

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Sherington Church of England VC Primary School

Address School Lane, Sherington, Newport Pagnell, United Kingdom, MK16 9NF

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

Overall grade **Good**

The impact of collective worship **Good**

School's vision

The Village Schools Federation aspires to nurture and inspire every child to experience life in all its fullness. Our schools are rooted in inclusive Christian values to enable all to flourish by building knowledge, confidence and resilience for the future. We strive to be the best we can be. 'Whatever we do, we work at it with all our heart' Colossians 3:23. 'Inspiring learners, growing together.'

Key findings

- The strong, distinctively Christian vision unequivocally sets the strategic direction and day to day operation of the school. The federation is having a hugely positive impact on opportunities for pupils and staff.
- The school knows and nurtures its pupils and families exceptionally well. As a result, staff are proactive in doing their utmost to meet the needs of individuals and enable them to flourish.
- Pupils are inspired to respect one another and accept each other's views. They enthusiastically support charitable causes but are not courageous advocates for change in their local or global communities.
- Collective worship is a special and valued moment of the day that is truly invitational. Pupils enjoy collective worship and are drawn into a spiritual place. Pupils may contribute spontaneous prayers, but do not often take a role in planning or leading acts of worship.
- The religious education (RE) curriculum is well-planned, balances knowledge and enquiry approaches effectively and allows pupils to explore religions and worldviews. Pupils know and remember key stories from a range of religions but would benefit from more opportunities for independent reflection.

Areas for development

- Develop opportunities for pupils to become courageous advocates and, in line with the school's vision, work with charities or communities in order to foster mutual flourishing.
- Embed approaches to stillness and reflection in collective worship to facilitate deeper spiritual wellbeing of pupils and staff.
- Increase opportunities in RE for pupils to explore religious concepts more independently in order to deepen their spiritual development.

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

Pupils and staff flourish at Sherington Church of England School. The executive headteacher and governors are exceptionally focused on their recently revised Christian vision. Governors describe this as the 'linchpin' of all the decisions they make, for example when considering their engagement with the Forest Schools approach, or creating a central office and training space for federation staff. Governors are mindful too that the school's vision is both distinctively Christian and inclusive to those of all faiths and none. As one governor said, 'we are all God's children and reflect an aspect of the divine.' This inclusive approach ensures the flourishing of all pupils, staff and federation schools as equal members of God's creation. The impact of the vision can be seen in leaders' rapid, decisive and supportive actions to welcome with Christian hospitality another school into their building following a recent fire. Parents are supportive of the school and its integral role in the local community, which is being re-established since the initial COVID pandemic. The revised vision, however, particularly the theological underpinning, is not yet firmly embedded with all stakeholders. There is a strong partnership with the diocese who provide effective support for leaders, including governors. They praise the school's Christian-focused leadership and highlight the Village Schools Federation model to other small schools as a 'beacon of hope.'

The school's curriculum is driven by its Christian vision. The curriculum (including extra-curricular opportunities) is developing confident and resilient learners who enjoy learning and are hungry to learn more. Moreover, leaders ensure the curriculum is developing children who are considerate, thoughtful and confident citizens. Despite its size, the school provides a range of before and after-school activities. The recent trip to London enabled pupils to travel beyond their local, familiar environment and become immersed in architecture and art at the National Gallery to support their 'buildings' learning theme. In addition to these planned moments of awe and wonder, staff seize every opportunity to pause and ask a thought-provoking question. A balance of these planned and spontaneous moments impacts well on pupils' spiritual development. The school's definition of spiritual development, however, is not consistently articulated across all members of the wider school community.

The RE curriculum weaves together effectively the locally agreed syllabus and diocesan planning in order to ensure a balance of knowledge and enquiry approaches. Learning objectives, framed as key questions, invite a response and create pupils who are inquisitive and respect each other's views. There are limited opportunities for pupils to discuss and explore religious ideas independently in order to challenge their thinking. However, in Early Years children are taking inspiration from the presence and use of physical resources to talk and write creatively, for example when they think deeply about pirates and treasure.

Support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is exceptional. Although, overall, the school's proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average, there are a number of pupils with highly complex needs which is above the national average. The school's provision and compassion for individuals is magnified in these unique cases. Leaders are sharply focused on ensuring 'life in all its fulness' by minimising barriers to learning, personalising provision, and providing highly effective liaison with partner schools and external agencies.

The school's aspiration to 'be the best you can be' impacts powerfully on pupils' character development. Pupils understand the importance of undertaking appropriately challenging work for their future success. Pupils are confident to speak up if they feel something isn't right in school and are assured that staff will listen to them and address the situation. Pupils have an understanding of world issues, talking passionately about the need to not litter our environment and the damage being caused by rubbish in the ocean. The school actively supports a range of local and national charities. Pupils engage enthusiastically in these initiatives but do not instigate action to support causes for which they are passionately concerned. In this way, being courageous advocates for change is at an early stage. Inspired by their outward-looking vision, the school seeks to not only support the flourishing of others, but to use those links to enable their own community to thrive.

The school's approach to behaviour and respectful relationships is underpinned by the thread of 'growing together' that runs through the school and the federation. A restorative approach ensures that reconciliation and recompense is undertaken in a Christian and supportive way. 'Zones of Regulation' are used effectively to identify and support children to recognise and regulate their emotions. The federation's mental health and wellbeing lead offers expert, timely advice and support.

The sense of inclusivity at Sherington is palpable. The school grows children who appreciate that the world is a diverse place. As a result, pupils recognise and are respectful of difference. The school has campaigned extremely successfully to raise a significant amount of money for a member of their school community – a story that received national news coverage. Provision for relationships and sex education is in place through the school's Personal, Social and Health Education and Relationships Education (PSHER) programme and is age-appropriate.

Collective worship is a profound and valued moment of the school day, where everyone is recognised as being special, with gifts from God. Planning follows the seasons of the church year and offers an opportunity for pupils to reflect on biblical text and Christian values. There is a recognisable structure and pattern to the liturgy which creates familiarity and routine. Parents describe the transformational nature of collective worship, where messages have rippled out to families and the community. Pupils enjoy collective worship. They are involved in preparing the worship table and occasionally offer spontaneous prayer. Pupils say it is important to pray because 'God helped the world and he still does,' but they also appreciate that praying is a personal choice, and respect others' decisions. They evaluate collective worship through pupil voice but do not regularly plan or lead worship. The parish priest is in school frequently and supports the leading of collective worship and RE. The diocese has supported the development of collective worship by providing resources and training. Most recently, the executive headteacher and two governors explored approaches to contemplation as a method of developing mindfulness and spiritual wellbeing. This is in the early stages of implementation in the school. In her training and leading of collective worship, the executive headteacher is modelling expectations and best practice.

Sherington Church of England School is driven, and living, by its distinctive Christian vision. It is an exceptional, inclusive, nurturing family where leaders 'work at it with all their heart' to ensure that pupils and adults flourish.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	21 June 2022	URN	110407
Date of previous inspection	19 May 2015		
School status	VC	NOR	020
Name of Multi Academy Trust or Federation	Village Schools Federation		
Diocese or Methodist Circuit	Oxford		
Headteacher	Emma Wallace		
Proportion of pupils deemed to be disadvantaged	Below National Average		
Proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Below National Average		
Additional significant information (if needed)	The role of the interim executive headteacher was made permanent in January 2022. The school is currently hosting another school from within the federation whilst their own school is repaired following a fire.		
Inspector's name	Rob Halls	No.	2106

