

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Ilam VA Church of England School

Vision

Ilam C of E School, is a close-knit loving family with a heart to see all in our care flourish. Within a warm, nurturing environment our children become caring, courageous, respectful individuals. Through our Christian values our children aspire for the very best for themselves and our community.

‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’ (Jeremiah 29:11)

Strengths

- Leaders ensure that the Christian vision and values are a lived-out aspect of each day. They are woven into the daily activities and routines of the school. As a result, pupils and adults flourish as confident and caring members of the school community.
- Positive relationships and partnerships rooted in love and care permeate this school. This caring culture results in pupils and adults being nurtured.
- Collective worship is central to the life of the school. The rhythm of worship brings an understanding of scripture, faith and God’s love for each person. These experiences provide opportunities for spiritual growth.
- The school’s approach to spirituality enables pupils an understanding of self, others and the world around them. The school maximises its wonderful setting to strengthen pupils’ understanding of their environment.
- Inclusion is a positive feature of the school. The welcoming culture of the school ensures that each person is accepted and celebrated. Pupils receive support and care in a warm and nurturing setting. The school seeks to develop the whole pupil.

Development Points

- Evaluate the current religious education (RE) offer. Ensure breadth, balance, assessment and high expectations are central to teaching and learning.
- Create opportunities for pupils to understand and challenge injustice and lead on social action. This is in order that they develop a deeper understanding of issues facing the wider world.
- Provide first hand experiences for pupils to gain insight and understanding of worldwide views and faiths. This is so pupils may foster respect for people with different backgrounds, traditions and beliefs.



Inspection Findings

Nestled within its beautiful surroundings, Ilam Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School stands as a beacon of love and care. Its warm and welcoming Christian ethos is testament to the work taking place. The Christian vision lies at the heart of its daily work and acts as the lens through which staff and pupils view the school. School leaders and governors ensure that actions and decisions are guided by the vision. Pupils know the vision and are able to express their understanding of it in their lives. Care, courage, forgiveness, respect and resilience are Christian values that feature within the school and are known by pupils and staff. Pupils explain that these values are a guide to show how to live and behave. Likewise, parents and carers fully support and understand the vision and values of the school. They recognise how the Christian vision sets the tone of the school. It enables parents to endorse the same values and help pupils grow in their Christian lives.

A well-established curriculum with a strong focus on outdoor education enables pupils to have unique and beneficial experiences. Many opportunities allow pupils to interact with the natural world around them. Such examples include a spirituality day allowing quiet time, reflective time and the opportunity to be 'in the moment' with nature. Although a clearly understood definition of spirituality exists across the school, only a minority of pupils related their experiences to God. Enrichment is important to the school with a range of additional learning opportunities. Art, dance, baking, film club and outdoor learning are amongst the many offers. The school demonstrates a high level of commitment towards those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Differences are accepted and celebrated. Appropriate curriculum adaptations support the most vulnerable in their learning. The school strives to ensure each child can be the very best version of themselves. They accept that their role is to develop the whole person and provide opportunities for everyone to thrive. Governors act appropriately in monitoring the curriculum and discussing impact. They are knowledgeable and want the best for every pupil.

Collective worship strongly reflects the vision and values of the school. A range of worship styles enable adults and pupils to effectively experience worship that leads to their personal spiritual flourishing. Pupils are able to refer to the school's vision and articulate its place in their lives. Worship provides an inclusive and invitational opportunity to reflect and learn. Pupils lead in prayer, song and affirmation of the school motto. They declare and sign their motto, 'Learning, achieving and thriving as a school family through God's love.' Collective worship is strengthened by the fruitful relationships with local places of worship. Regular visitors to the school use creative methods to deliver worship. Whether through drama, music or puppets, pupils connect and understand the messages being delivered. Regular opportunities to visit the local church are important to pupils and the community. Parents express the joy of attending services delivered by pupils. The worship council of pupils talk with excitement: 'We help others connect with God.' The school's 'Good Samaritan' initiative rewards pupils who demonstrate school values. Prayer is a valued and a consistent part of daily life at the school. A range of prayers are known and used each and every day. The school's approach to worship and prayer enables pupils to grow spiritually.

Through its vision and associated values, the school empowers pupils to be responsible citizens. As 'wombles' for the locality, pupils proactively protect and preserve the beauty of the area. Pupils have planted trees to support their mission to enhance the local woodland areas. Pupils have presented and shared harvest donations to be used by the church community. The school has taken further action in supporting a number of local and national charities. From bake sales to wearing jeans, pupils can ably explain the need to act responsibly. Support shown to a staff member who completed a marathon reinforces pupils' understanding of the positive differences which can be made. Pupils' understanding of injustice across the wider world, however, is less developed.

Leaders ensure that staff are trained and supported in delivering RE. Strong links with the diocese support the school's capacity to ensure that pupils are well taught in the subject. Awareness and training enable a greater confidence. A range of teaching approaches and suitable adaptations enable pupils to access the learning. Pupils speak confidently about their learning in RE. They are able to explain how the subject also helps them to develop and explore their own values and beliefs. Pupils use appropriate religious vocabulary to describe their growing knowledge. They are enthusiastic about the subject and explain its



impact on their lives. As a consequence of monitoring, leaders have begun a review and revision of the RE curriculum. This is in order to ensure that pupils retain a greater depth of knowledge and understanding of their learning. Monitoring is not sufficiently regular and effective to always identify accurately the standards of teaching, learning and assessment. The content of the curriculum is appropriate covering a range of worldviews and world religions, including Christianity. However, opportunities for pupils to experience visits and visitors that bring subject knowledge to life are limited.

Ilam School is a place of love and care. Due to its size and rural setting, staff members know pupils well. The small number of pupils on roll results in strong healthy relationships at all levels. Members of the school community are rightly proud of their school. 'We're like one big family' is a recurring message. The Christian vision and supporting values create a deeply embedded sense of the school being one loving community. Governors are proactive in their approach to supporting the school. Their annual questionnaire for staff provides a real insight. Governors speak with every member of staff in order to gather their thoughts and opinions. Actions taken by governors such as the 'wellbeing day' initiative illustrate the love and care shown to the staff team. The school's further outreach work reaffirms this. Such examples include providing lunch for villagers and inviting them to school productions. Parents are full of praise for the school and the impact it has on their wider lives. They value the many opportunities that are offered to engage in school life. Activities include visits to the church to mark the festivals of Harvest, Christmas, Easter and the Leavers' service. Parents appreciate the impact the school has on their children being able to navigate the most difficult and challenging moments in their lives outside the school. 'I hope my child will remember this part of her life. They get a good foundation here,' is typical of parental feedback.

Information

Address	Orchard View, Ilam, Ashbourne DE6 2AZ		
Date	23 rd October 2024	URN	860-3438
Type of school	Voluntary Aided	No. of pupils	42 (+6 Nursery)
Diocese	Lichfield		
MAT/Federation			
Headteacher	Emily Johnson		
Chair of Governors	Jon Cushing		
Inspector	Shaun Miles		