

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Ecchinswell and Sydmonton Church of England primary school.			
Address	Ecchinswell, Newbury, Berkshire. RG20 4UA		
Date of inspection	02 December 2019	Status of school	Voluntary controlled primary
Diocese	Winchester	URN	116285

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Good
Additional Judgement	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good

School context

Ecchinswell and Sydmonton is a primary school with 71 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. No pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is above national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages. Since the last inspection there has been significant staff turnover. The headteacher has a teaching commitment of three day each week.

The school's Christian vision

Ecchinswell and Sydmonton Church of England Primary School, **a caring and loving environment**, wants every child, **through the core Christian values of respect, responsibility, inspiration and courage**, to become independent, confident and articulate individuals who are able to think for themselves, have a sense of self-value and the values of others, **have a strong social, moral and spiritual awareness**, have relevant life-skills and be able to communicate in an ever-changing world.

Key findings

- The school has re-worded its vision and recognises that the next step is to consult with the wider school community so its meaning and purpose is clearly understood.
- All the pupils, especially those who are more vulnerable, benefit from the love, care and commitment demonstrated by all adults within the school.
- The headteacher, staff and governors have created a happy, safe environment where pupils enjoy their learning in a spirit of kindness, forgiveness and friendship.
- Worship is planned around the Christian year and the school's values. These contribute to pupils' understanding of messages within the Bible and the reasons behind each special Christian festival.
- Religious education (RE) is well planned using high-quality resources. Pupils' deeper thinking is encouraged within an open, respectful learning environment.

Areas for development

- Leaders now need to embed the newly worded Christian vision and established values so that all members of the community understand how they both underpin all aspects of school life.
- Ensure all adults in the school have a shared understanding of spirituality so that planned and unplanned special moments are celebrated and reflected upon, thus supporting pupils' spiritual development.
- Deepen pupils' ownership of worship by providing more frequent opportunities for them to plan, lead and evaluate this important part of each day.
- Increase the number of opportunities for pupils to have first-hand faith encounters so that they can appreciate their similarities to and differences from Christianity.

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

Ecchinswell and Sydmonton's vision, although relatively new, works with the school's established Christian values in allowing this small Christian community to live harmoniously together. Communication of the newly worded Christian vision is now necessary so that members of the community understand how it underpins all aspects of school life. Parents speak very highly of the school's care and describe the importance of its Christian ethos within a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere. Visiting professionals compliment the school on their noticeable 'passion and rigour' for the education of each and every pupil.

A small group of dedicated staff ensure that all pupils receive personalised teaching. They recognise that pastoral support for mental and physical well-being is a pre-requisite for pupils' academic and social development. This approach has successfully raised many pupils' self-esteem and behaviour, which has positively impacted on their academic progress. The school values each pupil as unique in the eyes of God, whatever their needs.

The commitment of the Headteacher, strongly supported by her staff and governors, is clearly evident and an instrumental feature in the school's continuing development as a Christian school. Leaders ensure that new staff understand the school's Christian character and what this means for them as adults working in the school. The school works in partnership with the diocese for professional advice and training. The headteacher engages with other church school headteachers and this provides a vehicle for sharing ideas regarding Church school development.

Core Christian values of respect, responsibility, inspiration and courage are explicitly taught and often referred to during the school day, impacting positively on pupils' academic, spiritual and moral development. Pupils say they feel very proud when they are awarded a certificate in the Friday 'Star Learner' worship. Achievements outside of school are also celebrated, such as one pupil's success at being awarded a 'Blue Peter' green badge. Inspirational role models share their ambitions, skills and achievements with the pupils, such as a visiting Team GB gymnast.

Regular monitoring by the school's small but dedicated team of governors ensures they are fully aware of the school's performance, including its Christian character. This information highlights future development needs. School data shows that pupils are generally making progress in line with nationally expected standards, taking into account their individual starting points.

Pupils gain an understanding of their role in the local and wider community through their charity activities, allowing them to witness the difference that helping others can make. For example, instead of sending Christmas cards some pupils made notebooks and sold them in aid of the homeless. Pupils have a voice in choosing which local, national and global charities they want to support, some personal to them such as Cancer Research UK. The school's community has a close partnership with a school in Uganda, including both schools' teachers visiting each other. Pupils describe their appreciation of the Ugandan school's gift to them of drums made from animal skins. Ecchinswell and Sydmonton's pupils know that they are fortunate in what they have. This was shown when they compared their playground footballs to the banana skin footballs of their Ugandan partnership school's pupils.

Pupils describe their care for the environment, for example, reducing their use of plastic and recycling. They particularly enjoyed establishing their bee garden and are keen to share their knowledge regarding the importance of bees in plant pollination and food production. They explain that God created the world and they know they should look after it.

Collective Worship is central to the life of the school and pupils are able to talk confidently about its themes, which are often linked to Christian values. Pupils are attentive in worship, participating with enthusiasm, especially when singing, sharing their prayers or managing the technology. Local clergy play an active role and the vicar will be missed by the school's community when he begins his retirement. Governors are planning for the interregnum

period so that the partnership with the church remains firm whilst a new vicar is appointed. A range of worship leaders allows the children to have a variety of worship style experiences. Pupils participate in special services through the year such as Remembrance. They know the Lord's Prayer and Anglican liturgical greetings. They also have an understanding of the Trinity at an age appropriate level, describing the Holy Spirit as a 'life guide.' Pupils especially enjoy worship when they can participate. One child explained, 'Jesus is super kind and that's what we should be too.' They say the values 'help you to make the right decisions and correct yourself when you make the wrong choice, helping you learn'.

Pupils happily describe how they use prayer in their own lives and how it helps them. Each classroom has a spiritual space and pupils are keen to explain the ways in which they use them. At present there is no shared understanding of spirituality among all adults in the school, therefore, many special moments are not fully captured in ways to develop pupils' spiritual development.

The RE curriculum is impacting positively on the school's Christian character. Understanding Christianity materials have made pupils think more deeply. Teachers have been extremely pleased with the learning, including the respectful manner pupils have towards each other when discussing topics with a range of valid opinions, such as, 'Can a scientist also be a Christian?' RE assessment allows teachers to gauge the impact of RE provision, providing important information to guide future planning.

Pupils understand that Britain is a country of many faiths and cultures. They know the importance of faith to those who believe and explain that this is why all faiths should be respected. However, limited opportunities take place for pupils to have first-hand faith experiences so that they can appreciate their similarities to and differences from Christianity.

Parents say the school provides a gentle, caring environment where their children can develop and learn from their mistakes. They recognise the school's ambition for their children. Numerous opportunities are organised for parents to visit and be involved with the school's activities, including supportive parenting sessions. These events are especially appreciated by parents whose children travel to and from school on the bus as it avoids them feeling isolated and distanced from the school's community.

Headteacher	Sharon Pole
Inspector's name and number	Lorraine Pugh 819

