

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Firle Church of England VC Primary School	
Address	The Street, Firle, Lewes, BN8 6LF
School vision	
<p>We seek to work collectively with our whole school community to create a cooperative environment in which both pupils and adults can flourish. Underpinned by Christian values and practices, we are an inclusive, caring school that embraces diversity, tolerance and dignity for all. We encourage creativity and imagination and strive to inspire pupils with the very best learning experiences delivered through an engaging and aspirational curriculum.</p> <p>‘Inspiring learning for Life’ is underpinned by John Chapter 10 verse 10: ‘I am come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly’.</p>	
School strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The vision statement, enhanced through its associated Christian values, is the driving force for decisions, actions and daily life in the school. • Shaped by the vision, a strong sense of community means that all have space, encouragement and support to thrive. • The vision-inspired curriculum engages all pupils and reflects the school's context. The inclusive environment supports those pupils who are vulnerable, enabling them to flourish. • Collective worship is an important expression of the school's Christian vision. All present benefit from time of stillness and prayer. It allows opportunities for pupils and adults to develop their personal spirituality. • Effective leadership in religious education (RE) has established a relevant and creative curriculum. This enhances pupils' knowledge and understanding of a range of worldviews and faiths, including Christianity. 	
Areas for development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen systems to monitor this as a Church school. This is to ensure that all leaders have a clear understanding of the impact of the Christian vision on pupils and adults. • Establish a shared understanding of spirituality across the school community. This is so that spiritual opportunities can be explored in greater depth. 	
Inspection findings	
<p>Firle Church of England Primary School is committed to its biblically rooted Christian vision of inspiring learning for life. It is a welcoming and inclusive school where everyone is known as an individual and nurtured to flourish. Jesus’ words ‘I am come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly’ (John 10:10) inspires the vision. Leaders interpret this through their decisions and actions to provide a wealth of opportunities for all pupils and adults. As a result, the vision and its associated Christian values are lived out daily in this happy school.</p>	

Leaders, including governors are guided by the vision when making strategic decisions. They are committed to the school and their community. Responding to the needs of pupils and families, leaders strive to ensure that the academic and personal needs of all are met. Governors visit the school regularly and a clear system for monitoring is in place. However, the clarity of focus on understanding the impact of the Christian vision on the lives of people is less developed. The information gathered does not always lead to next steps for improvement.

A strong sense of community means that all have encouragement and guidance to thrive. Deeply embedded Christian values, rooted in Bible stories, are lived out by all and are a clear expression of the vision. Pupils understand the impact of living the values on others around them. As a result, behaviours such as respect and kindness underpin highly positive relationships. Inclusion and wellbeing are prioritised. Secure partnerships are built with parents to gain a shared understanding of the uniqueness of each child. All staff are sensitive to the emotional needs of pupils. A whole school approach boosts pupils' self-awareness, and supports learners considered to be vulnerable to succeed. This tailored approach has improved attendance for some pupils. Effective specialist help enables pupils to develop their confidence, skills and interests. Adults in all roles benefit from opportunities for professional development. The positive and nurturing environment ensures the wellbeing of all.

Shaped by the vision, the curriculum responds to the school's rural location. It expands pupils' knowledge, experience and horizons. A programme that encourages pupils to work with others from different age groups develops strong skills of cooperation and collaboration. Pupils are articulate and proud to share their learning and knowledge. Creative and practical experiences within the curriculum foster a love of learning. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those deemed vulnerable, are carefully supported. Leaders ensure that targeted learning provisions are readily available. The engaging curriculum offers pupils moments of spiritual growth. However, these are underdeveloped, and without a shared understanding of spirituality, opportunities are limited.

As a result of commitment to the vision, pupils have a keen sense of justice and responsibility towards others. Pupils build strong bonds within school and are inspired to help others. Leadership roles in the form of the school and eco councils encourage pupil contributions. Their views effectively contribute to shaping playground improvements and supporting local projects such as litter picking. Motivated by learning about the planet, pupils are inspired to care for the world around them. Their determination to reduce the use of plastic straws has resulted in a ban on single use plastics. Links with Brighton and Hove City Mission enable pupils to appreciate the challenges of people who are homeless. Pupils compare their response to help them by providing food at harvest time with an expression of a Christian way of living.

Collective worship is central to the school community and a key expression of the vision. It is fully inclusive, inspirational, and thought provoking. Pupils have an impressive knowledge of Bible stories and make relevant links between the parables and how they live. Pupils and adults benefit from the spiritual experience of gathering together. Following the Church calendar, there is a consistent structure including discussion, reflection and time to pray. The school community enjoys singing. This makes a strong contribution to the sense of belonging and provides opportunity for spiritual growth. Partnership with the parish church enriches school life. Parents are welcomed at celebrations held in church to mark Christian festivals. They remark on the spiritual warmth they experience during worship and the strong sense of community that being together brings. Although spaces for reflection are offered in the playground and classrooms, opportunities for personal spiritual reflection are limited.

Leaders have carefully considered the design and balance of the RE curriculum. The subject has a

strong profile in the school. Leaders ensure staff benefit from high quality professional development. This enables them to understand how pupils learn best and make sense of the world and what people believe. As a result, pupils are committed to learning in RE. They are articulate and engage in quality discussions with thought and consideration for others. Pupils explain their learning in detail and appreciate the impact of belief on society. They are encouraged to express their understanding through a variety of activities inspired by the use of high quality resources. Pupils show deep understanding of Christianity as a living global faith and of a range of religions and worldviews. Lessons are a safe space for the discussion of faith, philosophical concepts and human science. Learning is enhanced through visits to places of worship including a mosque in Crawley and a synagogue in Hove.

Firle School benefits from being part of the Oak Tree Federation. The sharing of expertise and opportunities for regular professional development support staff across the school. Close partnership with the diocese ensures that the school continuously strengthens and builds on its Christian foundation. Motivated by the vision for all to have an abundant life, children at Firle School are guided to flourish as individuals.

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

Information			
Inspection date	22 January 2024	URN	114525
VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary controlled	Pupils on roll	62
Diocese	Chichester		
MAT/Federation	The Oak Tree Federation		
Executive headteacher	Rachel West		
Chair	Debra Vice Holt		
Inspector	Susan Costa	No.	902