

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| Newton Blossomville CE School | | | |
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| Address | Newton Blossomville, Turvey, Bedfordshire MK43 8AL | | |
| Date of inspection | 3 October 2019 | Status of school | VC infant school within the Village Schools Federation (VSF) |
| Diocese | Oxford | URN | 110405 |

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| Overall Judgement | How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish? | Grade | Excellent |
| Additional Judgements | The impact of collective worship | Grade | Excellent |

School context

Newton Blossomville is a first school with 24 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. No pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages. Pupils are taught in one class in the afternoons. The school is one of five local schools in the Village Schools Federation. The headteacher of this school became the executive headteacher of the federation in January 2018. The chair of governors of the federation is new to post.

The school's Christian vision

The school has a strong Christian vision that everyone in the community should flourish by being 'the best that they can be, working at everything with their hearts as if for the Lord, - Colossians 3:23 - and that they are 'strongest as a team' working in unity - 1 Corinthians 12:14.

Key findings

- The Christian vision is at the school's heart and every decision is made in accordance with it. The biblical roots of the vision are clearly identified by everyone in the community.
- The school's commitment to unity and teamwork has enabled it to reach out and support the other schools in the federation in developing their own vision, ethos and aspirations.
- Religious education (RE) and worship are of consistently high calibre. They develop pupils' spirituality and understanding of the Christian faith exceptionally well.
- Pupils flourish personally and academically because they are extremely well supported and encouraged to 'be the best that they can be'. They develop a strong sense of their role in making the world a better place and are committed to help those less fortunate.
- The community is inclusive and cohesive. Adults and pupils show profound respect for one another. The school's ethos is shaped by the vision and Christian values which are shared and articulated by everyone.

Areas for development

- Further develop parents' understanding of the impact of the school's Christian vision and values.

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

The school's vision is deeply rooted in the Bible and was developed by the community to be the foundation of the school's work. Leaders and governors here took the lead in bringing the five schools together and continue to use their expertise in order to support and unite them through a shared vision. They reflected on the best approach to meet this challenge and rapidly identified ways in which close collaboration could improve outcomes for all the federation's pupils. The RE and worship leader shares best practice with the staff across the federation so that all pupils and adults may flourish. New staff are given thorough induction so that they can understand and promote the vision well and all staff receive excellent professional development. Leaders have continued to work effectively with the Diocese, particularly for training, resources, external validation and current thinking in church school education. This relationship has united the federation schools further, giving them a common pursuit of best practice. They revisit the vision regularly to be sure that it is a living vision, always meets the needs of their community and is fully understood by parents, staff and pupils. They evaluate their work rigorously, identifying ways they can improve further and ways to support the federation schools. This ensures that the vision is always fresh and relevant. Leaders respond eagerly to initiatives to broaden pupils' experiences, such as celebrating the cultures of pupils of different nationalities. They capitalise on learning opportunities in their local environment such as the farmer visiting on his tractor or pupils naming the local bridges. Leaders have developed an outdoor learning programme which is particularly effective in supporting pupils' spiritual development and their growing sense of awe and wonder. Governors have responded to the area for development from the previous inspection, demonstrating their ongoing commitment to improve.

Parents are made fully aware of the school's vision when their children join the school. They are consulted regularly about the impact the Christian distinctiveness has on their children. They know that it has profound impact because their children soon learn Bible stories, Christian prayers and the important times in the Christian calendar. Pupils are able to talk about their feelings and what they believe, understanding and accepting that others might not agree with them. Pupils also talk about what it means to live by Christian values and to be the best they can be, both at school and beyond it. Families feel extremely well supported by the school in difficult times, and know they belong to the school irrespective of their own beliefs and traditions. The school is very closely linked with the parish church and uses the building and churchyard frequently for learning. Parishioners feel a close association with the school and sense the teamwork the school's vision inspires. They volunteer and join in many events such as the lighting of the Christmas tree at the start of Advent.

