

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Finchingfield Church of England Primary School

Address	Vicarage Road, Finchingfield Essex CM7 4LD		
Date of inspection	31 January 2019	Status of school	VC primary
Diocese	Chelmsford	URN	115107

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

Finchingfield is a primary school with 43 pupils on roll. The school has very low levels of religious and cultural diversity and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is above national averages. The mobility of pupils is high as some families come from the nearby military base. Since the previous denominational inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed.

The school's Christian vision

Together we grow healthy bodies, loving hearts and inquisitive minds, living life in all its fullness. John 10:10

Key findings

- The dedicated leadership of the headteacher and the passionate vision of the deputy headteacher and religious education [RE] subject leader ensure that this Church school is a transformative community where the academic and spiritual needs of all are met, and all are enabled to flourish.
- The school's chosen Christian values, whilst relatively new, enable this small Christian family community to live well together and show respect for one another.
- Pupils, especially those who are the most vulnerable, benefit from this being a safe and happy place in which to develop a love of learning in a spirit of kindness, forgiveness and friendship.
- Collective worship and RE offer pupils a secure space for thinking and reflection to ask and answer the big questions of life.
- Biblical stories are brought alive through whole school productions. These teach the Christian story in depth and immerse pupils in their understanding of how these are relevant for life today.

Areas for development

- Ensure there is more rigour in the explicit monitoring and evaluation of the school's Christian vision and values so that it effectively supports the school's ongoing journey of development.
- Extend the pupils' experience of diversity and difference in this rural, mono-cultural community by enabling them to meet people from a range of faiths more frequently.

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

'Our little school provides the children with the knowledge that God is all around us no matter where we are or what we do.' This comment from a parent exemplifies Finchingfield's nurturing Christian vision. It reminds the school community of God's presence within a safe and secure environment. This school is inclusive and welcoming to all, particularly those who have joined from other schools or the nearby military community. The kindness and friendship shown to all is readily articulated as being an expression of its Christian vision. Thus, the strong focus on growing loving hearts, healthy bodies and inquisitive minds is very much seen as living life in all its fullness. This is in keeping with the teachings of Jesus and it is constantly referred to in daily school life. The relatively new governing body are committed to this school's onward journey of development. Self-evaluation is in place but has been limited and lacked rigour, especially as there has not been a full complement of foundation governors until now. Of late, the school has a renewed impetus on its Christian vision and values which all subscribe to, taking everyone forward. Areas from the previous inspection have been addressed well and key priorities are strongly promoted to enable pupils and adults to flourish. Good partnerships with the diocese and other schools effectively support Church school improvement. This means that even the newest members of staff are well supported in their roles and responsibilities. The school's chosen Christian values, such as reverence and friendship, are owned by everyone, and are shaping policy and practice. Bible verses are proudly displayed around school, depicting different aspects of school life, which pupils can explain in their own words.

Growing loving hearts is a transformative process which meets the academic and spiritual needs of all. This is because the strong vision of the dedicated headteacher and the passionate deputy headteacher and RE subject leader drive the school forward. Together they ensure that all are enabled to flourish within a supportive Christian framework. Pupils' academic and personal development is being met within a broad and balanced curriculum, which reflects its Christian vision in action. In terms of living life in all its fullness, leaders affirm that this school is not just focussed on results. Rather, the school 'never gives up on a child, allowing them to be the best they can be'. This often results in pupils being championed as stars of the week. All pupils are making good progress. This is confirmed by parents who testify to the progress their children make because the school vision allows them to flourish. Whatever their ability, this school is 'so supportive'. For example, booster sessions and play therapy are often used to meet specific needs. This includes the most vulnerable pupils who are, 'made to feel good inside,' and share they, 'feel safe and not hidden in a corner'. They praise the school's leaders, saying, 'The teachers completely understand and they are totally supportive'.

Finchingfield pupils have inquisitive minds and a deep concern for justice in the world, driven by kindness. For example, they show compassion for the homeless and those affected by famine. This is confirmed by the depth of thinking and reflection in the philosophical discussions which take place in RE lessons.

The school's Christian vision underpins relationships at all levels where mental health and wellbeing is a priority. The quality of strong relationships results in good behaviour and a true spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation. Any differences are resolved on a one to one basis. Staff know the pupils so well, saying, 'It is a pleasure to converse with them' in meaningful discussions connecting faith to life. Mindfulness, yoga and stillness are offered as different approaches to living well together. All are motivated to succeed in this small Christian community where 'no one is judged and all are equals'.

Inspired by the school vision, collective worship and RE offers space for reflection by asking and seeking to answer the big questions in life. For example, what it means to be human. Inclusive and invitational worship in school or in church, which celebrates the church year, enables the extended school family to come together in respect. Whilst worship is varied in its approach each day, it has a strong focus on biblical teaching and Anglican tradition. Biblical stories are brought alive in whole school productions, such as the Nativity or Joseph. Such events are a strength of the school. Not only do they tell the Christian story in depth but they allow all pupils, including the most vulnerable, to take part and thrive. This fulfils the promise the headteacher makes to new parents, reflecting the school vision. Pupil prefects lead worship weekly in the 'holy area' in the school hall beneath the pupil-fashioned cross. Succession planning for pupil led worship is already in place and training by the prefects is engaging younger pupils well as they prepare for the prefect role. Leading worship is developing their self-confidence. For example, they encourage everyone to face new challenges and grow in courage, inspired by people of faith such as Moses. Prayer is integral to school life and is used every day throughout the day as a 'hotline to God'.

As part of living life in all its fullness, RE is extending pupils' minds and their responsibility for the wider world. With their love of learning and the world, they are 'shaping up to be the people God wants them to be'. This includes vulnerable pupils who have chance to contribute to the deep philosophical discussions which are an essential ingredient of RE lessons.

Given the rural, mono-cultural context of the school, pupils are not frequently meeting people of different faiths and cultures. Their experience is limited. However, all are treated with dignity and respect and difference is celebrated. This is because each child is respected as a unique individual and friendship is extended to all. As a result, pupils, including the most vulnerable, know the staff 'respect us for being different and we can forgive and forget'. Pupils are constantly reminded to follow Jesus' teaching as a reminder of their school's vision to grow loving hearts. For example, they proudly designed a new symbol of an empty heart through an open cross, filled with God's love. They do have a good knowledge of Christianity. They are aware of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. RE makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development. As one pupil said, 'I know who I am and who I am going to be'.

Headteacher	Lisa Feldman
Inspector's name and number	Lizzie McWhirter 244