



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Marlow Church of England VA Infant School	
Address	Sandygate Road, Marlow, SL7 3AZ

School vision

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, in our likeness.' Genesis 1:26
This bible verse roots our school vision. It tells us that every individual is created in God's image and so this leads us to conclude that everyone is precious and valuable. As a result of this we focus on treating everybody with respect and dignity because we acknowledge their God given value and unique identity.

School strengths

- A powerful and clearly articulated Christian vision empowers leaders to make sound strategic decisions. This creates a loving and nurturing culture where adults and pupils are unique, show one another respect and consequently flourish.
- Partnerships between school, diocese, church and community are extremely effective and hugely valued. These enable adults to grow professionally in a supportive environment, so that pupils benefit greatly from their experience, skill and expertise.
- Collective worship is thoughtful and engaging. Planned opportunities for prayer and reflection deepen the spiritual experiences and growth of pupils and adults.
- There are extensive opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills. These are interwoven with the impressive eco and children's rights projects, which enable them to become highly developed responsible citizens.
- Successful and efficient leadership in religious education (RE) ensures a carefully crafted curriculum and high quality teaching. This enables pupils to make good progress and thrive in the subject.

Areas for development

- Explore and identify new innovative projects so that experienced staff can share their skills and expertise more widely. This is to ensure the school continues to be outward looking, enriching the outworking of the Christian vision.
- Further challenge pupils' understanding in RE lessons so that their awareness of Christianity and other worldviews is deepened.

Inspection findings

Driven by strong leadership, the Christian vision empowers the school to be highly effective. Pupils articulate and understand the vision of themselves being in God's image by knowing they are valuable and unique. Carefully considered values including forgiveness, service and respect, support the vision. These are based on the teachings of Jesus and are interwoven through every aspect of daily life. This outworking of the vision and values is deeply embedded and actively drives the

decisions and actions of adults. Committed governors work collaboratively with senior leaders to monitor and evaluate their vision effectively. The analogy of being in God's likeness as being special and precious is well understood in the wider school community. Parents embrace the vision and values recognising their importance in the spiritual, moral and social development of their children. This ensures partnerships between school, church and community are greatly valued and effective.

Driven by the vision, the learning experiences offered are inclusive and innovative. Staff effectively use a range of teaching strategies and tools available to them to personalise and adapt learning. Consequently, pupils thrive enabling those who are vulnerable or have special education needs and/or disabilities to be successful. Appreciation for diversity and cultural differences are evident when talking to pupils about their learning. Leaders ensure they make advantageous use of local resources to ignite curiosity and inspire pupils in their learning. Pupils understand spirituality to be the 'wow and ow' moments of looking out, reflecting and responding. They appreciate the special places around school that give space and time for reflection, stillness and prayer. Outdoor learning and inspiring spaces such as the nature corridor and allotment garden, deepen an individual's sense of spirituality. Collaboration on projects between local schools and churches including 'Praise in the Park' enriches community spirit, deepening spiritual growth. These partnerships are fruitful. However, opportunities to share excellent practice and staff expertise are less widely exploited. Pupils are confident, articulate and exceptionally well-prepared for transition to their next phase in learning. A variety of extra-curricular activities such as sports, cookery, and music further enrich the academic and cultural development of pupils.

A rich provision of collective worship is central to daily school life. Strengthened by carefully selected themes and values, it is a treasured time where all come together. Leaders model an understanding that everyone is valuable and deserves to be respected. Worship offers time for reflection and discussion, which challenges and encourages deeper thinking. This prepares pupils for living in a diverse modern world. The worship team contribute by the lighting of candles, saying of invitational prayers and creative drama. This creates a sense of togetherness where all are valued. Bible stories and passages are chosen especially to convey key messages. Music and singing are inspirational and integral to the main themes. Families are invited to attend Christian festivals in church that include Harvest, Christmas and Easter. These further develop pupils' understanding of the church year and Christian practices. Sandygate Sunday services, Pentecost and Candlemass are special worship times during the school year, which further enrich personal spiritual growth. Local clergy and church members regularly lead worship and extra-curricular clubs such as Bible Bricks and Sandygate Stars. These links are hugely beneficial as finding creative and imaginative ways to make Bible stories meaningful further enriches worship.

Inspired by the vision, a culture of positive mental health around being valued and special in God's likeness is created. Staff know they are precious and supported by a committed leadership team, where a manageable workload is a priority. There is an intense sense of belonging to a caring family that works together supporting each other professionally and personally. Initiatives such as 'MindUp' make a positive difference where pupils benefit from daily brain breaks, meditation and periods of stillness. The implementation of a wellbeing policy is a clear outworking of the vision. This ensures staff and pupils are valued, nurtured and cared for with love to ensure they grow and thrive. Pupils are well-mannered and engaged in lessons. Practices to resolve disputes allow all to treat each other well and with dignity. They play well together at break times with the skills needed to deal with any issues effectively. As a result, behaviour is exemplary across all ages in the school.

Encouraged by the vision, pupils raise funds for a variety of charities. At Harvest they donate to the local foodbank. Serving others in the community is an important aspect of school life. Pupils concerned about road safety successfully raised local awareness and a speed sign has been provided. Actions such as, tidying the churchyard and performing for the elderly, ensure the vision is

a living reality. Pupils develop leadership skills through a range of roles. These opportunities give them a keen sense of responsibility and support them in challenging injustice. Eco warriors act as agents of change and raise important issues of sustainability. By litter picking, recycling their rubbish and ‘No Electricity Day’, they understand small actions can make a difference. This was clearly demonstrated when pupils raised money to adopt three bats to support bat conservation. The ‘UNICEF Rights Respecting School’ curriculum is having a transformative impact. This provides a solid foundation for pupils to develop as responsible citizens. Links with Kenya and toilet twinning in Uganda enable pupils to have a deeper understanding of issues in the world. The impressive impact of the eco curriculum on pupils ensures they can confidently speak out about injustice in the world.

The ambitious vision has ensured that RE is given a high priority and is a strength of the school. The curriculum is exceptionally well designed to ensure sequenced progressive learning with opportunities for recall of knowledge. Strong leadership in RE and links with the diocese ensure staff are supported with training to deliver high quality lessons. They have extended their own knowledge of elements in the RE curriculum. The impact of this knowledge to challenge pupils' deeper understanding of worldviews is under-developed. Staff scaffold work for learners, ensuring those with additional needs can participate fully. A range of specialist resources are used effectively to build on key knowledge and concepts. RE displays and key vocabulary promote the acquisition of knowledge of Christian and Jewish beliefs and practices. Pupils have a natural curiosity about religions and enjoy RE. They positively engage in a wide range of religious and cultural festivals such as Eid, Diwali and Chinese New Year. Pupils are given a safe space where they can ask questions and explore their own beliefs and views. The use of visitors and visits to places of worship develop an appreciation of diversity in the wider community. This helps to foster a deep respect for the views and beliefs of others. Assessment is effective and supports teachers in planning the next steps in RE lessons. Governors effectively review the curriculum's impact to ensure it continues to meet pupils' needs. Consequently, they thrive and flourish in RE.

The inspection findings indicate that Marlow Church of England Infant School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
Inspection date	20 June 2024	URN	110433
VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary aided	Pupils on roll	166
Diocese	Oxford		
MAT/Federation			
Headteacher	Sharon Reynolds		
Chair	Robbie McFarlane		
Inspector	Paula Shaw	No.	2245