

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Witchampton Church of England Voluntary Aided First School			
Address	Witchampton, Wimborne, Dorset, BH21 5AP		
Date of inspection	10 July 2019	Status of school	VA first
Diocese	Salisbury	URN	141854

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Excellent
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Excellent
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Good

School context

Witchampton is a first school with 62 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages. The school serves a predominantly rural community.

The school's Christian vision

'Live a life of love just as Jesus loved us' (Ephesians 5,2)

Small School, Big Heart - Making a difference. Our school provides the Christian foundation for children to grow and flourish, whilst inspiring ambition and empowering them to achieve their very best. Our nurturing environment ensures each child becomes a confident and curious life-long learner.

We inspire others, build courage and show respect - all through love.

Key findings

- Pupils and adults are supported to flourish spiritually, emotionally and academically in a culture of holistic care that pervades the school. This transforms the lives of families in the community.
- The Christian vision and values are clearly understood and valued by the whole school community. The vision positively impacts on behaviour, relationships at all levels and pupil attitudes towards academic work.
- Strong Christian leadership allows the school to nurture, share and celebrate its Christian distinctiveness within a multi academy trust.
- A close relationship with the local church provides sustained and constant support. Pupils are able to discuss how worship themes guide their everyday lives. This contributes significantly to their spiritual, moral and personal development, giving them a strong sense of living in a faithful community.
- Religious Education (RE) is taught creatively, allowing pupils regular opportunities to express their views.

Areas for development

- Further extend pupils' spiritual and cultural development by enabling them to encounter people of diverse faiths and beliefs more frequently.
- Expand the recognition and recording of pupils' growing spirituality so that planned and unplanned spiritual encounters can be deepened.
- Develop wider moderation of standards in RE to enable targeted next steps for every pupil and the sharing of strong church school practice with other settings.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?
Inspection findings

Witchampton's vision is firmly rooted in a Christian interpretation of love and is clearly articulated by the whole school community. The head of school's belief in following the teachings of the Bible influences her leadership style which contributes to a culture of care. Staff feel valued within a supportive team. The vision and values infuse all aspects of the school, so that the lives of pupils and families are being transformed. One staff member described feeling two arms wrap around her when she arrives for work. The school is supported by a committed multi-academy trust. The frequent presence of trust members means that they have a deep understanding of the school, allowing members to accurately evaluate performance. This culture of open dialogue supports the development of Witchampton as a distinctively Christian school within the trust. Partnerships with the church, the diocese, the academy trust and the community are highly valued. The church and school have a close working partnership and pupils enjoy weekly visits to the church. This contributes to pupils feeling a valued part of the village community. The enthusiastic vicar knows pupils well and this close relationship supports their spiritual and emotional development. One staff member describes this as, 'working hand-in-hand with the community so that we are all saying the same thing'. School leaders are now in a position to offer support to other church schools with their Christian development.

The curriculum is well planned and continually adapted to meet the needs of pupils, allowing individuals to flourish. Academic progress and achievement typically match or exceed national averages. Pupils feel supported by teachers and encouraged to be the best that they can be. They speak of themselves as being 'God's treasure' which builds their confidence and self-esteem. The enjoyment of deeper thinking across the curriculum is facilitated by the use of 'big questions'. Pupils enjoy this approach to considering subjects and their place in the world. By encouraging pupils to think of their personal responses to challenging questions, teachers are able to link learning to the Christian value of love and pupils talk about 'letting the love out just like Jesus did' when they express their responses to questions. One pupil explained that learning French was a way of showing love and respect to people in different countries, 'like Jesus would want us to do'.

Leaders have introduced strategies to support mental health. The Heartsmart programme gives pupils a vocabulary to explain and control their emotions. This language is used by teachers and the vicar in lessons and worship which enhances the understanding of pupils. Parents appreciate that the school has introduced a buddy system and pupil playtime leaders to promote the school's Christian values of love and respect. One parent said that their child had become more kind and caring during their time at the school. Parents say that the school feels like an extended family and goes 'above and beyond' to support families. One parent described how the school had helped him to 'become a team' with his child. The school has prioritised funding to equip a room providing an exclusive space to support pupils' mental health. An additional teaching assistant to support the needs of the most vulnerable pupils has been appointed. Some pupils attend nurture groups and individual nurture support, as well as Sensory Circuits, an active gym session each morning which prepares them for working in the classroom. The impact of mental health strategies is regularly monitored to ensure that they are contributing to the pupils' ability to flourish in and out of school. Parents say that these strategies have had enormous impact on their children and, in some cases, have transformed family life. One said, 'A small school with a big heart, that is exactly what it is.'

Worship is a joyful experience and marked as a special time in the day. Pupils' experience is enhanced by receiving a rich diet of worship styles, including Open The Book sessions and visits to Wimborne Minster. They are challenged to complete 'takeaway' messages and to think about their own responses to the teachings of Jesus. Pupils' views on worship are collected each week so staff can evaluate its impact. Pupils have a significant ownership of worship. They plan alongside the vicar for celebrations in the church calendar. Class worship is driven by pupils' questioning and responses, ensuring that they have a role in the planning and delivery. Monitors prepare the hall for worship, including choosing music and a new worship team has been set up to further involve pupils further. Pupils are given regular opportunities to pray and reflect.

Class reflection areas displays worship themes and give pupils a space to share their thoughts. The setting up of a whole school reflection area was initiated by pupils and they were instrumental in choosing how this should look, including a cross, bible, prayers, a prayer tree, prayer stones and writing equipment. This contributes to pupils'

understanding of Anglican practice. Pupils requested an outside spiritual area which has been created in a secluded area of the grounds and gives pupils opportunities for stillness, prayer and reflection.

Pupils are aware of their responsibility to help others and can link this to examples in Bible stories. They describe their work with charities as an expression of God's love. Pupils take ownership over their fundraising, including some having their hair cut to raise money and a school project on single use plastic. The school ensures that pupils learn about the exploitation or deprivation that exists behind their support for charities. This contributes to pupil understanding of social action and the personal contribution they can make to God's world.

Religious Education (RE) is well planned and thought provoking. Teaching is supported with professional development and pupils are encouraged to think deeply. Pupils know there are many world faiths and can describe some aspects of a variety of cultures and beliefs. Pupils have a detailed understanding of love and respect and this contributes to their understanding of why all faiths need to be respected.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

Pupils are engaged in their learning and describe lessons as fun. Teachers ask some thought-provoking questions. This allows pupils opportunities to organise and justify their viewpoints and encourages them to hear the views of others. Pupils benefit from a variety of creative teaching styles, including drama, art and music which allows all pupils to access the curriculum. They say that they are often challenged in lessons and 'asked some difficult questions that make us really think'.

Some pupils' work is captured in large class books which are valued by the pupils. The storing of these in class reflection areas helps pupils to further reflect on their viewpoints throughout the year. Pupils are taught about a variety of world faiths but are not always fully clear on the purpose of this learning.

Head of school

Joanna Hancock

Inspector's name and number

Susan Bowen 916