultural experience. Work to support pupils' emotional wellbeing has been rightly inspired by the ambition to see all pupils 'grow and flourish'. Activities such as outdoor learning and the sensory circuits intervention, ensure that pupils are well-supported.

Following training led by the diocese, the school has begun to grow pupils' spirituality. However, this is not embedded across the curriculum. Pupils are supported in thinking more deeply through the use of a reflection idea known as 'windows, mirrors and doors'. Classrooms and shared areas contain reflection tables and spaces, where pupils can write prayers. These spaces also celebrate actions which demonstrate the impact on behaviour and thinking of the school's focus on Christian values. The lunchtime 'Spiritual Reflection' space provides a further opportunity for pupils to reflect on core values and linked Bible stories. Pupils value opportunities to reflect and pray during the school day.

Collective worship is distinctively Christian and an important aspect of school life. It provides a calm space for reflection and prayer at the end of each school day. Pupils and staff appreciate the opportunity to take an active part, or simply observe. Inspired by the school's vision, it provides a successful opportunity for the nurture of spiritual flourishing. 'Big questions' encourage pupils to reflect on themes and biblical teaching, and individual written responses evidence the inspiration gained. Pupils play key roles in leading worship. For example, pupil spiritual leaders have written a prayer which is used regularly in class and school collective worship. The collective worship programme is supported by contributions from local churches. Parents appreciate the opportunity to attend worship when led by their child's class. The school visits the local church for special services.

Religious education has a high profile at Potten End. It is confidently and enthusiastically led and the curriculum has been carefully constructed. It successfully combines elements from a published resource for Christianity and the recognised local curriculum for the subject. The diocese has been

involved in creating the curriculum and monitoring its effectiveness. Planning is detailed, outlining both skills and knowledge for all units. This ensures that consistent and well-considered challenge is provided across the school. The programme of study is thoughtfully timetabled so that Christianity units are taught at key points in the church calendar. Multi-faith work, for example work focusing on sacred books and inspirational people, enables pupils to compare and contrast different religions. The development of a RE enrichment programme is an ongoing focus for leaders. This year it includes visiting speakers as well as visits to a Jewish synagogue and a Hindu temple. Knowledge organisers are used by pupils throughout the school, providing definitions of key vocabulary and clarifying core knowledge. In addition, ‘do now’ activities provide an effective tool for pupils to check their recall of learning. However, pupils lack some of the key skills required to have an in depth experience of the subject.

Relationships at all levels within the school are excellent. Pupils learn and play well together, showing generosity and care towards each other. Core values of friendship and respect are lived out by pupils throughout the school, particularly in playgrounds and shared spaces. Pupils say that they know who they can talk to if they have a problem. Pupils enjoy a number of leadership roles within the school and are proud to talk about their responsibilities. ‘Eco warriors’ are active in finding ways to help the school reduce its climate footprint, such as by saving energy. Some pupils have carried out actions to make a difference in their school and local community. However, they do not reflect on injustice further afield and how they might be agents of change.

The inspection findings indicate that Potten End Church of England VC School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
Inspection date	31 January 2024	URN	117414
VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary controlled	Pupils on roll	205
Diocese	St Albans		
MAT/Federation			
Headteacher	Denise Kennedy		
Chair	Robert Dale		
Inspector	Nicola Flower	No.	2224