

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

High Wych Church of England Primary School

Vision

Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a man who built his house upon a rock. Matthew 7-24

We are a caring, inclusive Christian school who believe that each one of us has the ability to achieve our highest potential, living and learning in the fullness of God. Our mission is to help children build a strong foundation so that they can achieve high levels of success in all they do and to be confident in going forward into the next phase of their learning. We aim to develop a wide range of skills throughout all areas of the curriculum developing each individual's character and talents to the full. We strive for our children to have endurance and courage even when times are challenging. In our school, we encourage all members of the school community to live in God's love where care and respect is shown to everyone.

Strengths

- The Christian vision is well known and understood throughout the school. Leaders, staff and governors are determined that pupils should be provided with a strong educational foundation for their lives.
- The curriculum is a natural expression of the school's Christian vision. It successfully supports pupils with their personal, social and emotional development.
- The school has a richly inclusive and welcoming culture. Adults and pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are treated well and enjoy coming to school.
- Pupils take responsibility for their school and their world because they understand the meaning of justice and injustice. They express this creatively, such as through their own artwork, and change their school and community for the better.
- The religious education (RE) curriculum provides pupils with accurate information about different religions including Christianity. This enables pupils to be thoughtful about the role and place of religion in the world.

Development Points

- Agree a definition of spiritual development that adults and pupils can embrace and aspire to. This is to help leaders, governors and staff to judge how well pupils develop spiritually in their school.
- Extend and improve the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship. This is so that leaders and governors can better understand its impact on adults and pupils, making changes where necessary.



Inspection Findings

The High Wych Christian vision is widely understood and embraced by adults and pupils. There is a shared determination that the school should provide a strong foundation for life. Leaders and governors are clear about why they have chosen this vision. They seek to motivate pupils and adults to have high aspirations for themselves, for others, and for their community and world. Leaders and governors know about the impact of the vision because they are regularly present and approachable around the school. Key decisions, such as how to manage behaviour or plan the curriculum, are considered in the light of the vision. The impact of these decisions is then judged according to how well pupils grow from the school's strong foundation.

The curriculum is thoughtfully planned and executed to reflect the Christian vision. The novels pupils read in English lessons, for example, are chosen to reflect this vision. The systemic use of 'assessment questions' at the beginning of lessons is an explicit expression of the school's vision in action. They enable staff to make sure that lessons are built on the strong foundation of what pupils already know. The planned curriculum promotes the school's values, helping pupils to learn the importance of endurance when faced with life's challenges. There are opportunities for pupils to grow spiritually and emotionally. Examples include the well-kept school allotment and the joyful school choir. Leaders and governors are, however, not clear about the precise characteristics of spiritual growth that they want pupils to experience. This means that it is difficult to judge how well pupils develop spiritually through their immersion in the curriculum.

Acts of worship encourage adults and pupils to reflect upon the school's values from a biblical perspective. This term's focus on selflessness, for example, is presented as both a secular and universal value. In doing this, leaders are careful to make worship inclusive for all as well as reflecting the school's Christian foundation. Pupils love to write prayers and use them in worship. They also enjoy being involved in the dramatic retelling of Bible stories. This makes worship memorable and helps pupils to reflect on its themes throughout the school day. The local church helps regularly with worship. Pupils and their families love to worship as a school community in the adjacent parish church. As a result, pupils, parents and staff speak naturally about the importance of spiritual growth within the school's vision. The nursery and reception class have their own separate acts of worship. These are planned to be consistent with the ethos of worship in the rest of the school. These younger pupils nevertheless enjoy attending worship with the older pupils in church. This helps them to be ready to join in whole-school worship when they are old enough. Leaders and governors listen to feedback from pupils about worship from time to time. They do not, however, have a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating the quality of worship in school. This means that they do not understand sufficiently well the impact that worship has on the school community.

Leaders support teachers to make sure that pupils, including those with SEND, enjoy and do well in school. Leaders take the wellbeing of staff and pupils seriously, providing extra help where necessary. This includes counselling and family therapy. Staff have had training to help pupils with particular needs such as autism or the effects of trauma. Pupils value the 'worry boxes' placed around the school. They know that they can discretely use these boxes to alert staff to their worries, and that someone will respond. The recently constructed 'spiritual garden' enhances pupils' wellbeing by providing a place to unwind away from the lively playground. Pupils take responsibility for their own and each other's safety. The school council, for example, helped pupils to understand what to do if they felt threatened online or elsewhere. This enhances their wellbeing because it makes them less anxious about how to protect themselves. Pupils like school, and levels of attendance are high. This is because leaders and governors are diligent in making school a happy and safe place for pupils to be.

Pupils are eager to take on the responsibilities that the school offers them. These include school council, eco council and roles in the dining hall and playground to make other pupils feel safe. Pupils relish engaging in the



Archbishops' Young Leaders Award, provided by the Church of England and facilitated by the school. This has inspired them to prompt their local council to reinstate road signage and repair play equipment in the park. This feeling of empowerment energises pupils who are proud that they have made their village better for everyone. Leaders invite visitors into school to teach pupils how to stand up against prejudices such as racism. The local church also supports pupils to learn and speak out about global justice and injustice. Every pupil displayed a work of art in church for a recent project about the ethical challenges of climate change. This gave them a sense of collective hope that they can change the world for the better. The school is also committed to promoting sustainable transport. 'Walk to school week' features regularly throughout the school year with the provision of a 'walking bus'. Similar initiatives, such as 'Wheelie Wednesdays' make it fun for families to join in as they improve their world.

Leaders work with the Diocese of St Albans to ensure that the school teaches the locally approved RE syllabus. The RE curriculum is based around 'big questions' and aims to inspire pupils by including art, music and drama. Leaders monitor pupils' work to ensure that the curriculum accurately covers a broad range of religions including Christianity. Pupils learn that Christianity is a global faith. An example of this is the use of a story of self-sacrifice by a Christian from El Salvador. Pupils' learning is enhanced by themed days throughout the year that focus on some central Christian teachings. During 'salvation day' pupils studied Christian beliefs about Easter and different ways Good Friday is celebrated around the world. The RE curriculum provides a range of visits to different places of worship. This helps pupils to learn about, for example, Islam and Hinduism alongside the other religions they study. This makes learning memorable and helps pupils to remember key details about what they have learned. The local church supports the teaching of RE by providing additional lessons such as one about the role of bishops. Children in the early years foundation stage (EYFS) also experience an RE curriculum that is appropriate for their age group.

Information

Address	High Wych, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire. CM21 0JB		
Date	24 September 2024	URN	117398
Type of school	Voluntary Controlled	No. of pupils	219
Diocese/District	St Albans		
MAT/Federation	NA		
Headteacher	Michelle Moulsher (interim headteacher)		
Chair of Governors	Matthew Littlewood		
Inspector	Richard Hopkins		