

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Upper Arley Church of England VC Primary School	
Address	Upper Arley, Bewdley, Worcestershire, Y12 1XA

School vision
<p style="text-align: center;">One community, learning and growing together, sharing God's love.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"I can do all this through Christ because he gives me strength." Philippians 4:13</i></p> <p>God created everyone in his image, and we are all his children. His ultimate aim is for us to grow and succeed in everything we do as his children. It is through the strength that Christ gives that we are able to overcome all challenges and to achieve and flourish in all that we do.</p>
School strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Christian vision is lived and breathed in this united community. The sharing of God's love is clearly seen in action through fruitful relationships at all levels. • There is a strong and positive collaborative working relationship between this school and the Black Pear Trust. This drives a culture of continuous improvement, with children at the heart of every decision. • A restorative approach to all relationships has rebuilt trust so that the community learns and grows together very effectively. • Pupils display a passion for justice and an exceptional drive to share love for one another. This is clearly modelled by the adults who care for them. • Pupils enjoy religious education (RE) and gain a secure knowledge of a range of world faiths through a carefully planned curriculum. This understanding enables them to be deeply respectful of others.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to embed the Christian vision so that the whole community deeply understands the impact of its biblical roots. • Develop a shared understanding and language of spirituality so that it is explicit across the curriculum and beyond. • Ensure that the Christian vision shapes the spiritual experience of collective worship so that it fully enables flourishing.

Inspection findings

Upper Arley Church of England Primary School community has been unified by transformational leadership. Leaders are unafraid to take bold decisions where the children are at the heart, investing deeply in a Christian vision. Strong collaborative relationships within the school and the Black Pear Trust demonstrate an unrelenting desire to live out the vision. This creates a warm and supportive learning community where all take collective responsibility for high expectations of pupils' flourishing. Fruitful partnerships drive a culture of continuous improvement whilst ensuring all relationships are deeply valued, included, and loved.

The sharing of God's love is seen in action through the careful investment in rebuilding relationships with those they serve. During the school's transition to academisation, leaders sought to deeply understand their context and create bespoke solutions to overcome challenges. They drew upon evidence-based research from collaborative partners but diligently ensured the school's Christian foundations remained central to its core. Black Pear Trust talks passionately of the positive effect the school and its Christian principles has had upon their trust-wide practice.

A restored sense of stability has now ensured that all stakeholders feel secure in the school's positive future. They celebrate how open and honest communication has strengthened their connection and delight in a newly developed resilience. They are yet to deeply understand and, therefore, connect how this impact is driven by the biblical roots of the vision. They do not draw instinctively upon the Christian narrative that drives the vision as the foundation for their flourishing.

Recent training from the diocese around spirituality gives staff the confidence to explore their personal views. A shared understanding of spiritual development is beginning to form. Staff and pupils describe an understanding of 'something bigger than us' and connecting with something unique to each individual. Reflection is encouraged and spiritual moments do permeate the day, with time in their natural environment a key curriculum driver. Leaders rightly identify next steps to advance the wider understanding of spirituality across the curriculum. This work is at too early a stage to evaluate. However, staff are enthusiastic to continue the work, inspired by the thought-provoking input so far. The school is using creativity through art and stories about nature to invoke and consolidate a shared language and ideology.

Collective worship unifies the community. Pupils and staff joyfully engage in a spiritual experience. Christian values are meaningfully explored and understood in the context of Bible stories. Pupils often reflect on what impact these stories can have upon their lives. Worship is greatly enhanced by the work of the local church. Parents and pupils talk fondly of 'magical' experiences the community has shared in the church building. They deeply value the dedicated work of the small local ministry team in school. It has had a powerful impact upon their children, where lessons learned are applied in family life. One pupil was moved to write their own 'Bible' about how to be a good person, using Jesus as their example. Pupils are beginning to play an active part in supporting worship. Pupils have formed a committee that is beginning to explore matters of global concern. They respond thoughtfully through prayer, poems and social action within their community. Collective worship is not fully shaped around the vision and its biblical roots. As such, its impact is not explicitly understood as an expression of the vision. This means that staff and pupils are not fully able to recognise that they are truly flourishing because of it.

Relationships within the school are exceptionally strong. Everyone is clearly valued as a child of God. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary because positive relationships are modelled to them by all adults. People beyond the

community also recognise this. They comment that you can ‘spot an Upper Arley pupil due to their care, kindness and respect for their community’. Parents talk about how the school’s vision builds their children’s character, instilling them with values and morals for life. Leaders recognise everyone’s unique inherent worth and all pupils, including those who are vulnerable, have their needs met. This has been achieved through a steadfast determination to be present, listen and adapt to the needs of all pupils. They work diligently and sensitively with families of pupils to overcome barriers to learning. Wellbeing is a priority for all. Governors minute concern for staff and their wellbeing and staff talk about ‘belonging.’ They describe Upper Arley as warm and loving, a place where everyone is supported and helped along the journey through life. They are proud to work at the school. This one community is passionately and compassionately learning and growing together.

This passion ignites action. Pupils see injustice, feel compelled to challenge it within their community, and share God’s love to overcome it. There are powerful individual examples of pupils being agents for change. One decided to give their pocket money to the local church which had been recently burgled. Young Leaders meet and discuss, ‘What would Jesus do?’ They have planned a litter pick to show how important the beauty of their locality is to them. They are starting to focus on diversity within their trust. Heartfelt prayers are written and shared to respond to international conflict or natural disasters. Through strong moral teaching that is embedded, pupils are increasingly aware of the need for greater justice in the wider world.

Religious education (RE) is valued as a core subject. Pupils talk with enthusiasm and pride about their understanding of Christianity, demonstrating an excellent knowledge of Bible stories. They enjoy acting them out to remember them and this is keenly supported by the work of the local church. One pupil has been so inspired, that they brought the Bible as their favourite book for World Book Day. They asked their parents to take them to the library as they did not own one at home. Pupils also show knowledge of a wide range of faiths, including Christianity. Leaders have worked closely with the diocese to plan a well-structured curriculum, mindful of complex mixed age class structures in place. They explore a variety of activities centred around theological and philosophical questions about beliefs. Pupils talk about how important this learning is so that they grow to be respectful citizens of the world.

The inspection findings indicate that Upper Arley Church of England Primary School is living up to its foundation as a church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish.

Information			
Inspection date	14 March 2024	URN	147761
VA/VC/Academy	Academy, former VC	Pupils on roll	65
Diocese	Worcester		
MAT/Federation	Black Pear Trust		
Headteacher	Louise Low		
Chair	Freda Griffith		
Inspector	Nadia Underwood	No.	C.23/24