

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Herne Church of England Infant and Nursery School

Vision

Our school family: learning, loving and growing together rooted in God's love

Herne Church of England Infant and Nursery 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

- Herne Infant and Nursery school is a place of love and growth. The Christian vision derived from the parable of the mustard seed is lived out in this nurturing Church school. The tangible sense of this as a safe and secure haven is recognised by all different parts of the school community.
- Leaders and staff are deeply committed to serving this school. Their work with the pupils and their families strengthens relationships and ensures the flourishing of the whole child.
- Worship is a joyful and uplifting part of everyday life at Herne. Carefully and appropriately planned worship provides pupils and staff with a time for reflection, calm and togetherness. The word 'simcha' (shared joy) is rightly used by the school to describe this time.
- Pupils take responsibility for each other. The school's vision, deeply woven through the whole curriculum, inspires pupils to act positively. Actively supported by caring adults, they lovingly take care of the environment and demonstrate a willingness to serve others.
- At Herne, there is a powerful outward facing but reflective culture. This is driven by the vision of the mustard seed growing into a strong tree.

Development Points

- Develop governors' strategic knowledge and evaluation of the impact of the Christian vision. This is to ensure the ongoing development of Herne as a Church school.
- Build on the strong recent developments in the delivery of the religious education (RE) curriculum. This will further enhance its status within the school. In this way, it will enable pupils to explore deeper ideas, questions and worldview perspectives in their learning.



Inspection Findings

Rooted in the intention that pupils are welcomed and loved, leaders nurture a community where growth and flourishing are paramount. This school is a vibrant expression of its Christian vision. Pupils and staff show a deep understanding of the values and vision, derived from the parable of the mustard seed. As a result, there is a powerful sense of belonging and acceptance of differences which permeates this compassionate school community. Policies, procedures and the daily life of the school are rooted in this Christian vision. This can be seen in the implementation of the behaviour policy and the regular adaptations made to the curriculum for the pupils' benefit. Leaders are passionate about reaching local schools to share good practice, just as branches stretch out on a tree. Strong partnerships locally and across the diocese, such as The East Kent Learning Alliance, support this culture of growth for professionals. The church and governors are supportive and actively engaged in school life. Carefully planned monitoring and evaluation of school improvement actions provides leaders and governors with evidence of impact and areas for development. However, there is a lack of focus on the impact of the vision within this work. This means that governors are not always clear on how Herne is developing as a Church school. There is, however, an absolute desire and commitment to every child achieving in their own unique way.

Inspired by the vision of growth rooted in love, leaders and staff have created an exciting and inspiring curriculum. This is regularly adapted and tailored to the needs of the pupils. It offers rich experiences that foster pupils' curiosity and interests. Aspects such as weekly COOL time, 'continuing our own learning', are driven by the Christian vision for all to grow in their learning. Use of the school's dedicated outdoor spaces, the hive and the wildlife area is an integral part of the curriculum. This provides pupils with regular opportunities to be immersed in the wonders of God's creation. Visits, visitors and use of the local area further enhance the pupils' learning. Training has enabled staff to confidently explore moments of spirituality as they arise. There are also planned opportunities within the curriculum. As a result, pupils are beginning to be able to recognise moments of awe, wonder and stillness. Staff have an in-depth understanding of pupils' learning needs, driven by a commitment to ensure that every pupil thrives. Consequently, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), as well as those who are vulnerable, receive the support they need to succeed.

Collective worship provides pupils and staff with an inspiring and happy start to each day. Leaders ensure that the whole school community feels welcome and comfortable in worship. There is a daily pattern which gives pupils a sense of security and familiarity. Local clergy and church members support the worshipping life of the school on a weekly basis. The many opportunities for singing, along with accompanying signing and actions, are enjoyed by pupils and staff alike. There is a genuine sense of shared joy at these times of togetherness. The use of the Bible and stories linked to everyday examples expands pupils' understanding of the school vision. Storytelling and space for both talking and thinking results in even the youngest pupils being able to access worship time. They are gently challenged by important questions such as, 'How can you show someone they are loved?' Staff value worship and the I wonder questions, sharing these messages regularly with pupils throughout the day. This supports the pupils in developing their own sense of spirituality.

The deeply embedded vision of the mustard seed tree creates a culture of love and nurture for pupils, staff and families. Leaders and staff model the Christian values and vision through their interactions on a daily basis. Parents value the support and care that the school provides, especially in challenging times. As a result, there are strong relationships across the school community and people flourish because of this. The mental health of staff and pupils is a high priority at Herne. Leaders have an unwavering determination to adapt both the curriculum and the



delivery of this in order to deliver what pupils need to thrive. Carefully thought-out policies, procedures and wellbeing programmes, rooted in the vision, provide opportunities for pupils to develop as individuals. Professional development is very highly valued and this vision-driven approach applies equally well to staff.

Strong emphasis is put on the importance of the school values and how these can be demonstrated in everyday life. In this way, a culture of individual responsibility pervades the school, from the early years upwards. Pupils take on many leadership roles across the school including lunchtime monitors and worship, play and class leaders. Along with the school council TED team, 'together everybody decides', this creates an active culture of responsibility towards others. Pupils speak enthusiastically of the importance of making a difference to others and the world around them. The curriculum also provides opportunities for this, thus ensuring the pupils begin to learn about ethical choices and actions at an early age.

Leaders continue to develop a RE curriculum that meets the changing needs of the pupils in their care. A variety of displays around the school, along with class big books and pupil files demonstrate the range of RE learning experienced by the pupils. Starting each unit with a big question helps pupils build confidence and their ability to express their views. Pupils enjoy lessons and talk about how RE makes them think. The youngest pupils in the school remember well known Bible stories and confidently retell them. Older pupils can articulate the importance of faith for a believer and the impact this has on their lives. However, their knowledge of religious and non-religious worldviews other than Christianity is limited. Pupils' understanding of Christianity as a diverse global faith is developing. The committed RE subject leader values the effective support from diocesan training. Recognising that staff have varying levels of experience in RE, the subject leader disseminates this training effectively to build confidence and expertise. Monitoring and evaluation has led to changes in curriculum planning and assessment procedures. This is positively impacting on pupils' learning.

Information

Address	Palmer Close, Herne, Herne Bay, Kent, CT6 7AH		
Date	23 January 2025	URN	118710
Type of school	Voluntary Controlled	No. of pupils	270
Diocese	Canterbury		
Headteacher	Executive Headteacher Elizabeth Thomas-Friend Head of School Lucy StJohn		
Chair of Governors	Liz Thundow		
Inspector	Sarah Alexander		