

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Finchampstead Church of England VA Primary School

Vision

'This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.' Psalm 118

Our vision is for our pupils and staff to feel cared for unconditionally and valued as a unique creation in our learning, play and rest. We want to help them to approach each day now and in the future with gratitude and high aspirations. We encourage them to reflect and pray. Our school ethos is based on our six values: thankfulness, hope, friendship, forgiveness, honesty and compassion.

Strengths

- The school's Christian vision drives a strong sense of purpose, shaping both daily experiences and long-term aspirations. Strong, knowledgeable, and supportive leaders are self-reflective and lead positive change. Effective communication ensures the vision remains relevant, creating a welcoming and inclusive environment.
- The school's courageous support for pupils and families during difficult times reflects deep compassion. This dedication strengthens relationships and builds a caring, resilient community. As a result, pupils grow in hope and aspire towards a bright future.
- Through intentional moments of stillness and reflection in collective worship, the school fosters inclusivity and inspiration. These practices anchor meaningful conversations and promote spiritual growth over time.
- The school recognises staff as spiritual beings, prioritising their wellbeing to enable wider flourishing. Strong, supportive relationships with all members of the community, including those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable, create a thriving, compassionate environment.
- The leadership emphasises the flourishing of pupils by offering a wide range of experiences in sport, music, and extracurricular activities. This broad approach enriches learning, helping pupils enjoy a well-rounded education and embrace life in all its fullness.

Development Points

- Create opportunities for pupils to reflect on their place in the world and expand their focus and understanding of social justice. This is so that pupils are inspired to act justly in their local community and with reference to the wider world.
- Strengthen subject leadership in religious education (RE) to ensure the school is well-positioned to address developments. This is so that all pupils can make even better progress in RE.
- Find more effective ways for leaders and governors to strengthen the evaluation of RE. This is so that it can more effectively recognise and build on strengths, as well as identify areas to improve.



Inspection Findings

This is a small Church school with a big heart for its community. The school's Christian vision profoundly inspires both pupils, staff, and governors, creating an environment where everyone feels valued and cared for. Rooted in Psalm 118, the vision inspires purpose, encouraging daily gratitude and high aspirations. One pupil expressed how the school's vision 'helps you to understand what you're doing and push you beyond the limits of what you already feel capable of.' The vision is lived out through values including thankfulness, hope, and forgiveness. In this way the vision guides everyone with joy and resilience. This inspires adults and pupils to find light and life in each day. It shapes the school's ethos, providing a foundation for spiritual and emotional growth. It enables adults and pupils to dwell in an environment of safety and position of hope. Regular engagement with parents and stakeholders keeps the vision dynamic and alive. This involvement unites the school community and celebrates individual achievements. The school creates an environment where everyone's contributions are acknowledged and valued, fostering hope and compassion.

The curriculum ensures that the intent of the vision is being lived out in the life of the school. It reflects the vision by prioritising creativity, inclusion, richness and breadth, enabling individual flourishing. Enquiry-based learning is encouraged across the curriculum. This philosophical lens for learning successfully encourages pupils to engage with different perspectives, connect concepts together, and develop empathy. Staff are 'enjoying dwelling in conversation around spirituality', embracing this part of their work as an ongoing journey. This work is full of vitality and meaning, richly contributing the spiritual flourishing of both adults and pupils. One pupil reflected on how 'spirituality is our inner being, our inner self – what makes us unique.' School leaders are rigorously committed to offering broad experiences enabling pupils to embrace 'life in all its fullness.' This approach ensures that the curriculum provides diverse opportunities such as concerts, tournaments, and whole school performances. The curriculum is designed through connected themes and supports curiosity and critical thinking about the wider world. Governors, leaders, and staff are courageous and effective advocates for pupils who are vulnerable. In this work the school are changing and enhancing the life chances of pupils. Outdoor spaces and reflective lessons enhance spiritual growth. For instance, exploring rock formations in the churchyard prompts reflections on legacy and time. This approach helps pupils grow into responsible, well-rounded individuals who value community.

