

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Sir Robert Hitcham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School and Nursery, Debenham

Vision

At Sir Robert Hitcham, we aim to become more like the person Jesus, who values community, respect and compassion. A Church school community of kind, caring, friendly and creative learners; working together to ensure that the whole community flourishes. We are a community who are inspired by Jesus, the son of God, but also by Jesus, a historical figure and moral teacher. We demonstrate respect and compassion to all members of our community and the environment; showing willingness to forgive and learn from mistakes that are made.

Striving to be more like Jesus.

Strengths

- The Christian vision shapes and guides the welcoming and inclusive environment of this school. It underpins all that leaders do and enables pupils and adults to flourish.
- Collective worship is a valued part of the school day. It is an expression of the vision and of the school's identity. Worship is well supported by members of the local churches, enriching the spiritual life of the school.
- There is a deep sense of care and responsibility for others amongst the entire school community. This is directly because they are 'striving to be like Jesus'. It creates an ethos within school where it is a safe space for pupils to explore their own beliefs and values.
- Religious education (RE) is regarded as an important subject that enhances appreciation of our multicultural world. Pupils develop their understanding by responding to big questions. They speak about their learning with enthusiasm.

Development Points

- Ensure the governing body conducts its monitoring against the Christian vision and as part of an evaluation process. This is to enable governors to have a deeper understanding of how it is supporting pupils and adults to thrive.
- Embed pupils' understanding of spirituality and the language needed to discuss it. This is so that it can become an intrinsic and planned part of the curriculum, enhancing spiritual flourishing.
- Extend opportunities for pupils to identify and explore issues of justice and fairness. This is so they may confidently and independently further their personal influence to become agents of change.



Inspection Findings

'Striving to be more like Jesus' inspires this school community to be the best that they can be. Although it has not been in place for long, this vision is a success because it is already having a positive impact. This is because it was formed seeking the views of pupils, parents, staff and governors. This has ensured it is relevant and purposeful in the everyday life of the school. It underpins the core values of community, respect and compassion, as well as the long-established 'rainbow pledges'. The vision is clearly understood and lived out by pupils and staff. Leaders celebrate three Bible stories as Jesus' examples of their key values. This provides pupils with a good reference point and enables them to speak of community, respect and compassion with genuine understanding. Governors make a valuable contribution to the school through their regular visits. They know the school well but do not formally evaluate their observations to develop further as a Church school. Partnerships are successful and enrich school life. For example, Debenham, St Mary Magdalene's Church and The Forge Church are an intrinsic part of school life. They both contribute positively to worship and the RE curriculum. Pupils visit St Mary Magdalene's Church for services and to learn. The diocese supports the school in its development. It also provides specific training on RE as well as opportunities to meet with other Church school staff.

The carefully crafted curriculum provides rich learning experiences including school visits and extra-curricular activities. Its continuing development is shaped by the Christian vision, providing further opportunities for pupils to thrive. Staff guide pupils in their learning and encourage them to reflect. Pupils are able to think deeply, making connections in their learning with the world around them. Forest school is a successful way in which pupils engage with their outdoor environment and experience spiritual growth. This is the time when they can appreciate the joy and wonder of nature and acknowledge how it makes them feel. Whilst the school has a shared understanding of spirituality, it is in the early stages. Consequently, it is not planned for within the curriculum. The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is finely tuned to meet the needs of each individual. This is because the school knows its pupils well. Staff, and pupils, ensure that no-one is left out. Adaptations are made to ensure that whatever the needs of each pupil, they will always be part of the school community.

Collective worship is recognised as an essential part of the school day. Currently worship is held outside, and this is enriching spiritual growth. As worship starts there is a tangible sense of peace and calm. These moments of quiet personal reflection allow pupils and adults to think deeply. As a result, worship enables them to develop spiritually. The school environment adds an extra dimension to pupils' spiritual growth, for example, as they watch autumn leaves fall or a rainbow appear. Pupils set the atmosphere of worship by presenting the Christian symbols of a cross, a Bible and a candle. Worship is carefully structured and is an expression of the school's vision. Relationships with local churches and church groups enrich worship. Children especially enjoy Bible stories and role play during worship. These enable them to develop a deeper understanding of Christian values and inspires them to be 'more like Jesus'.

The school's vision encourages good behaviour and the 'rainbow pledges' focus on what behaving well looks like. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is very good. The school celebrates pupils who have put the 'rainbow pledges' or values into action in celebration worship. It matters to pupils that they notice the best efforts of one another. At break times, there is a sense of family and caring. Children play well and look out for each other. Pupils with SEND are included and supported by their peers. Staff carry out daily wellbeing checks with pupils. They give them practical tools to support good mental health. These include mindfulness and calming breathing techniques. The staff are a strong team who demonstrate care and respect. They are very effective role models for their pupils. The wellbeing governor is also a trusted and respected support to the school.



Pupils rise to their responsibilities and make a difference. For example, the eco warriors are active in caring for their environment. They have their own notice board in school, and they carry out litter picks. This inspires some to continue this in the village. Pupils learn about historical issues of justice, for example, equal rights and racism. They are concerned about inequality and injustice. Pupils also speak very passionately about environmental issues such as the deforestation of palm oil plantations. Staff encourage pupils to consider where they can have a positive impact. As a result, they have supported national initiatives such as toilet twinning and Jeans for Genes day. Pupil voice is heard and valued; however, action is mostly led by staff.

RE is well led and has a significant status within school. The weekly lessons are balanced, well-structured and build upon prior learning. A range of religions are effectively taught. Working walls around the school demonstrate a piece of work from each section of a unit of work, as well as key vocabulary. This supports further learning and enables pupils to make links with different curriculum areas. Pupils and parents rightly agree that RE is a valued subject. They recognise that it is important to learn that people have different beliefs in a multicultural world. The vision has created a culture whereby school is a safe place to speak freely about religion and to disagree respectfully. Visits to the church to learn about Christianity enrich lessons on Advent, Easter and Pentecost. The diversity of Christianity is studied and some pupils learn what it means to be a Christian in different parts of the world. Pupils' progress is checked each half term. Pupils with SEND are supported to succeed in RE. Assessments and work in learning journals show that pupils make good progress. Some pupils from each class have the role of RE ambassadors and speak confidently about their learning. They demonstrate that RE is not only contributing to their academic development but also their spiritual flourishing. The RE subject leader oversees assessment through monitoring. This is carried out in a variety of ways and ensures that staff are confident in their subject knowledge.

Information

Address	School Corner, Debenham, Suffolk, IP14 6PL		
Date	21 October 2024	URN	124774
Type of school	Maintained Voluntary Aided	No. of pupils	161
Diocese	St Edmundsbury & Ipswich		
Headteacher	Laura Dumolo		
Chair of Governors	Colin Tapscott		
Inspector	Christina Galletly		