

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Dennington Church of England VC Primary School

Address	Laxfield Road, Dennington, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP13 8AE		
Date of inspection	5 March 2019	Status of school	Academy inspected as VC Primary
Diocese	St Edmundsbury and Ipswich	URN	146234

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

School context

Dennington is a primary school with 63 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is in line with national averages. The school joined the All Saints Multi Academy Trust (ASST) in September 2018. The executive headteacher has been in post at Dennington since the school joined the trust and has overall responsibility for three schools.

The school's Christian vision

We want the best for each member of our school – learning and growing through Christian values, gladly working in partnership with each other, with home, church and the community – guided by the hand of God. This is underpinned by the biblical verse: Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid or discouraged for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9)

Key finding.

- The school's distinctive Christian vision shapes its partnerships which enable pupils to flourish. The strong links with local churches have supported the school in raising its Christian distinctiveness.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to all that they do show a living out of the school's Christian vision and values.
- Leaders' perceptive understanding of the school's context has resulted in a range of opportunities for pupils to be courageous and widen their horizons.
- Religious Education (RE) and collective worship make a valuable contribution to pupils' understanding of the biblical roots of the school's Christian values and their relevance in the everyday life of the school.
- Recent changes to the leadership and status of the school have meant that the school has not fully involved all stakeholders in strategically monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness as a Church school.

Areas for development

- Develop a strategic and systematic programme of monitoring and evaluating by all stakeholders to effectively evaluate the impact of its Christian vision.
- Enhance pupils' spiritual development through further planned opportunities for pupils to explore 'big questions' and reflect on their own beliefs which they are able to express in a variety of ways.
- Extend the opportunities for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate worship so that they have greater ownership.

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 of wanting the best for all is clearly seen in the way all pupils and adults are valued within this caring, inclusive family. Leaders have developed the vision in response to its context as a small rural school serving its community. The recent review of the vision, and addition of a biblical verse to support it, has ensured a renewed focus by all stakeholders. The vision and verse, displayed together throughout the school, are a focus for all, inspiring them to strive to be the best they can be, knowing that God is with them. Leaders talk about how learning and growing through Christian values is an important part of the school's vision. They see them as firmly rooting the vision in Jesus' teaching. Christian values, for example perseverance and forgiveness, underpin curriculum planning, embedding them in everyday life. Leaders ensure that all stakeholders work in partnership to achieve the best for each member of the school community. This is evident in the way staff work closely with parents. As a result, overall standards are improving and progress is broadly in line with national averages. Leaders have a clear understanding of strengths and areas for development. Targeted interventions enable vulnerable pupils to overcome barriers to learning and make similar progress to their peers.

The school's Christian vision, reflected in policies, underpins relationships at all levels as adults and pupils learn and grow together through Christian values. Relationships between all members of the community are good, with mental health and wellbeing a priority. Pupils talk about how they have learnt to persevere, 'build a bridge and get over it' when problems or differences arise. They say if they have any worries there is always a friend or adult in school they can talk to. Early intervention resources nurture less confident pupils, giving them the skills they need to succeed both socially and academically. Wanting the best for each member of the school, means that pupils are treated with dignity and respect and difference is celebrated. This is evident in the kindness and friendship shown to all and recognised by stakeholders as an example of the way the school lives out its Christian vision. Pupils say they look after and help each other in both academic and social situations and this is evident throughout. They attribute their behaviour to Christian values that form part of the school's vision. Parents talk of the school living up to its vision as it 'brings out the best' in their children, giving them confidence to grow and flourish as individuals. Staff describe the family ethos of the school where all are known and valued.

The school has been through a period of change in recent years. Governors' decisions for the school's future have been underpinned by its vision. All Saints Multi Academy Trust was chosen as it was closest to the school's vision. The trust is passionate about developing small schools within their community and supporting them to live out their distinctive Christian vision. School to school support is firmly established at leadership level. Schools share expertise and training opportunities to address identified needs. This enables middle leaders to develop their knowledge of Church school leadership, preparing them for future senior leadership. Close working with the diocese ensures that church schools within ASST are aware of developments in church school education and are equipped to respond to them. Bespoke support from the diocese enabled the school to identify and begin work on key areas for development such as enhancing areas for quiet reflection. Governors have attended training on leading church schools, enabling them to hold the school to account and ensure it lives up to its vision of achieving the best for all its members.

Leaders are sensitive to the rural, mono-cultural context of the school. The vision challenges individuals to be strong and courageous. This shapes leaders' approach to the curriculum and the planning of enriching experiences for pupils. A multi-faith day challenged their thinking, increasing their appreciation of different faiths and beliefs. Older pupils visit London to experience a range of cultures. As a result of the understanding they have gained, pupils show respect for differences and diversity. They feel comfortable to express their own views. Pupils begin to challenge inequality when they raise money to help pay for a young South African boy's education. They appreciate the differences between his life and their own. They work in partnership with the community when they raise money for a local hospice. Pupils talk about taking part in sporting and musical extra-curricular activities. They say they are all encouraged to be courageous, take part and be the best they can be.

Leaders work in close partnership with churches and the local community to ensure that worship in school and church is invitational and inclusive. All staff and local church leaders lead collective worship, which has a strong focus on embedding Christian values rooted in Bible stories. This develops pupils' understanding of how Christian values support the school in living out its vision. Pupils say they show the values in their everyday lives and are

proud to receive a token in recognition of this. They describe how Bible stories inform their behaviour and attitudes. Pupils have a good understanding of the main Christian festivals, for example Easter, and their significance to Christians. Fortnightly acts of worship in the church, together with seasonal celebrations, give pupils an understanding of local Anglican traditions for example, liturgical colours. Pupils associate candles with worshipping God, thinking of Jesus as the light of the world and as a focus for reflection. Pupils take an active part in worship and join in enthusiastically with action praise songs. Older pupils prepare the worship space and play a supporting role. They do not yet have opportunities to plan and lead worship themselves. Pupils say they value personal prayer as an opportunity to talk to God, to thank him or ask for help.

Pupils are challenged to explore spiritual and ethical issues and answer 'big questions' such as 'What is God like?' to deepen their understanding in RE. They do not as yet have opportunities to do this in the wider curriculum. End of unit assessments are used to effectively inform future planning. The RE lead attends training and supports staff in their planning, enabling them to successfully use local resources. Pupils have a sound understanding of core theological concepts in the different religions they encounter in RE. They reflect on how God wants them to live.

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