

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Sibertswold Church of England Primary School

Address	Coldred Road, Shepherdswell, Dover, CT15 7LF		
Date of inspection	10 October 2019	Status of school	VC primary
Diocese	Canterbury	URN	118691

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	Excellent

School context

Sibertswold is a primary school with 199 pupils on roll. The school has a very low level of religious and cultural diversity and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages as is the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school is part of a federation with Eythorne Elvington community school. They share an executive headteacher and have one governing body. The school was judged as good by OfSTED in November 2018.

The school's Christian vision

Fulfilling our God-given potential

We are a school family with God at the centre, enabling us to share God's love within our community and beyond. We protect those with no voice by standing up to injustice. Every child is valued and special with individual needs driving their Sibertswold learning experience, creating an environment where we all can flourish and grow. (John 10:1-18 and Psalm 23)

Key findings

- The Christian vision and values of the school have been developed thoughtfully by the senior leaders in the school. They are very well suited to its rural context and to its commitment to meeting the needs of all pupils. The Christian narrative is well understood by school leaders but not by parents, staff and pupils.
- Spiritual development supports pupils well in their personal and academic flourishing.
- Pupils have a strong sense of courageous advocacy with an ability to speak out confidently for justice for others locally, nationally and globally.
- Collective worship is a strength. It is characterised by creative and exemplary practice, benefiting all members of the school community.
- Religious education (RE) provides a safe space in which pupils can explore their personal beliefs and opinions. In their recorded work, it is not clear how they can make their next steps of learning.

Areas for development

- Embed the theological and biblical basis of the school's vision which drives the thinking and actions of school leaders, so that this can be confidently expressed and applied by all stakeholders.
- Develop strategies which enable pupils to understand how to make their next steps of learning in RE.

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

Pupils and adults flourish and thrive at Sibertswold primary school. A theological vision which puts Jesus as the Good Shepherd at the centre of the school's thinking and daily living means that relationships, behaviour and attitudes are very positive. For the executive headteacher, the head of school and the governors, the vision is explicitly driving all aspects of the life in the school, as seen in the school's development planning. However, this theological understanding and motivation is less evident in parents', staff and pupils' articulation of what the school seeks to do and to be. For most, this is understood in terms of 'fulfilling our God-given potential' and through the living out of the school's associated values. This understanding means that all pupils grow and flourish in the school, with attainment being high and progress being good. Needs which may limit progress are quickly identified and successfully met. Individual gifts and talents within and beyond the curriculum are nurtured and celebrated. The academic and personal flourishing of pupils is securely underpinned by a wide range of opportunities for spiritual growth. Reflection is embedded across everyday life in the form of quiet areas, prayer spaces, thought provoking displays and opportunities throughout the curriculum, including within RE. This means that pupils are confident in speaking about 'what God has set before us'.

An innovative project, called Messenger Kids, which is led and organised by pupils sees them visiting local residents, especially those who are lonely. Staff, parents and governors agree that this has a significant impact within the village, and that it demonstrates the values of joy and love in action. The school's commitment to its value of justice, which is also explicit in its vision, is understood and enthusiastically articulated by pupils. Their support for those in need, including through outreach to Burkina Faso and to many local and national charities, is based on an understanding that others need help because of disadvantage and deprivation in the world. Thus, they know that their actions can make a difference. Relationships at all levels are very strong and directly linked to the school's associated values. This means that staff and pupils show love to each other, take joy in being together, make wise choices and know that they are treated fairly. Parents are confident that their child's faith is confirmed if appropriate but that all their children, those of faith or of none, are enabled to reflect on and explore their beliefs meaningfully.

Staff feel valued, saying that the school is a place where their potential is fulfilled and where they are nurtured as individuals. This, in turn, enables them to encourage all their pupils to 'shine', whatever their abilities and needs. The mental health of all members of the school community is an increasingly important consideration in all decisions made, for example about work/life balance. Partnerships with other local schools, especially with their federated school, provide good opportunities for staff development. Good use is made of diocesan training, including for leadership in a Church school. Equality and inclusion lie at the heart of the school vision and, according to governors, form the basis of their vision centred community. Pupils recognise diversity and difference by treating everyone with dignity and respect, and with love and justice. School leaders maintain the centrality of the school's vision by holding each other to account with the question, 'Is God a part of all of our discussions?' Governor monitoring provides a robust level of challenge through regular visits which test whether what the school does benefits everyone in the school community, in line with its vision and values. They trust the senior leadership team to take on additional initiatives if they will enable the community to 'blossom and grow', even if the decision to do so is hard.

School leaders have found creative and exemplary ways to enhance collective worship. For example, a forest cathedral linked to the Lambeth conference 2020 is planned as a collaboration with the Diocese. This builds on the school's exceptional practice in holding worship in the outdoor garden, in their forest school, and during the Year 6 residential day by day. Pupils confidently express the importance of worship for their school community saying that it reminds them that 'God is always watching over us' but at the same time "it builds up our confidence'. Those pupils that lead worship are clear that it is their role to explain a message to their community. They do this with maturity and thoughtfulness. Worship is a place where the pupils' very positive attitudes to both learning and behaviour are explored through the example of Jesus. It is also a time to explore the value of justice that pupils understand as an important lens through which to view the world and their interactions with others, especially those beyond the school gates. There is an exceptional sense of reverence, underpinned by sung worship, prayer and reflection, which encourages all members of the community to grow spiritually. Both pupils and adults are involved in the monitoring of worship which successfully drives changes and improvement. Worship to mark the Church's year provides times of awe and wonder for the school, its families and the wider

community. Close collaboration with the local church and its leaders enriches school life in ways which go well beyond worship. Examples include opening the church each Wednesday morning to offer quiet, reflective space, ensuring that there is a growing understanding of Anglican practice and an annual communion service. Some Year 5 and 6 pupils choose to be confirmed.

RE is well led and the leader has a good understanding of next steps for the subject. The Understanding Christianity resources are well established, reflecting the Church of England Statement of Entitlement. Appropriate training has been provided for teachers. This means that their confidence and competence are in evidence through teaching and learning for the subject. Pupils understand that RE helps them to understand difference and diversity in the world through their learning about the major world faiths. They also have a keen sense that RE is a subject in which their own ideas are valued and developed, giving them 'the freedom to write what we want'. They enjoy the big questions, based on Christian concepts, which deepen their thinking, especially when these are explored in creative ways, such as through art or poetry. Assessment is secure, but pupils are not able to explain how they can make the next steps in their learning.

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