

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Whatfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Vision

Our small school is 'like a small mustard seed, which is smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants'. (Mark 4:30-32)

Whatfield Church of England 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

- A clear Christian vision drives the school's actions. The parable of the mustard seed is reflected in the support for growth for those in the school community. Milestones of these achievements are regularly reinforced and celebrated. As a result, pupils and adults are enabled to flourish.
- Effective support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEND) and/or are disadvantaged, is a strength. Staff training, tailored interventions, and partnerships have resulted in robust provision for these pupils. Consequently, they thrive and their needs are met.
- Whatfield is an accepting environment where there is a culture of nurture, compassion and inclusion. This includes a responsibility to staff in supporting their wellbeing. The school is a place where looking after each other is a priority.
- Led by the vision, the school has developed a rich and varied curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities. This includes the creative use of outdoor space, which in turn, enables pupils to develop spiritually.

Development Points

- Review the curriculum provision for religious education (RE) to ensure that Christianity forms 50% of what is taught to all pupils. This will allow pupils to develop a better understanding of Christianity.
- Develop a school wide understanding of spirituality so that there is a clear language with which to discuss it. This will enable pupils and adults to have a way of considering 'awe and wonder' moments which will support their spiritual development.



Inspection Findings

The school's vision is centred on the parable of the mustard seed. It reflects the commitment to the nurture, growth and development of pupils and adults. Leaders' actions are driven by this distinctiveness. They have established a school culture of 'growing and learning together' in love. The vision is also a compassionate response to the school's context and pupils' needs. It shapes the provision for the spiritual, moral, cultural and academic development of pupils. Staff are encouraged to grow through continuing professional development and strengthen their expertise. Such training has enabled a breadth of provision for pupils with SEND. Staff feel confident in their professional abilities because of their access to training. They work collaboratively across the federation with Bildeston school. This partnership positively impacts many facets of school life including staff development, the curriculum and extra-curricular provision. Governor engagement in training, including with the diocese, allows them to effectively monitor church school life. This regular evaluative process enables them to make informed decisions.

Underpinned by the vision, the curriculum provides rich learning experiences. This is because the strategies, actions, and decisions of leaders enable pupils to thrive. Whatfield is a small school where pupils are cared for and support is carefully tailored to meet the range of needs. They are enabled to develop a range of lifelong skills and are happy and confident. Pupils with SEND are also effectively supported because of carefully planned provision. This has been achieved by a skillful harnessing of staff expertise, deliberate planning and adaptations made to the curriculum. The impact of this is that these pupils achieve extraordinary personal milestones. These small successes are celebrated, which is a feature of the school. The curriculum and extra-curricular activities such as craft club and learning to play an instrument provide many varied opportunities for spiritual development. These also help develop pupil confidence. Through nurture, guidance and support, pupils' rich experiences enhance their spiritual flourishing. In line with the vision, outside spaces have been creatively developed to enable pupils to grow through play. Spaces around the school have been developed to support flourishing including sensory spaces, the continuous provision area and the pond. The woodland space and the Philippino hut are used to allow for reflection time in nature. A variety of trips, including to Norfolk lakes, activities week and the 'Big Sing' enhance spiritual development and broaden pupils' experiences. As a result, pupils talk enthusiastically about their enjoyment of such opportunities. While spiritual development is intrinsic to the curriculum, there is not yet a clearly understood language with which to discuss spirituality.

Collective worship is an enjoyable part of the school day. This is evident in the enthusiasm and engagement of pupils. They take pride in setting up the worship space, lighting the candle and leading prayers. Spiritually there are many moments for pupils to grow and reflect through stillness and prayer. The variety of opportunities offered for worship such as drama and pupil led activities support spiritual flourishing. This is particularly evident in the way the whole school sign using Makaton when singing favourite worship songs. Paintings from across the world of different bible parables invite pupils to consider how Christianity is a global living faith. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about the importance of collective worship in their own lives and in being able to come together as a school community. Staff appreciate the opportunity for reflection that collective worship time offers. The partnership with St Margaret's Church, further strengthens the worship experience. Weekly visits by the lay minister engages pupils to share in worship through biblical teaching. Pupils look forward to their visits to the church to celebrate Christian festivals.



Driven by the vision, leaders are committed to creating and maintaining a school environment that is inclusive and nurturing. This has been achieved by compassionately working with pupils, parents and staff. By liaising with them and using surveys, leaders know the community and make informed decisions to enable pupils to grow and learn together. The school has adopted clear strategies to provide emotional support for pupils at Whatfield. Social and emotional support programmes, including drawing and talking therapy, promote the wellbeing of pupils. Whole school approaches to this, reinforced in each classroom, help pupils to have an understanding of their emotions and feelings. This is further enabled by the spaces around school that have been adapted to meet needs. Quality professional development enables staff to offer informed support. Parents rightly endorse the positive difference that this school makes. They value the exceptional support and care offered to them. One parent commented, 'My child has been taught that they have value and worth.' Staff wellbeing is a priority, as is being mindful of staff workload. Staff acknowledge the deep care and compassion shown to them by leaders in the school in the ways that they feel welcomed and supported. This has ensured an environment where pupils and adults thrive.

Student leadership fosters a culture of justice and responsibility. This is evident in the practical efforts and work of the 'Whatfield Advocates' and the pupil traffic officers. As an outworking of the vision, this also extends to having a social responsibility towards those in the local community. Pupils are keen to share in the local village campaigns. Raising awareness of potential traffic hazards and care for the environment by litter picking, are examples of this. Participation in Christingle services and carols at the local care home demonstrates how pupils positively impact their community. Emerging from their sense of social action they have raised funds for causes that are meaningful to them. This is another expression of their care and compassion for others. A visit with a local M.P., has developed pupil awareness about issues such as the climate and the welfare of the local community. The school actively lives out its vision in its partnerships with other small schools to engage in training and offer support. Staff work with other schools including those in the Hadleigh Pyramid group. This demonstrates the school's outward-looking approach and responsibility towards others. As such, it is an expression of its Church school foundation.

Leaders have ensured that religious education (RE) has a high profile. The curriculum provides opportunities to have many first-hand experiences of a range of worldviews. It is sequential and develops a comparative understanding of different beliefs. These include Judaism, Islam and Buddhism. The recent pupil survey of RE captured their engagement and enjoyment of the RE curriculum. Visits to local places of worship, including to a Mosque, make learning memorable. These opportunities enable pupils to meaningfully understand a range of religions and worldviews. The Year 5 and Year 6 class trip to the local church invited pupils to consider signs of Jesus. Resources used, including artifacts, reinforce the idea of Christianity as a global living faith that is celebrated in different ways. Supported by the diocese, the curriculum provides many opportunities to critically engage with RE and ask key questions about beliefs. However, currently, the RE curriculum plans do not always clearly reflect the school's commitment to teaching at least 50% Christianity.

Information

Address	Rectory Road, Whatfield, Suffolk. IP7 6QU		
Date	12.11.24	URN	124718
Type of school	Voluntary Controlled	No. of pupils	36
Diocese	St Edmundsbury and Ipswich		
Federation	The partnership of Bildeston Primary and Whatfield Church of England VC Schools		
Head of School	Charlotte Clarke		
Executive Headteacher	Julia Shaw		
Chair of Governors	Heather Williams		
Inspector	Claire Gibson		