

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bodiam Church of England Primary School

Vision

Our vision for our Christian community at Bodiam CE Primary School is that our pupils feel valued for who they are, reach their full potential through high quality, inspirational learning experiences and are ready for life in an ever-changing world. We aim to treat everyone in our community with compassion, friendship and tolerance, and instil high aspirations for all, underpinned by the teaching that we ‘love our neighbour as ourselves.’ (Mark 12:31)

Bodiam Church of England Primary 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

- The Christian vision of Bodiam school serves its context very well. It is a simple, yet profound, vision that results in a close-knit school community, supporting and nurturing each other day by day. The more recently added value of aspiration inspires pupils to aim for the best, especially for their very best behaviour towards others.
- A shared and powerful understanding of spiritual development has been effectively established through collective worship. As a result, pupils and staff are able to explain how they connect with themselves, others, the wider world and God. This enriches the daily experience of gathering to worship.
- Leaders have embedded a strong culture of inclusion throughout the school. It is based on a mutual understanding that each individual should receive the love that will enable them to feel valued. They effectively target resources to promote good mental health for pupils, for families and for staff.
- Within the school, there is a strong sense of personal and community responsibility. Leaders support staff extremely well, both professionally and personally. This creates a cohesive staff team which is able to serve its pupils selflessly because staff are flourishing themselves. Older pupils exercise their roles and responsibilities effectively and with pride.

Development Points

- Establish an understanding of justice which contributes to pupils’ aspirations. This is so that they grow in confidence as they seek to make a difference in an ever-changing world.
- Embed knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews within the religious education (RE) curriculum. This is so that pupils deepen their appreciation of diversity in preparation for their future lives.



Inspection Findings

Bodiam school lives out a Christian vision which is both simple yet highly effective. It is based on a commitment to serving each other in love, following the example and words of Jesus. In revising the vision recently, school leaders and staff were happy that the existing vision and its associated values worked very well. The addition of aspiration, firmly rooted in spiritual growth, was made to raise pupils' expectations and achievement and this is happening. Love for self is explained by pupils as the start of wanting to do your best for yourself. Parents and carers see that the staff do their very best for their children every day. School leaders are ambitious for the staff so that they too reach their full potential. In this small school, close partnerships with the federated school, the diocese and many external agencies make this happen. Monitoring and evaluation by a small group of governors is robust and moves the school forward as a Church school.

The curriculum is focused on a 'need to be aspirational' which came out of a vision and values day for the whole school. This has resulted in a unique two-year rolling programme for the two schools in the federation. Joint planning for teachers shares skills and interests which are mutually beneficial. There is a framing around 'big questions', looking out into the wider world and preparing pupils for their future lives. A key part of curriculum design has been the formulation of a new approach to spiritual development. With diocesan support, school leaders sat with their staff team to shape an understanding which looks 'in, out and up'. It is closely aligned to the school's Christian vision as it helps pupils and adults to think about themselves, others and God. This is starting to impact on the curriculum as well as on the extra-curricular offer of the school. Its impact on collective worship has been considerable.

Collective worship enables pupils and adults to flourish spiritually. From the time of gathering, there is a quiet sense of anticipation. Pupils are very eager to share their ideas and thoughts. In looking at Christianity as a global faith, they are able to make keen observations about images from around the world. The use of 'Picture News' is challenging pupils to consider the problems and the wonders of the wider world. Questioning encourages insightful comments from pupils of all ages. Those in worship are invited to reflect on themselves and on their responses to others. In turn, they put what they hear into action into their daily lives. Singing and prayer add joy and concern for the needs of others into worship times. Creative strategies ensure that everyone is able to be present and to sit calmly with the rest of their community. Staff describe how they are grateful to 'take a moment' for themselves in worship. Staff, parents and carers, and pupils speak warmly of a fruitful partnership with the local church. The vicar from a neighbouring village, who is currently supporting the school, says that it is his 'privilege and pleasure' to do so.

A culture of inclusion and welcome means that relationships are strong and supportive at all levels. Following a period of change in leadership, the staff has remained largely unchanged. Their strength as a cohesive team has contributed to the stability of the school and the embedding of its Christian vision and values. School leaders invest in their professional development so that 'we can follow our passions', as one teacher explained. They have also provided mental health training and support. This means that adults grow and flourish, confident that they can 'go to anyone [on the staff team] for anything'. Parents and carers choose the school because its values and moral compass are deeply instilled in their children. Families are given personal, emotional and mental support, saying that staff go 'over and beyond' for them. Pupils who have additional needs are very well integrated into the school. They are supported in their journey to achieve in something they enjoy and provided with the practical and human resources needed. All of this is rooted in the relationships which school leaders and their team model and build.



There is a strong sense of responsibility within the school community. This flows from the vision which builds an understanding that love of one's neighbour is central for day-to-day living. Staff serve their pupils and families with the attitude that 'we never say no' which is praised by parents and carers. This reflects a high level of personal and school-wide responsibility for the best possible care and nurture of others. School leaders ensure that a behaviour policy based on restoration and reflection fosters personal responsibility and tolerance. This means that pupils behave very well, creating a calm and purposeful environment for learning and for social times. For parents and carers, it is important that older pupils give so much care and support to the younger children as buddies and helpers. Year 5 and 6 pupils are active in roles which make their school a better place. In looking outwards, the school contributes to its local community by visiting care homes and marking Remembrance Day, for example. They raise funds for those who are less fortunate than themselves. However, their window on the wider world and its lack of justice for those in need is limited.

The introduction of a revised curriculum for RE has increased staff confidence and pupil engagement. Pupils enjoy sharing their knowledge and understanding through creative approaches. The use of floor-books to record RE thinking has been particularly effective in capturing and supporting learning. It means that there are more regular, deeper discussions through which the contributions of all pupils are valued and celebrated. This is a highly inclusive and accessible approach, encouraging more reflection than previously. One pupil said, 'Our floor-books give us time to talk about questions like "what happens if you choose not to pray?". Another explained how she was allowed to express her own opinion and not always agree with others. As the curriculum has not yet completed its initial two-year cycle, there are gaps in the understanding of some of the major world faiths. However, a recent online discussion with an imam helped Key Stage 2 pupils to consider some of the challenges of living as a Muslim in Britain today. Joint working with the other school in the federation contributes in positive ways to the embedding of good practice in RE.

Information

Address	Castle Road, Bodiam, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5UH		
Date	25 November 2024	URN	114529
Type of school	Voluntary Controlled	No. of pupils	66
Diocese	Chichester		
Federation	Riverside Federation		
Headteacher	Cherane Marshall		
Chair of Governors	Beverley Waldis and Louise Reader		
Inspector	Virginia Corbyn		