Daily collective worship enables pupils and adults to flourish spiritually by creating opportunities for stillness, reflection, and connection. Diocesan resources and training have richly infused the daily life of the school, both in times of worship and through the curriculum. Worship experiences are varied and each foster inclusivity and participation, including classroom prayer walls and time spent in nature. Pupils who lead worship gain a sense of responsibility and belonging, expressing their spirituality confidently. One pupil shared that they 'like leading the stilling because I've led something that's really important, that's about creating real peace.' Another explained the impact of their contribution, sharing that 'I can help create space for all to appreciate God's miracles and creation.' These moments encourage reflection on gratitude, forgiveness, and creation, contributing to spiritual growth. Collective worship offers practical tools for prayer, such as the 'TSP model' (Thanks, Sorry, Please), which some pupils use regularly. The calmness and openness from worship help staff and pupils approach their day with gratitude and respect. Through stillness and music, they explore the spiritual dimension of their lives, gaining emotional resilience and self-regulation. This daily practice strengthens the school's collective spirit, creating a supportive environment where everyone feels valued.

The school's Christian vision fosters a supportive culture by prioritising individual needs, even when this compassion is costly. This reflects its commitment to walking alongside families during painful and challenging times, showing tenacity, care, and sometimes personal sacrifice. Through this approach, and with excellent



communication, the school nurtures strong relationships, ensuring that pupils and parents feel supported. Staff wellbeing is a central focus, with spirituality integrated into daily life. Recent work on spirituality and staff wellbeing has had a noticeable impact on enhancing the flourishing of adults. The focus on mental health and wellbeing empowers both staff and pupils to respond to challenges. Governors and staff build honest, compassionate relationships, even during challenging conversations. They foster respect and mutual support by embodying the vision of recognising all as ‘unique creations’ who are ‘loved unconditionally.’ Initiatives like the buddy system and ‘STEP badges’ promote kindness, politeness, and inclusion among pupils, reinforcing the vision. The use of ‘restorative justice’ ensures inclusiveness by creating a supportive environment where all pupils feel valued and safe to reflect. The behaviour policy reflects the Christian vision by emphasising therapeutic approaches and forgiveness, promoting self-reflection and understanding. The school’s partnership with the parish church strengthens this culture, providing a foundation for community and spiritual growth.

The school’s Christian vision promotes personal responsibility through various activities and leadership roles. Pupils engage in projects such as food banks, litter-picking, and supporting elderly care, reflecting a commitment to compassion and service. Leadership roles, including prefects and school council positions, help them understand broader responsibilities and develop respect. The partnership with the church enhances this culture, with pupils maintaining church grounds and linking physical spaces for shared confidence. Although pupils recognise the importance of compassion, the relationship between this and social justice has not been made and therefore is not securely understood.

RE is given priority in planning and policy. School leaders give prominence to the subject through thoughtful curriculum design and professional development opportunities. Governors are extremely dedicated to the subject. The commitment to enhancing RE reflects a holistic approach, fostering an environment where spiritual and academic growth thrive together. Teaching is engaging, encouraging pupils to explore significant questions about existence, miracles, and creation. Pupils connect religious teachings with science while learning about various faiths and non-religious worldviews, fostering respect, tolerance, and critical thinking. As a result, pupils’ knowledge of Christianity and other religions is strong. Pupils enjoy the lessons and develop their understanding of spirituality, including worldviews, while feeling supported in respectful disagreement. Teachers skilfully address misconceptions and broaden pupils’ perspectives. New assessment methods and the tracking of pupil progress have been actively implemented, although too soon to judge the impact. Teachers use creative approaches, for example through outdoor education. The enquiry-based method and resource allocation prioritises RE, enabling dynamic and inclusive learning. Overall, teaching is effective, and pupils generally make good progress. However, while monitoring practices are evolving, gaps remain in the effective evaluation of information to support the best progress of all. The recent rearrangement of subject leadership creates necessary potential for greater engagement with national developments and training in RE.

Information

Address	The Village, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JR		
Date	17 September 2024	URN	110012
Type of school	Voluntary Aided Primary	No. of pupils	104
Diocese	Oxford		
Headteacher	Jacquie Vanstone		
Chair of Governors	Nigel Kennington		
Inspector	Mary Sweeney		