

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Nicolas Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Vision

Journeying together to live life to the full. To serve our local community, families of all faiths and those with no faith at all; by providing a broad, deep and outstanding education, rooted in Christian values, that prepare each child for the next step in life.

‘I come that they might have life and have it to the full’ John 10:10

Strengths

- The Christian vision is clearly expressed through carefully selected inclusive values. This inspires pupils to be confident and to challenge themselves within the safe culture of a loving community.
- Pupils flourish because of the inclusive and creative curriculum. Adults are dedicated to meeting the needs of all pupils. As a result, those who are most vulnerable are able to flourish alongside their peers.
- Leaders are ambitious when supporting the inclusive, Christian culture of the school. They serve with compassion and insight, prioritising the wellbeing of people within the school community.
- Positive partnerships with local churches enhance collective worship. Consequently, pupils and adults are able to experience meaningful opportunities for spiritual growth.
- The dedicated leaders of religious education (RE) are reflective and knowledgeable. Their skillful actions provide teachers with high quality training and supportive resources.

Development Points

- Embed a shared understanding of spirituality. This is in order that adults and pupils can engage in deeper discussions when responding to moments of awe and wonder.
- Deepen pupils’ understanding of the diversity within religious and non-religious worldviews. This is to clarify their thinking and knowledge when discussing their own responses.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to be agents of change so that they can respond to injustice in meaningful and appropriate ways.



Inspection Findings

Leaders are dedicated to the school and the local area that they serve. They inspire pupils to flourish through the inclusive termly values and the memorable 'NICS' attitude to life. They show a deep commitment to providing an appropriate and creative experience at this vision led Church school. Adults are driven by the determination that pupils are supported to achieve their best. This commitment extends to ensuring pupils are prepared for their future educational journey. Consequently, pupils develop confidence underpinned by the values they encounter. Governors are knowledgeable and mindful of the vision, particularly when faced with challenging decision making. This supports the staff and pupils to flourish.

Leaders monitor the curriculum effectively which supports teachers to provide high quality learning experiences. The school is community focused and encourages pupils to live out the vision in their local area. The local study week provides pupils with an important understanding of where they live and their place within it. However, the curriculum does not fully provide pupils with an awareness of injustice within the world. Pupils are able to make mistakes due to the safe culture of the school and learn new ways of achieving their best. They thrive due to the enriching activities such as specialist music teaching and outdoor learning activities. Incidental moments of awe and wonder are maximised. For example, young pupils acting on their fascination with caterpillars. A lack of a shared understanding for spirituality means that such discussions are limited. The vision is carefully woven through the curriculum which offers thoughtful adjustment for the most vulnerable. Consequently, pupils benefit because their needs are central to the actions of adults. The pastoral team collaborates effectively with specialist agencies which ensures pupils receive inspiring and challenging learning experiences. Adults receive high quality training which enables them to support learning with knowledge and understanding. Pupils are proud to belong to St Nicolas. They behave well and benefit from the calm environment that is created by adults. They know that their successes are valued because these are regularly celebrated.

Collective worship is sensitively planned and accurately evaluated. Partnerships with a variety of local churches enrich the life and vision of the school. This supports pupils' understanding that Christian worship is varied in style. Thoughtfully planned visits to the church and 'prayer space' activities provide important opportunities for spiritual growth. However, due to the absence of a shared understanding of spirituality, such opportunities gather limited responses. Leaders provide teachers with high quality resources for class worship time. These effectively provide opportunities to embed the messages from whole school gatherings. Carefully chosen biblical stories extend pupils' knowledge of Christian beliefs. Teachers feel more confident when leading worship because of the support they receive. Prayer is invitational and pupils join in respectfully. Singing is clearly an important part of the worship of the school. Consequently, this offers those gathered with an opportunity to benefit spiritually.

Leaders foster a highly effective culture where people are valued as unique individuals. They are committed to supporting pupils on their educational journey. Adults work tirelessly to support the most vulnerable to ensure that they can reach their full potential. They have high expectations for all yet recognise that life can be challenging. Creative provision such as the Todoodles Group meets the emotional and learning needs of individual pupils. In turn, this enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to work confidently alongside their peers. Adults and pupils sustain each other with encouragement and compassion within this caring environment. Inspired by the vision to prepare pupils for life, leaders rightly focus on improving attendance. Sensitive provision and support for families ensures pupils benefit from being in school. Governors are mindful of teacher workload. Their effective support during challenging times is valued by staff.



Pupils live out their responsibility to those within the school community in a calm, kind manner. Older pupils are important role models for the youngest pupils joining the school. Such strong bonds enhance the flourishing of this loving community. Leaders recognise the importance of encouraging pupils to serve those who are vulnerable. The opportunity to contribute to the local food bank reinforces how pupils can help others. Teachers wisely encourage pupils to contribute to local projects. For example, the May Fair. For some pupils, membership of the school council provides opportunities to discuss injustice and ways to address this. The recent efforts to reduce food waste effectively enables pupils to improve their impact on the environment. Pupils leading cake sales recognise the importance of being responsible for others. For example, they diligently display allergen information. Opportunities to extend an awareness of injustice internationally and how to make a difference are limited.

Leaders have a strong vision for the planning and relevance of RE. They are reflective, using their monitoring to adjust resources and support teachers. As a result, planning documents are detailed and well sequenced. Leaders utilise their access to specialist training which contributes to their effectiveness. This means that teachers are also able to grow in subject knowledge and confidence. Pupils benefit from the inquiry approach. The curriculum ensures that pupils are introduced to a variety of religious and non-religious worldviews. Teachers are creative when introducing new knowledge and provide memorable learning activities. For example, eating Challah bread. Adults create a safe space for pupils to explore their own views whilst respecting those of others. This means that pupils acknowledge the importance of living out their values of kindness and empathy. They are enthusiastic about their learning and recognise that people are entitled to hold an individual view. Pupils have a secure knowledge of the aspects of beliefs that they have studied. However, they do not have a deep enough understanding of religious and non-religious worldviews. Teachers regularly collect examples of learning to evaluate the impact of the curriculum and make adjustments to their planning.

Information

Address	Boxhill Walk, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 1HB		
Date	27 September 2024	URN	123166
Type of school	Voluntary Controlled	No. of pupils	404
Diocese	Oxford Diocese		
Headteacher	Andrew Spooner		
Chair of Governors	Katrina Hancock		
Inspector	Helen Crolla		