Governors and school leaders evaluate RE and worship robustly and pupils have regular opportunities to contribute to this process. Policies and decisions are based on the vision and potential challenges are seen as rich opportunities. For example, having all the children working together in the afternoons enables younger pupils to hear the language used by the older ones, and older pupils are able to nurture the younger ones. Leaders are committed to supporting everyone's wellbeing and good mental health. They have taken steps to monitor staff workload and set up a wellbeing club for pupils. Leaders have reflected on their approach to monitoring lessons and feeding back so that it is completely positive and constructive. There is a highly engaging curriculum which motivates learners well, and appropriate help for those who find learning more difficult. Pupils who find learning challenging are especially well supported and feel safe in this small community. These steps help to ensure that all pupils, irrespective of their background, flourish, making good and often outstanding progress.

A strong partnership has been set up with Sierra Leone. As a result, pupils begin to understand Christianity as a global faith and also realise that they can help those who are less fortunate to flourish. Pupils also support local and national charities to express their determination to make a difference. They are encouraged to be advocates for a better world through special activities such as 'no plastic' day. They know it is their responsibility to look after God's creation. After a recent trip to an aquarium, they wrote to say thank you but also pointed out to the organisers that they were selling a lot of plastic toys in the gift shop. Pupils develop their resilience to cope with challenges and they are beginning to understand that some questions about their lives are impossible to answer. They behave extremely well and are rewarded well for being 'the best that they can be' and for working together as a team. They understand how they can apply the Christian vision and values to the situations they encounter, for example, when they have a disagreement. Relationships are respectful and harmonious. Adults show Christian

compassion for pupils so that they develop confidence and ambition. Pupils and adults treat one another with dignity.

Pupils and adults grow in spirituality through prayer, reflection and stillness. Worship is seen as a journey which transforms and reenergises. Pupils particularly benefit from opportunities to reflect outdoors, for example, standing silently on the bridge overlooking the river on a frosty morning. Adults feel greatly uplifted and sustained through worship. It is carefully planned to engage pupils fully and gives them relevant and memorable experiences. Many resources and stories are used so that pupils learn about events in the Christian calendar and Bible passages in meaningful and engaging ways. Pupils develop beyond an age appropriate understanding of the Trinity, seeing the three candles lit for worship as representing God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils were introduced to the sacrament of Eucharist when they made bread, broke it into pieces and shared it with one another. Different staff and the incumbent lead worship weekly so that pupils enjoy different styles of worship. They learn a range of Christian prayers and frequently offer up their own spontaneous prayers. Pupils shape their worship because they are often invited to choose the topic and style of worship they would most enjoy and draw on their favourite stories and activities. This enables leaders to know if worship always meets the needs of the pupils. They worship in church at special times and especially look forward to these, when they are often joined by parents and parishioners. This reinforces the sense of being one united community and of the school's vision for everyone to flourish through working together. The school supports the other schools in the federation in developing their worship, demonstrating the strength of its commitment that they should all be 'the best that they can be'.

RE is very engaging and helps pupils to understand the Christian faith as well as other world faiths through practical and memorable activities. For example, to help them remember what happens on Shrove Tuesday they held a pancake race. The curriculum is enquiry based and pupils are relaxed about discussing different opinions. Recently they have been talking about 'why Christians celebrate Harvest' and 'have we spoilt the world?' Pupils enjoy learning about different faiths and see it as a way of helping them to get on with everyone they meet. They make consistently good progress. Pupils visit local places of worship to gain first-hand experience of a range of traditions. The RE leader supports colleagues well with their planning, resources and assessment so that teachers can plan lessons which are relevant and engaging. She monitors learning in RE and supports the federation schools skilfully so that they all benefit from her expertise. Teachers benefit from good professional development. RE provision is in line with the expectations for Church of England schools.

By 'being the best that they can be' and working as a team, pupils and adults flourish in this school. The Christian vision, passionately articulated by leaders and governors and clearly understood by all stakeholders, permeates every aspect of this excellent school's work.

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| Executive Headteacher | Marie-Claire Parsons |
| Inspector's name and number | Gill Walley 644 |