

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Finstock Church of England Primary School

Vision

'Do everything in love.' (1 Corinthians 16:14) as the foundation for achieving excellence through faith, friendship, courage and respect by providing all children with the highest level of academic curriculum and pastoral care, with opportunities for spiritual growth and intellectual enquiry.

Finstock Church of England Primary School is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. It has the following notable strengths.

Strengths

- The empowering Christian vision drives the work of the school. It inspires leaders to make bold decisions rooted in love and enables pupils and adults to flourish.
- The vision to do everything in love inspires a culture of caring for each other that nourishes a sense of belonging. Pupils and adults thrive in their relationships and personal development.
- Collective worship is part of a golden thread that weaves through daily life. Values are carefully chosen to support the vision and foster spiritual growth in pupils and adults.
- The vision prioritises the achievement of excellence for all and this shapes an inclusive curriculum tailored to the needs of pupils. This engages them, broadens their horizons and gives them confidence within and beyond their learning.

Development Points

- Further strengthen the religious education (RE) curriculum so that pupils develop their understanding of Christianity as a living, diverse, global faith.
- Extend opportunities for pupils to take active ownership in challenging injustice. This is so that they understand fully how they can make a positive difference within their local community and beyond.



Inspection Findings

This small Church school holds positive relationships at the heart of all its work. Its vision, to 'do everything in love', ensures that pupils and adults thrive. Leaders devised the school's vision in response to the impact of change in this rural locality. It is clear and relevant to the school's context. The vision permeates the school day. It is outward looking to the wider community. It inspires leaders to make bold decisions rooted in love. For example, they have made dedicated, structured class reflection times part of the daily timetable. These inspiring sessions give rich opportunities for pupils and staff to explore questions relating to Christian values. As a result, personal, spiritual understanding is significantly deepened. The school is well supported by the Motivate Inspire Learn Lead (MILL) Trust and its vision 'to transform lives and to enable individual schools to grow, develop and serve their communities.' Dedicated local committee volunteers take an active role in supporting the strategic direction of the school. They receive regular reports from the headteacher on the impact of the vision and help steer school development. Trust and school leaders work together to make the vision a lived reality. Pupils of all ages take responsibility for the wellbeing of each other. Staff members are mutually supportive. Leaders support families and champion the best possible provision for pupils.

Pupils benefit from an inclusive, personalised curriculum inspired by the school's vision to achieve excellence for all. School and the trust leaders are committed to a review cycle that is about being 'even better, every day.' This means that the curriculum engages and challenges pupils. It is shaped by 'Big Ideas' and themes are often launched with a visit. As a result, pupils have opportunities to reflect on personal responses and explore their learning outside the school site. Leaders are committed to equity and pupils' individual needs are exceptionally well met. Pupils' achievements and values-led behaviours are celebrated in weekly assemblies. In this way, the unique individuality of every pupil is recognised. Spiritual development is prioritised in the curriculum. As well as providing a programme for collective worship, Christian values thoughtfully underpin class reflection times. This means there are more opportunities for pupils to develop their spirituality. Thus, they are responsive and thoughtful learners. Pupils benefit from a range of enriching extracurricular activities, made possible through partnering with other schools. Through joining up in competing in local sporting events, pupils experience wider opportunities to work and play with others and succeed.

Collective worship is inclusive and invitational. Pupils value it as a special time for individual response. Leaders are clear about expectations and there is effective modelling by more experienced staff members. There is a shared understanding of spirituality as being about reflection on 'the deeper things of life, its meaning and our purpose.' As a result, teachers feel confident about leading worship. Leaders provide feedback and there is an ongoing improvement cycle. Pupils of all ages take on active roles, including as worship leaders. This engages them and enables them to grow spiritually. There is a strong relationship with the local church and the vicar knows the school well. He leads a weekly collective worship and hosts open question sessions. As a consequence, pupils extend their knowledge of Christianity and have more opportunities to explore their own beliefs. Special church services for pupils and their families are held in two local churches. These deepen an understanding of Church traditions and foster a sense of belonging to school, village and wider community. Christian values are carefully chosen to support the vision. Adults use skilful questioning to explore these with pupils using Bible texts. Thus, they understand how Jesus' teachings can help people make good choices. Leaders find innovative ways to include the wider community in reflecting on worship themes. Thoughtful questions on a blackboard at the school gate often prompt passersby to respond, thus extending the vision's impact.



Pupils and adults flourish in a loving culture inspired by the school's Christian vision. This nourishes a sense of belonging. Parents value the ways that the school meets individual needs and gives pupils 'space to be themselves with a Christian guiding hand.' Staff members provide effective pastoral support so that vulnerable pupils thrive. Leaders model empathy, resilience and reflection. Adults work hard on behalf of pupils and model the school's values. They use thoughtful questioning to deepen pupils' understanding of them. For example, they explore the impact of being thankful on how pupils feel and what they do. As a result, pupils know that their actions can have a positive impact on others. Leaders promote the wellbeing of staff members and make strategic decisions to maintain a balance of work and home life. Partnerships with trust schools are very effective and beneficial. They provide opportunities for off-site educational visits, specialist support and professional development. As a result of this collaboration, staff members feel valued and their professional life is enriched.

The strength of relationships at Finstock demonstrates the impact of the Christian vision and values. Parents recognise the benefits of older pupils supporting younger pupils in different ways. They describe the school as a 'family environment'. This helps pupils to develop their understanding of responsibility towards others. Leaders work hard to make sure that there is equity, including in the provision of thoughtfully planned playtime activities and inclusive extracurricular experiences. Through the curriculum and collective worship pupils explore their rights and responsibilities. Supported by adults, they understand how people can bring about positive changes within their community. For example, pupils successfully lobbied the parish council to introduce a 20mph speed limit. However, currently, pupils have fewer opportunities to initiate action themselves in addressing injustice. As such, their understanding of injustice and ways individuals can make a positive difference is more limited.

The RE curriculum is coherent and well sequenced for mixed-age classes. Skilful leaders have devised a programme that develops knowledge and understanding of core elements of Christianity. RE has a high profile and displays of pupils' work reinforce key Christian concepts. However, opportunities to learn about diversity within Christianity is more limited. The curriculum includes other world religions and pupils enjoy learning about different religious beliefs, such as the Hindu cycle of samsara. Teachers provide memorable learning experiences, for example, visiting a synagogue. Leaders are determined to promote high standards in RE. They support staff professional development to ensure consistency across the school. As a result, teachers are clear about expectations and they feel well supported. They create a safe space for pupils to explore their own views whilst respecting those of others.

Information

Address	School Road, Finstock, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, OX7 3BN		
Date	26 November 2024	URN	142350
Type of school	Academy	No. of pupils	33
Diocese	Oxford		
MAT	The Mill Academy		
Headteacher	Leanne Dixon		
Chair of Local Committee	Kate Sutton		
Chair of Trust	Claire King		
Inspector	Gillian Scozzafava		