

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Bentworth Church of England Primary School

Address Church Street, Bentworth, Alton, GU34 5RE

School vision

We warmly welcome each and every child to St. Mary's and have high aspirations for all our pupils. Through love, we nurture a sense of purpose, a direction, a meaning of life. Through respect, we celebrate that everyone is unique and special. Through belonging, we commit to our families and communities so that together we can flourish.

School strengths

- The school's Christian vision, expressed through values, and underpinned by biblical understanding, is deeply rooted in all decision-making. It forms the foundation of relationships, enabling pupils and adults to flourish within, and beyond, the school community.
- Pupil leaders, nurtured by adults, are active in listening to the voices of those across the school. In an outward looking school, they are well-supported to drive change within areas they identify as being important to them.
- Committed to the flourishing of all people, mental health and wellbeing is a heartfelt priority for school leaders. This is evident in the way that pupils, staff and parents are valued, loved and cared for.
- Collective worship provides a special time of spiritual flourishing. Rooted in biblical understanding and the school's wellbeing programme, it is thoughtfully planned and fully inclusive.
- The school is a 'beacon' within the local community, further enriched by effective partnerships. The close relationship with nearby churches deepens the spiritual development of pupils and adults.

Areas for development

- Develop assessment in religious education (RE) in order to enhance curriculum coverage and progress.
- Continue to embed a deepening understanding of spirituality so that opportunities for spiritual development are understood and planned for across the curriculum.
- Enhance monitoring and evaluation through the focus of the school's Christian vision and values. This is to capture the distinctiveness of being a Church school and its impact on further priorities.

Inspection findings

The school's Christian vision, expressed through the biblically rooted values of love, respect and belonging, permeates throughout the school and into the local community. St. Mary's is a welcoming and inclusive school, where every person is known as an individual, and every voice is important. An example of this is the creation of a landscape strategy, which has been developed by feedback from across the school and local area. This features a devoted space for spiritual reflection, for the benefit of the whole community. Christian values lie at the heart of all decisions and relationships. This is modelled in the care and compassion shown by pupils and adults.

Testament to the vision and values, staff and governors have a strong sense of belonging within the school and church community. They love the work they lead. In their service to the school, governors ensure that all policies reflect the vision and values. This is evidenced particularly well in the school's behaviour policy that establishes a strong culture of living well together. Governors maintain a close rapport with class teachers through their regular meetings, rooted in the wellbeing of everyone. United in their high aspirations, governors and leaders provide good support in a caring, Christian manner. While the vision enhances the life of the school, it is not used explicitly in monitoring and evaluating the distinctiveness of the school as a Church school.

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is deeply rooted in the school's Christian vision. Parents rightly speak with enthusiasm about the school's values focused curriculum that nurtures pupils to 'thrive and contribute positively to the world'. Topics, such as the Great Barrier Reef, ignite pupils' learning, contributing to their committed care for the planet. Supported by recent training, led by the diocese, the school is growing in their understanding of spirituality. Using the analogy of a window, the curriculum planning provides an empowering focus on the world, stimulating pupils' spiritual reflection. Digital resources are successfully used to enable pupils to encounter people and places globally. This supports them in recognising their sense of belonging. However, at present, there is not a sufficiently systematic approach for planning spiritual development across the curriculum.

Collective worship provides a special time of spiritual flourishing. It is a joyful, collaborative and reflective occasion, fully inclusive of everyone. Pupils actively engage in reflection and discussion, demonstrating a good understanding of the Bible. These spiritual experiences are further enriched by visitors from the local church community. Led with expertise and energy, collective worship is thoughtfully planned. It is successfully aligned to the school's wellbeing programme. Worship songs and Bible verse are effectively linked with key themes, deepening pupils' understanding. Pupils are invited to share their own prayers, associated with the themes they explore. These prayers are heartfelt. The love, which is promoted through the Christian vision, is evident in the practical support that is provided to pupils with additional needs. This amount of care means that every pupil is enabled to participate in worship.

Underpinned by the school's vision of belonging, everyone 'looks out' for one another and everyone has a place here. As testimony to this, leaders plan community events, bringing generations together. People of all ages make the most of any opportunity to come back to the school. Staff appreciate the actions of leaders, who value their hard work. Leaders keep wellbeing at the forefront of their plans and aspirations. This is evidenced in their bespoke programme that has a lasting impression on people's lives. This inspiring initiative, equips people to live life well, even in times of difficulty. It is further enriched by a full range of personalised support and extracurricular activities. The school works hard to ensure that no person is left out from all that is on offer.

Adults in the school appreciate the love and support, provided by leaders. They value the dedicated wellbeing days that enrich the flourishing of everyone. Because of the vision, staff provide academic and pastoral programmes with great love. This provision has a profound impact on people's lives. As an example of the school's value of respect, pupils show an immense pride in their leadership roles. They exemplify care and responsibility for others, as modelled to them by adults within their school and community. Leaders, for example, have been instrumental in developing close and effective connections with local churches. As a result, there are many opportunities for pupils to serve and lead within the church community, across the Christian calendar. Representatives from the church rightly value the contributions made by pupils.

Pupil voice is heard and matters. This includes the significant work led by the school's church council, head pupils, eco-warriors and equality and rights advocates. Supported by dedicated staff, they have an abundance of opportunities to tackle themes of justice and responsibility. Pupils on the school's church council have a fitting understanding of courageous advocacy for social action. This is evident in their vision to learn about various causes and their work to promote awareness, beyond that of raising money.

Together, they ensure that voices and experiences within their school community are well-reflected in their work and leadership. They raise hope and aspiration through their actions within the school and local area. This inspiring work is further enhanced by their flourishing partnership with other Church schools, where pupils actively work and learn together. The school is rightly proud of its outward looking approach. Because of effective partnerships, the school provides valuable opportunities that encourage pupils' aspirations and their transition into the wider world.

RE is held in high regard across the school, led with a wealth of experience. This is evident through the expert support provided to staff, as well as in their passion for teaching this subject. Activities and questions in lessons are well thought out, enabling pupils to discuss, reflect and imagine. In the curriculum, which is taught in dedicated 'blocks' of time, pupils have sufficient opportunities to revisit their previous learning. They have meaningful opportunities to explore key themes, such as freedom and justice. Through their balanced and well-sequenced curriculum, pupils build on key concepts, including community and belonging, through Christianity and different world faiths. Visitors from the church and other faith backgrounds enrich pupils' learning with their knowledge and personally lived examples. They offer diversity, immersing pupils in different religious experiences. These events capture pupils' interest and deepen their understanding. As a result, pupils talk confidently about their learning in RE, recalling key stories from the Bible and different world religions with enthusiasm. RE is well-resourced and detailed planning supports the effective and enthusiastic teaching of this subject. Pupils make sound progress overall. However, current assessment practices do not fully cover the breadth of the RE curriculum. This inhibits the capacity to capture the full range of outcomes in Christianity, world religions and worldviews.

Upheld by the school's Christian vision and values, everyone at St. Mary's is shown that they are of great worth. Pupils of this cherished, rural Church school are well prepared for life in the wider world, and adults feel part of this school family.

The inspection findings indicate that St Mary's Bentworth Church of England Primary School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information

Inspection date	11.01.24	URN	116351
VA/VC/Academy	Voluntary Aided	Pupils on roll	107
Diocese	Winchester and Portsmouth		
MAT/Federation	N/A		
Headteacher	Joanna Ayres		
Chair	Maria Fordyce		
Inspector	Carmella Reece	No.	C.23/24