



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Chilham St Mary's Church of England Primary School	
Address	School Hill, Chilham, Canterbury, CT4 8DE

School vision

We are a diverse, loving community, committed to providing firm foundations built on God's love and forgiveness for all. Within our family of learners, guided by Jesus' example, we nurture and encourage every individual to have the confidence to achieve their own potential, now and in the future.

The parable of The Prodigal Son in Luke's Gospel (Luke 15:11–32) provides the school with the basis for the school's Christian values of love, trust, respect, honesty, forgiveness and perseverance.

School strengths

- The Christian vision is effective in embracing the school's community context. Leaders' strategic actions, decided through the lens of their Christian values, enable everyone to flourish. The life of the school is deeply rooted in a strong Christian vision. This is understood by all members of the community who feel valued and welcomed.
- Through the vision, leaders actively drive a culture that supports and nurtures all. Support for vulnerable pupils and those who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is good. The rich provision for nurturing the individual is a strength.
- Worship provides peaceful and reflective opportunities for personal spiritual growth. Collective worship is inspirational, invitational and the school's distinctive Christian vision and shared values are embedded within. Pupils and adults value the time to come together as a school.
- Relationships within the school and community are excellent. The wellbeing of everyone is a core strength and this creates an overwhelming sense of peace, respect and Christian love. Kindness is in abundance and no request is seen as too difficult to accommodate.
- Leaders have been effective in developing a well sequenced and balanced religious education (RE) curriculum. Both teachers and pupils enjoy lessons. The curriculum builds upon prior learning and pupils recall their lessons well.

Areas for development

- Expand the scope of activities for pupils to develop as agents of change to include national and global communities.
- Further extend opportunities in RE, for pupils to develop a deeper understanding of the impact of religious and non-religious worldviews.
- Further enhance opportunities for spiritual development so pupils develop deeper personal insights into their own individual beliefs during collective worship.

Inspection findings

Chilham St Mary's is a school where all are welcome, made to feel special and treated with kindness. It lives out an embedded Christian vision with thoughtfulness and purpose. Relationships are developed through the key values of love, trust, respect, honesty, forgiveness and perseverance. Pupils understand the source of the vision and know the associated values. As a result, they are able to make links between the examples set by Jesus and some of the values that express the school's vision. Leaders recognise the needs of the community and successfully adapt its core offer, keeping the vision central to decision making. Governors are insightful and understand the school well. They are highly committed and together with senior leaders drive the vision forward. The vision is particularly well lived out through the many ways in which the school supports and nurtures vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). As a result, the pupils flourish here.

The school's vision enables pupils to reach their potential through a curriculum that prepares them for future readiness. Big questions are used to excite pupils to learn and encourage them to explore different subjects. For example, pupils thoughtfully reflect on their art, inspired by the question of God's love for them and develop their own ideas. Collaboration between staff means barriers to learning can be quickly identified and the curriculum can be adapted. Leaders respect and listen to the views of staff to further enhance pupil well being. For example they created nurture nests around the school to support vulnerable pupils and develop confidence. Inspired by the loving community and built on God's love, the school has a number of partnerships. These local collaborations, are strong and beneficial in supporting the school to have firm foundations. For example, the church supports the forest school by allowing access to their grounds. Consequently, forest school sessions offer thrilling chances for pupils to explore the relationship with themselves and others, fostering spiritual growth. Teachers and support staff are committed to the pupils and there is a proactive culture of learning and shared purpose. As a result pupils thrive here and enjoy coming to the school.

Pupils are active in running a school council, worship and looking after the environment. This gives them opportunities to be leaders of change. They passionately advocate for environmental care and acknowledge their responsibility in shaping the future of our planet. For example, the school council raised money for a local animal charity to support the village. They have an understanding of justice through some of their local social action work, such as their ramble to raise money for children in need. These activities support the pupils to develop perseverance and love. Leaders plan for pupils to explore the local area and they make effective use of the rich history and rural location. This leads to enriched lessons and a sense of place in the local community. Pupils enjoy these planned and spontaneous opportunities, however their deeper understanding of the world beyond their locality is not yet developed.

Collective worship is invitational, reflective and provides the school with opportunities to be at peace. Leaders plan carefully with a detailed overview ensuring all values are covered. Adults and pupils feel a sense of purpose in coming together to hear a message, and to reflect and respond. Adults say they value the time together. Respect for one another is a key part of the worship, especially when reflective moments are shared. Worship leaders help to light a candle, read passages and say prayers. They also help to plan the worship and feedback to the headteacher afterwards. As a result, worship is more interactive and pupils enjoy this level of engagement, deepening their spiritual understanding. The school supports less confident pupils to take part in practical ways. One such example, is where they roll a dice to choose a pre-written gathering together message, which the school then responds to. They enjoy going to a dedicated garden that contains visual representations of the school vision. The school has thought about ways in which pupils can spiritually grow. For example, in each classroom pupils access dedicated worship areas.

They leave prayers and their concerns in worry and prayer boxes around the school. However, these areas are not fully developed. Pupils are unsure of what happens as a result of using them, so spiritual development is incidental rather than planned for. Chances to deepen spiritual growth in the curriculum can be missed. For example time to reflect and develop personal responses are limited. Questions do not yet support pupils deepen their understanding or expand their opinions. As a result, pupils cannot yet speak about their own thoughts with confidence. The local clergy enhance worship. There are regular visits to the church to support pupils learn about key Christian festivals and the church year.

Parents praise the school. They are appreciative of the individual care that is offered to their children and how the school accommodates their needs. The school, in its commitment to welcome a diverse community and show love to all, has secured excellent relationships. There is a strong culture of trust. Staff and parents speak of a family and community where everyone is treated with kindness. In living out the vision of nurture and encouragement, they have created a sense of togetherness. The school takes a personalised approach to well-being and supports the individual with their mental health. As a result of nurturing spaces, time to talk, some specialist support and a restorative approach to behaviour, all feel cherished. One outcome of this is that pupils and staff grow in confidence and in turn become more successful learners.

School leaders have considered the local context. They have based the RE curriculum on a regionally agreed syllabus and the Understanding Christianity resource. They have not fully developed opportunities to work beyond the locality to enhance an understanding of diversity within the Christian faith. They work with the local church for example, but their work with a national charity is at an early stage. Staff receive regular training through the Diocese of Canterbury, so that their skills are up to date. Leaders support the teachers and positively promotes RE. They monitor lessons and books frequently and use these findings to tailor staff training and check the effectiveness of the curriculum. As a result, staff are confident and knowledgeable. Pupils enjoy their lessons and take part with excitement. For example, in the early years foundation stage the pupils were counting the animals into the ark and deciding which animal they would take. They reflect with the teacher on why they have chosen their animal and why it is important to save them. This supported their understanding of Bible stories and encouraged them to develop opinions. Pupils feel able to ask questions in lessons and express themselves. They are enabled to do so by the structure of the lessons. The use of the outside areas enhances pupils' spiritual development, where big questions are brought to life through discussion and reflection. Pupils do not have an understanding of the impact of religious and non religious worldviews. Opportunities to develop these in lessons are limited. For example, their knowledge and understanding of world faiths is sound but opportunities to explore difference and diversity are limited. Governors monitor the provision of RE across the school, they feedback their findings to support the cycle of staff development.

These inspection findings indicate that Chilham St. Mary's 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	7 November 2023	URN	118665
VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary controlled	Pupils on roll	89
Diocese	Canterbury		
MAT/Federation			
Headteacher	Delia Cooper		
Chair	Jennie Litten-Brown		
Inspector	Howard Fisher	No.	2223

