

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Heathlands Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Address	New Church Road, West Bergholt, Colchester, CO6 3JF		
Date of inspection	11 June 2019	Status of school	Voluntary Controlled Primary
Diocese	Chelmsford	URN	115083

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

School context

Heathlands is a primary school with 418 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British Heritage with a very small number from minority ethnic groups. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below the national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages. The school has close links with St. Mary's Church and the local community.

The school's Christian vision

The school vision 'Inspiring innovative, confident, inclusive and caring members of the local and global community' is associated with the six core values of friendship, truthfulness, respect, hope, thankfulness and peace.

Key findings

- The vision and associated values have been established after a time of consultation. There is substantial theological underpinning of the values, but this is less evident in the overall school vision.
- The school uses the vision and values to give shape to the policies and development plan and monitoring is in place to evaluate their effectiveness.
- The school enjoys the benefits of a nurturing, supportive and caring community where pupils and adults alike flourish both academically and in their relationships with one another.
- The school enjoys, and benefits from, strong and supportive relationships with their local church community and links to the global community.
- An inclusive and collaborative leadership team is in place, which has contributed to the overall wellbeing of the whole school community.

Areas for development

- Ensure all members of the school community know and understand the theological underpinning of the Christian vision and that this vision drives all aspects of school life.
- In line with the school's identified priority and to enhance teaching and learning develop the enquiry-led approach across the whole curriculum.
- Embed the 'Understanding Christianity' resource further to ensure there are greater opportunities for enquiry-based learning and the critical engagement of biblical text.
- As part of the school's ongoing planned development, extend further the already well-established variety of opportunities for personal spiritual development for the pupils and the rest of the school community.

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

The school's vision 'Inspiring innovative, confident, inclusive and caring members of the local and global community' has been established by leadership after consultation with all stakeholders. It reflects well the nature and context of the school. The core Christian values of friendship, truthfulness, respect, hope, thankfulness and peace clearly support the vision and have appropriate biblical links. The degree to which the vision is underpinned by a firm theological understanding of education is, however, less evident. The vision and associated values offer shape to school policies and development planning and regular and effective monitoring by leaders and governors is in place. The school vision is reflected in the strong links with the parish church and village community. The established links with Kathari primary school in Kenya, and Zadlanska Skola in Levice, Slovakia offer evidence of how the school lives out its vision in a global community.

A broad and balanced curriculum is in place where all pupils, including the most vulnerable, experience a stimulating learning environment. Pupils speak about being inspired with one describing how teachers 'know about you and know how you learn' and another saying that they were encouraged 'grow and grow and grow.' A high quality of pastoral care is evident. Parents commented that 'each child matters' and that when you 'make a call, they know who you are.' This overarching care is reflected in pupil progress, which is at least in line with, and in some areas well above, national averages. Opportunities such as circle time create a culture of curiosity and enhance spiritual development and pupils are beginning to become confident in exploring spiritual and ethical issues. Leaders described individual spiritual development as a journey and this was noticeable in the change of language in prayer from 'Dear God', to 'Dear Father.'

Pupils are challenged to play an active role in their learning and to make positive choices. Tasks of varying levels of difficulty are available in lessons. The school's adoption of the 'Visible Learning Project', which aims to grow reflective learners, is innovative and effective at developing pupil resilience and the confidence to persevere and overcome challenges. An enquiry-led approach to the curriculum is in evidence, most notably in religious education (RE), where a topic on salvation might begin with 'who was responsible for Jesus' death?' The school's decision to shape its future curriculum provision around 'Big Questions' flows, in part, from their success with the 'Understanding Christianity' resource. The school's established link with Kenya is highly valued and flows from their vision to be part of a global community. Links with this school have helped develop an understanding of disadvantage and deprivation through recognising, for example, the difficulty of internet access in rural Kenya. The establishment of a charity committee and the wealth of fundraising activities and their aspiration to become a 'Fair Trade' and 'Zero Waste' school all flow from the school's vision of being local and yet global in outlook.

The school's vision is reflected in the very good quality of relationships at all levels. For example, parents describe it as 'friendly, inclusive and cuddly' where their children would be 'very safe and very looked after.' Wellbeing and mental health are taken seriously. Pupils say that teachers are 'really open to us' and 'always looking out for you.' Staff wellbeing is in evidence with regular meetings to support one another and opportunities to enjoy 'staff retreats.' Mental health awareness opportunities are available such as a 'draw and discuss' session run by an art psychotherapist. Behaviour is excellent. Expectations are high and parents rightly recognise and appreciate the commitment of the staff. Pupils experience forgiveness and recognise the importance of starting afresh through a traffic light system that offers the opportunity to begin each day with a 'green.' The school house system, the adoption of school buddies and the use of 'Friendship Benches' all help to create a community that lives well together.

The school vision is reflected in their recognition of difference and celebration of diversity. The value of each child, made in God's image, is seen as you enter the school with class photographs which allow the pupils to express their individuality. One carer of a child with complex needs spoke warmly about the 'transformation in him' and of the school's approach which went 'above and beyond' her expectations. The Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum and the school's approach to sex and relationship education (SRE) reflects their vision of inclusivity and of the importance attached to community. Effective measures challenge prejudicial behaviour, and this is reflected in the very low incidence of bullying behaviour. Pupils spoke of a memorable talk with high-heeled shoes which invited them to 'learn to walk in others' shoes.'

Collective worship invites all to reflect upon life's spiritual dimension. Whilst clear links to school values are evident, the link to vision is less explicit. Worship provision is supported by the parish and opportunities to experience church worship strengthens the link and leads to an appreciation of diversity in the Anglican tradition. Collective worship is inclusive, and invitational where pupils and adults grow spiritually through music, reflection, and story. Pupils encounter the teachings of Jesus through biblical texts and have an understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils have a significant role in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship through the Worship Team and the recently appointed Worship Council. Prayer is a natural and valued part of school. It is invitational, and many opportunities exist for all to pray. Pupils and staff value the prayer spaces and the prayer tree. Opportunities to extend personal spiritual development, through the installation of a permanent prayer space and outdoor worship space, has reached the funding stage. The establishment of a Year 6 Retreat is an example of innovative practice which has been shared within the Diocese.

Curriculum planning for RE is effective and the RE lead has worked alongside the diocesan advisor to ensure the provision is structured and assessment is effective. The 'Understanding Christianity' resource is used, and a more enquiry-led approach is being introduced. The effective use of images and 'Big Questions' provides opportunities for pupils to reflect critically on their spiritual development. One pupil, commenting on a painting of the baptism of Christ, wrote 'this makes me feel like an explosion of peace.' Visits from representatives of a range of faiths develops pupils' understanding of other world religions. The established link with Kenyan gives them a clearer vision of Christianity as a living and diverse world faith. Statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met.

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