

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Isleham Church of England (VC) Primary School

Vision

'Let your light shine' (Matthew 5:16)

Flourishing together in a Christian community

At Isleham Church of England (VC) School, as a Christian school we aim to value and respect every individual. We promote resilience, excellence and discovery. Everyone can succeed and be the best they can be. We aim to provide an environment where all can flourish and let their light shine.

Isleham Church of England (VC) 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

- Effective leadership and supportive and knowledgeable governors have created a learning environment with its Christian vision at its heart. Members of this school community live by the vision and this enables pupils and adults to flourish.
- The school's Christian vision provides an exceptional culture of care and compassion in which barriers to learning are overcome. This enables pupils, including those who have special educational needs and / or disabilities (SEND) or who are vulnerable or disadvantaged to succeed.
- The school's carefully planned curriculum, and the extra-curricular activities offered, provide many opportunities for pupils to let their light shine.
- The mental health and wellbeing of staff is a priority for school leaders. This means that adults in school can flourish as professionals. As a result, they provide caring and excellent role models to pupils.
- Pupils understand how to apply the school's Christian vision responsibly and justly to make positive changes. Consequently, they actively and confidently engage in charitable action and support within the local community.

Development Points

- Embed the newly constructed long-term RE plan to enable pupils to have a deeper understanding of Christianity and a range of religions and worldviews.
- Maximise planned opportunities across the whole curriculum to extend the impact of the school's shared approach to spiritual development.



Inspection Findings

Isleham Primary School has a clear Christian vision that reflects the school's ambitions for its pupils and community. The biblical encouragement to 'let your light shine' inspires staff, pupils and governors alike. The vision underpins the school's aim to support both the academic achievement and positive wellbeing of its pupils. Leaders invest in the staff and prioritise their wellbeing, enabling them to work effectively. The vision is deeply rooted in the everyday practice of the school. The school dedicates time to build trusting and respectful relationships with pupils and families. Consequently, it is rightly very well regarded in the local community. The vision is the lens through which strategic decisions are viewed. For example, the school's current development plan includes the priority of further enhancing mental health provision. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and next steps as a result of regular monitoring and evaluation.

The Christian vision has underpinned the development of a curriculum that provides engaging and enquiry-based learning. Outward looking leaders have taken bold actions to provide rich experiences and broaden pupils' horizons. The extensive extra-curricular programme, which includes sport and music, is highly valued by pupils, parents and staff. In this way pupils can follow and develop their interests in order to flourish and succeed. Rural isolation is not permitted to limit the education of these pupils. Visits, such as those to London, and residential trips enrich the curriculum and are considered an exciting and important part of school life. As a result, pupils enjoy school. Those who are vulnerable or have SEND have their learning needs effectively met. This is achieved through various interventions including individualised provision and adapted opportunities, enabling them to thrive. Barriers to learning are removed through compassionate support for those in challenging circumstances. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to grow spiritually. Regular references to 'window, door, mirror' moments help pupils to reflect on their learning. However, staff and governors are seeking to establish how more planned opportunities for spiritual development can be built into the curriculum.

Pupils live out the school's vision through the multiple roles of responsibility and leadership offered to them by the school. This includes eco councillors who take very seriously their role of taking care of the local environment, for example litter picking around the village. Junior travel ambassadors work with the local parish council to find solutions to traffic issues in the village. Parents recognise the impact of the Year 6 buddy scheme in helping the youngest pupils to settle into school routines. True to the school's vision and values, pupils and staff understand their role in supporting the local community. For example, senior leaders and house captains attended the village Remembrance Day parade. A food box at the school is regularly used by those in need in the community. This leads to strong links between the school, the village and the local church. The school's behaviour policy is based on a restorative approach and consistently applied by staff. It supports pupils to treat each other with dignity and understanding. As a result, pupils accept each other's differences. There are rich opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to gain a good understanding of issues of justice and injustice. For example, the way pupils discussed and challenged injustice during a topic about the Second World War. Courageous advocacy is an important part of school life and promotes action at all levels. As a result, pupils and staff are articulate advocates for social justice. They are empowered to take action in support of others, including charity work, fundraising and planting bulbs in the local community.

Compassionate leaders seek to serve the whole school community and treat everyone well. The Christian vision creates an inclusive ethos where pupils and adults feel valued and trusted. Enabling good mental health is central to the school's work and strongly supported by the governing body. The deputy headteacher's senior mental health



lead training has led to better identification of pupils who might need additional mental health support. Emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) trained staff make sure that pupils with anxiety about coming to school are very well supported. Parents and carers are confident they can approach the school with concerns about their children and be listened to. Driven by the vision, senior leaders encourage staff professional development and carefully consider the deployment of staff. This has led to two teachers with interests in music and PE teaching these subjects across the school and leading extra-curricular activities. Consequently, pupils have additional opportunities to let their light shine. The school has supported pupils and families during particularly difficult times, such as bereavement. Pupils confidently report that adults in the school care for them. Parents rightly talk about how school staff 'go the extra mile' to nurture their children.

Daily collective worship provides an opportunity for pupils and adults to unite as a school community. Leaders thoughtfully plan worship to match the school's six Christian values to key times in the church calendar and school year. Each value is explored using a variety of ways to actively engage pupils, including drama, singing, reflection and prayer. Pupils confidently take part in leading aspects of collective worship, such as signing the songs, and take great pride in their roles of responsibility. Pupils enjoy the opportunities for reflection in collective worship and parents report positively about the impact at home of the school's vision and values. As a result, worship has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual development. Collective worship provides an opportunity to celebrate the ways staff and pupils engage in significant acts of courageous advocacy, such as staff charity fundraising. Pupils use the creative reflection spaces in each classroom and displays around school to focus on the school's Christian values. Events in the Christian calendar are celebrated with services at the local church. The vicar also contributes regularly to collective worship. Leaders engage with collective worship training from the local diocese and governors effectively monitor its impact.

The RE subject leader had identified gaps in pupils' learning so she worked closely with the local diocese to devise a new long-term whole school curriculum plan. Staff and governors access high quality training to support their teaching. Well-chosen teaching resources enable pupils to learn through the presentation of key questions at the start of topics. Floor books demonstrate the creative responses pupils can make in RE, for example through learning outdoors. They also support pupils to remember their learning. A recent RE enrichment day gave pupils the opportunity to explore how prayers and spirituality can be expressed in a variety of ways. As a result, pupils are receiving a well sequenced and diverse curriculum. However, pupils' understanding of Christianity as a diverse global faith is limited. They are not confident to make accurate comparisons between world religions. This is because the new RE plan is not yet fully embedded. Leaders, including governors, have rightly identified the development of RE as a school improvement priority.

Information

Address	Malting Lane, Isleham, Ely, Cambs, CB7RZ		
Date	20 November 2024	URN	110791
Type of school	Voluntary Controlled	No. of pupils	208
Diocese/District	Diocese of Ely		
Headteacher	Dawn Deacon		
Chair of Governors	Heather Davies and Karen Foster		
Inspector	Neil Henery		