

# Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

<b>Wilden VA Church of England Primary School</b>			
Address	High Street, Wilden, Bedfordshire, MK44 2PB		
Date of inspection	07 November 2019	Status of school	Voluntary aided primary
Diocese	St Albans	URN	109627

<b>Overall Judgement</b>	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Additional Judgements</b>	<b>The impact of collective worship</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
	<b>The effectiveness of religious education (RE)</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Good</b>

## School context

Wilden VA School is a primary school with 52 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few 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. An interim headteacher is in place for the current term and two new appointments make up the senior leadership team. The RE leader has been in post for a year and there is a new vicar after a long vacancy.

## The school's Christian vision

The mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.

Matthew: 13:32

In partnership with parents, governors, St Nicholas Church and community, we strive to ensure all children are embraced and nurtured. Our creative curriculum teaches our children to be generous, loving, resilient, inquisitive and courageous; enabling them to flourish as they journey through God's ever changing garden of life.

## Key findings

- The school's vision enables pupils to make positive choices about how they live, behave and learn.
- Leaders have established and sustained a clear Christian vision through periods of change within the school.
- Pupils in the school community are treated as unique individuals and the whole child is developed through the school's broad curriculum that is underpinned by the Christian vision.
- RE teaching enables pupils to compare major faiths and make personal reflections based on their own faith or value systems.
- Collective worship enables participants to grow spiritually and to incorporate Christian values into their own lives.

## Areas for development

- Ensure that the relationship between the newly formed leadership team at the school, and the church is supportive and sustainable, enhancing the focus on developing the school as a Church school.
- Plan opportunities for spiritual development as part of the curriculum revision process to enable the children to access moments of awe and wonder in their school lives.
- Encourage pupils to think globally beyond their home community through both curricular and extra-curricular activities to enable them to develop a wider understanding of their place in the world.
- Develop pupils' active involvement in planning and leading worship to enable them to shape worship to their interests and develop confident oracy skills to articulate their ideas and values.

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**

Leaders have established and sustained a clear Christian vision through periods of change within the school. The Christian values are embedded and the revised vision statement has a clear Biblical basis which gives coherence and meaning to these values. Policies and how the school live together are driven by this vision. It has shaped decision-making in difficult times. Pupils say 'Our values are what we do, they are how we live. They are important to me.' Parents value the nurturing aspect of the school where every pupil is known individually, and say that the children bring the values into their lives at home as well as in school. Staff know their pupils and understand their needs and work to remove any barriers to learning. Academic outcomes have been variable with weaknesses in writing and inconsistent teaching in areas of the school, but standards are improving and have moved closer to national averages with detailed plans for improvement. The school's behaviour policy is rooted in its Christian values and uses a restorative justice approach. Pupils seek forgiveness from others and actively forgive others who have wronged, following the model established by their teachers. As the vicar stated, the pupils are 'unconsciously competent' in living out the school's vision.

The vision's values are explored in worship and are linked to a whole school reward system for the pupils. They are also shared and understood by the school community. Recommendations from the previous inspection have been addressed with some rapid progress in the new academic year which shows that leadership values the school as a church school. The RE coordinator has attended training and information has been cascaded to all staff. Pupils understand Christianity as a living faith and explore its core concepts. Lessons show age appropriate skills of enquiry and interpretation. There is a clear plan for RE development and the monitoring of RE is leading to higher academic standards. Leaders value and prioritise ethos development alongside other aspects of school improvement. Parents praise the team in school for being resoundingly positive and for offering warm relationships and approachability. Self-evaluation of the school as a church school is accurate and informs this drive for change. The leadership team have welcomed the arrival of the new parish priest and have already worked closely with him developing healthy church school partnerships. Governors are effective and have been involved in regular monitoring of the school including worship and the teaching and learning of religious education (RE).

The curriculum, including RE, has a focus on asking Big Questions as well as exploring how the children can make a difference to the world they live in. Pupils are given space to reflect and make their own contributions in lessons, which are thoughtful. Children's understanding of other religions is secure which encourages children to be tolerant and respectful of others. The school has been following the RE syllabus for the St Alban's Diocese for the past year. RE reflects the Church of England Statement of Entitlement. Issues of global significance and the ecology of the world are studied. Opportunities across the curriculum are planned for children to explore ethical topics. However, opportunities for spiritual development have not yet been fully developed as part of the current curriculum re-design. Parents and children speak in an engaged and positive manner about the new whole school topics. Questions are encouraged within the classes and an inquisitive and courageous attitude is promoted in pupils. Class teachers also focus on relevant issues around injustice or environmental concerns in class worship times. Hope and aspiration are included in worship themes. Staff know individual pupils well and take an active interest in their character development. Teachers draw on opportunities throughout the curriculum to explore relationships. Resources around the school look to challenge stereotypes and celebrate differences. Pupils are respectful and understanding to all. Pupils' awareness of other cultures is improving through recent curriculum re-design, giving them more opportunities to develop a global outlook. Pupils want to make a difference and seek to fundraise and raise awareness amongst the community about specific issues close to their hearts. However, they have a limited awareness of needs on a global scale.

There are firm links with the local diocese. The school is a member of the St Alban's Diocese school trust and has strong links with two other local schools. The school has a recently been pleased to work alongside appointed vicar to St Nicholas church. The vicar has already attended school training days as well as leading worship in the school. He works hard to build positive relationships with the school's staff and makes himself available in the school for pastoral guidance. Church wardens were active in supporting the school during the period when there was no local vicar.

Children, parents, staff and governors say they feel supported and included as members of the school community. Staff have received recent training to support their pupils with additional needs. Staff wellbeing is a priority too and the staff team enjoy positive relationships where the small caring gestures they give to each other help to make them feel valued.

Worship is an important way in which pupils are invited to reflect on the school's vision and associated values. It provides a time for the community to grow spiritually and to encounter the teachings of Jesus and the Bible. Pupils appreciate the time to reflect and incorporate Christian values into their daily lives. Worship is relevant varied and accessible to the whole school community. The school follows the Church calendar and leaders of worship make worship as creative and alive as possible. Worship includes the elements of prayer, stillness, worship and reflection which give it structure and familiarity. Worship leaders have had training and are well supported by the church team especially the new vicar. Time for reflection and prayer is built into the pattern of worship to enable a personal response from all. Prayer plays an important role in the life of the school. Worship leaders conclude with a way to encourage worship to have an impact in the daily life of the school. As a result of worship some pupils can articulate the impact of God working in their lives and often talk about living out the school's Christian values. A range of leaders, including children at times, plan varied Christian worship experiences. All teaching staff have the opportunity to lead worship. Children get the opportunity to plan and lead a part of daily collective worship session with their teacher's support but this is not yet regular and frequent.



**The effectiveness of RE is Good**

RE teaching and learning is consistently graded good through regular school monitoring. Based on the data available at the time of the inspection, pupils, including those with SEND and the most able, make good progress against local expectations. The school is enabling its vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties, to flourish academically in RE through creative and engaging teaching.

Interim Headteacher

Maria Hutchinson

Inspector's name and number

Anna Reeder 659