

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Mepal and Witcham Church of England Primary School

Vision

“Be kind and loving to each other.” Ephesians 4:32 (ICB)

Together, we CARE!

Personal Development: Community, Appreciation, Respect, Empathy (CARE)

Scholarship: Courage, Aspiration, Resilience, Excellence (CARE)

Mepal and Witcham CE Primary School is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. It has the following notable strengths.

Strengths

- The school’s Christian vision is fully understood and clearly articulated by those in the school community. The CARE acronym ensures it is relevant to even the youngest learners. Consequently, it is the bedrock of school life.
- Mepal and Witcham is a caring, inclusive and welcoming school. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and disability (SEND), are enabled to prosper in their learning and personal development.
- Pupils are valued and respected and this defines how they treat one another with care, according to the school’s vision. As a result, behaviour is exemplary.
- Effective partnerships with the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust and the diocese education team strengthen all aspects of school life.

Development Points

- Ensure leaders, including governors, monitor and evaluate the impact of the school’s Christian vision. This is to ensure the vision remains central to the continued long term success of this school as a Church school.
- Embed the newly developed religious education (RE) curriculum. This is to deepen pupils’ understanding of Christianity, and a range of faiths and worldviews.
- Continue to develop the school’s shared understanding of spirituality. This is so rich opportunities for spiritual development are evident throughout school life including collective worship.



Inspection Findings

The school's Christian vision, rooted in scripture, empowers pupils and adults to live their lives through acts of kindness. The shared commitment to the vision has brought the school community together. This follows significant changes in staff, including the appointment of a new headteacher. His relentless drive, supported by the committed team around him, has taken the school on a rapid journey of improvement. The thoughtfully crafted CARE values define the school's ethos and motivate pupils and adults to care in order to succeed. This happy and inclusive school is enhanced by working in partnership with the trust, putting children at the heart of everything they do. However, leaders including governors are not rigorously monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school as a Church school.

The curriculum is an expression of the school's CARE values, shaping pupils' personal development and academic achievement. Strategic curriculum decisions, driven by the school and trust's shared vision for excellence, enable pupils to thrive and develop a love for learning. Those leading and teaching SEND and/or vulnerable pupils are well supported by the trust giving pupils equal opportunity to prosper. There are a variety of clubs available through the school's extra-curricular offer. This creates a range of learning experiences for pupils which has a positive impact on their development including social skills. The school has begun to explore how they can support pupils' spiritual understanding and development by introducing a shared language of spirituality. Dedicated time for pupils to explore self, others, beauty and beyond is beginning to enable pupils to develop self-awareness, empathy and imagination. The newly created 'library for pleasure', whose walls artistically display the creation story, includes a spiritual nook. This special area provides a space for refuge and reflection; much valued by pupils as a place where they feel safe and accepted. Further reflection spaces are available in the new sensory garden and within classrooms. Pupil and adults' understanding of spiritual development is not sufficiently developed and embedded to facilitate spiritual growth across the school.

Collective worship is well planned, engaging and invitational. Pupils participate in praise, choral worship and prayer on a daily basis at the end of the school day. Christian values are explored through Bible stories, with opportunities for pupils to demonstrate curiosity and open mindedness when exploring life's big questions and national events. Consequently, pupils look forward to collective worship as a chance to feel calm, relax and reflect. They feel comfortable with stillness and silence and engage in reflection and spontaneous prayer in the central spiritual area. In the absence of a vicar, the school are well supported by a foundation governor who is a member of the local church. Pupil CARE ambassadors and staff are encouraged and supported to participate in and lead elements of worship. Once every half term, the school community value being brought together to celebrate pupils' achievements. They also appreciate the opportunity to celebrate special festivals in the Christian calendar held in the neighbouring church. Nevertheless, leaders are not clear about the impact of worship on pupils' and adults' spiritual development. Robust systems are not in place to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness.

Staff and pupils care deeply about each other at Mepal and Witcham. Respectful relationships form the basis of pupils and adults treating each other well. Explicitly taught Christian values, modelled positive behaviour and purposeful routines permeate school life, creating exemplary standards of behaviour. Families feel welcome and included; rightly appreciating staff who spend time getting to know them as well as their children. Staff feel trusted and valued. Professional training opportunities, facilitated by the trust and diocese, further develop best practice. This aids the work of the school as a Church school and is particularly evident in the assistance given to those who are vulnerable and/or disadvantaged. The trust is committed to creating an environment that promotes good



mental health, for example, access to a mental health first aider. The trust's policy for staff recognises that health and wellbeing are important to success at work. The level of support the trust gives to leaders during challenging times is testament to this.

An active culture of positive relationships with responsibility towards others is intrinsic to the school's Christian vision and CARE values. Pupil CARE ambassadors act as role models, ably holding positions of responsibility which other children aspire to. Pupils actively engage in practical fundraising activities for community causes including a foodbank in the local church and a hedgehog rescue project. The school's curriculum provides some opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding of injustice. For example, through studying key characters in history that have fought for human rights. As a result, pupils are beginning to think, ask questions and be informed about issues in the world. This is starting to support them in becoming agents of change.

RE has a high profile and priority. Leaders' evaluation of the quality of RE teaching and learning, and curriculum provision, has rightly identified gaps in children's learning. This has led to the recent adoption of a well-sequenced, relevant and diverse curriculum. Pupils explore lived experiences, through a range of faiths and worldviews. Child friendly characters introduced through the new curriculum are supporting pupils to explore theological, philosophical and sociological questions relating to RE. However, as this is in the early stages, pupils are not demonstrating a secure understanding of Christianity or a range of faiths and worldviews. The diocese and trust support the school well with training to develop RE subject knowledge; integral to its implementation. Working in partnership with another local school is also enabling reflection and shared good practice.

Information

Address	Brangehill Lane. Mepal, Ely CB6 2AL		
Date	19 November 2024	URN	141212
Type of school	Academy	No. of pupils	100
Diocese/District	Ely		
MAT/Federation	Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust		
Headteacher	Corey Snuggs		
Chair of Governors	Joy Walker		
Inspector	Nicola James		