

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Eastry Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Address Cooks Lea, Eastry, Kent CT13 0LR

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish

Overall grade **Good**

The impact of collective worship **Good**

School's vision

Learning and growing, side by side in God's love

Our school family is committed to sustaining and growing a nurturing learning community. We strive to promote a welcoming and open ethos to ensure all feel happy, safe and respected. We value each member of our community as unique individuals where all are encouraged and inspired to fulfil their potential as God intended.

Key findings

- Driven by the school's Christian vision, there is a fresh impetus from the headteacher, strongly supported by the governing body and staff, to create a learning community where all can flourish. This has influenced decision making, policies and practice at all levels. These changes are at an early stage of development.
- The high value placed on each individual as unique, inspires care for all. This results in nurturing relationships within the school family to create a happy, safe and respected community. This was particularly exemplified during the recent pandemic.
- The value placed on the individual child is central to growing a learning community and thus pupil progress. Opportunities for pupils to develop their self-worth beyond the classroom through clubs, activities, such as the forest school, and a range of pupil leadership roles, encourage and inspire pupils to fulfil their potential as God intended.
- Collective worship offers a safe place for thinking and reflecting on the big questions in life. This, along with forest schooling, helps support pupils' spiritual development. Specific planning for spiritual development within the curriculum is less well developed.
- Religious Education (RE) acts as a safe place to discuss a range of religions and spiritual ideas. As a result, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of Christian belief and practice, as well as an understanding of a range of world religions.

Areas for development

- Embed the development plans which leaders have put in place, to sustain the school's ongoing journey of effective Church school improvement.
- Sustain developments in the RE curriculum by enabling greater opportunities for exploration of the themes beyond the written word, so that all pupils flourish.
- Ensure that opportunities for spiritual development are planned within the whole school curriculum, so that pupils are able to develop their thinking further.

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 Christian vision has underpinned the school developments that have been undertaken at Eastry. This follows a period of leadership instability. Strongly supported by the governing body, the current headteacher, appointed in May 2020, has led significant changes. These have particularly impacted on the curriculum development plans and behaviour policies. Rooted in God's love, her effective skills in communicating the school's vision and its impact on school development, has ensured the willing support of all staff and earned the respect of parents and pupils. This has been particularly important as the changes were introduced and implemented during the recent pandemic. Regular monitoring by governors is supporting the embedding and evaluation of the developments within the school.

Strong partnerships with the diocese, through staff training, and support from the local authority and the Star Alliance, a group of local schools, essential changes that were needed have been implemented. As a result, the curriculum has been reinvigorated and effectively meets the learning needs of pupils.

The role of subject leaders has been crucial in developing a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils. Topic themes and big questions, with 'wow' experiences, engage pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Strategies to build resilience and perseverance have a positive impact on pupils' independence in learning and subsequent progress. During the pandemic, the school clearly demonstrated how each one could learn and grow in God's love. The school thus sustained learning for all pupils. This was through work in school, for some pupils, or through online learning. In line with the school's vision, great care was taken to enable all individuals to access their learning. Some were provided with laptops. Others were given an individualized curriculum that focused on their nurture and wellbeing. This included one to one support online for some and the introduction of a book shed on the playground to facilitate the exchange of reading books for others.

The school's inspire days have broadened pupil's horizons beyond the school. These days examine issues such as refugees, Black History month and homelessness. The themes encourage dignity and respect for all. As a result, pupils develop a concern for justice for those in need, as well as an understanding of the plight of those who suffer nationally and internationally. A further impact of these topics is to inspire a desire to raise funds for charities that support these causes. Following nominations by pupils, it is the work of the School Council to decide which charities are to be supported and how. Although at an early stage of development, this represents a growing understanding of courageous advocacy within pupils of all ages.

Pupils have been inspired to fulfil their potential as God intended beyond the classroom, through a range of clubs, as well as the forest school. All pupils take an enthusiastic part in the outdoor forest school setting. Times to be still and quiet at the start of these sessions, as well as times to experience a sense of awe and wonder in creation, support pupils' spiritual development. Other activities enable pupils to work co-operatively and in turn allow pupils to feel calm and live well together. This facilitates a readiness to learn in the indoor environment. At present opportunities for spiritual development in the wider curriculum are less well planned.

Reflecting the schools' vision, the nurture of pupils, families and staff is at the heart of the school's practice. The Family Liaison Officer (FLO) and Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) play a crucial part in supporting the wellbeing of pupils. They have put in place effective programmes to support all pupils, demonstrating that each child is unique. This was particularly apparent during the recent pandemic. Careful monitoring of pupils' mental health has enabled the staff to respond promptly to pupil anxieties. A focus on building resilience following the pupils return to full time schooling and a nurture group that fosters positive pupil behaviours and engagement with school, demonstrate God's love for each child. Pupil leadership roles, including peer mentors and buddies, develop pupil self-worth and a happy and safe community. The school's welcoming and open ethos has helped establish positive relationships with parents. The use of online communications with parents, initiated during the pandemic, has been sustained. Parents value this close communication with the school and their daily involvement with their child's education.

Effective strategies to support staff mental health have created a happy staff. As a result, they are willing to support the changes that needed to be implemented within the school. Consistent recognition and celebration of their work by the headteacher and governors has demonstrated their value. In turn staff are mutually supportive of each other.

Collective worship is a central part of the school day when the school family comes together. The vision and values are lived out and reflected in the chosen themes and illustrations. Pupils take a part in the leadership of worship carrying out specific roles, such as lighting the candle or managing the IT equipment. The ethos group are involved in planning and leading worship. The pupils enjoy sharing their thoughts and ideas about key questions in this safe environment. The majority of pupils sing and do the actions to songs enthusiastically. In their feedback pupils recognize that they are inspired to change their behaviours or thinking in response to the themes. Parents are equally enthusiastic about school worship, valuing the times that they are able to join worship either in person or virtually. This ensures that they feel part of the school family. Staff also value the worship as a time of calm and quiet reflection. Each class has their own reflection corner. Pupils use these in their own way for restoring a sense of peace and calm in a busy day. Pupils write their own prayers for the reflection corners, especially in Key Stage 1.

Pupils enjoy learning about and display a good understanding of Christianity and a range of world religions. During lessons pupils show considerable respect towards each other, listening and participating in discussion of big questions. Pupils record their learning in their books weekly. Challenge questions allow pupils to reflect more deeply on the topics. Book monitoring has shown that activities within RE have often been focused on written responses. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to express their learning in a range of creative ways, something identified by pupils. Support has been given to develop the leadership of RE and the skills and knowledge of teachers in the teaching of Understanding Christianity and world religions by the diocese. This has resulted in confident RE leadership and teachers.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	18 October 2021	URN	118685
Date of previous inspection	29 September 2014		
School status	Voluntary controlled primary	NOR	181
Name of MAT/Federation	N/A		
Diocese	Canterbury		
Headteacher	Sarah Moss		
Pupil profile	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 is above national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)	The school has been through a period of considerable changes in leadership, with five different leaders since 2019.		
Inspector's name	Elizabeth Pettersen	No.	557