

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Tunbridge Wells St Barnabas Church of England VA Primary School	
Address	Quarry Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN1 2EY
How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	
Overall grade	Good
The impact of collective worship	Good
The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Good

School's vision
<p>Each child is uniquely created and loved by God.</p> <p>It is a privilege to nurture and develop our children. An outstanding education enables children to reach their full potential. Children are the future of our community. Christian faith informs behaviour and moulds character of our adults and children.</p>
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The deeply embedded Christian vision and values are embodied and exemplified by the whole school community. Governors are highly supportive of the school and its Christian character. The biblical roots of the vision are less well established so cannot be articulated by all. • Through brave, aspirational actions and decisions, school leaders have cultivated a tangible culture of welcome and respect that celebrates diversity and the inherent worth of each individual. • School leaders are passionate about providing rich and inspiring opportunities to grow and develop every member of the school, thus equipping them with the skills needed to thrive. The vision led curriculum empowers children to be agents of change and reflect spiritually. • Acts of worship encourage all to reflect on the teachings of Jesus in an invitational and inspiring way. The strong connection with the parish church and vicar enriches the worshipping life of the whole school community. At present, pupil leadership of worship is less well developed. • Religious Education (RE) is led well. High quality teaching, classroom discussions and tasks, enable most pupils to make good progress. Currently, there is not a consistent approach to the teaching of religious vocabulary across the school.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the theological underpinning of the school's distinctive vision so all can articulate the biblical principles that underpin who they are as school. • Continue to develop the role of pupil leaders in collective worship, so they take overall responsibility for planning and leading acts of worship. • In RE, develop a consistent approach to the teaching of key vocabulary to further strengthen pupils' ability to discuss, question and connect knowledge in and out of RE lessons.



Inspection findings

St Barnabas' Church of England Primary School is a diverse and inclusive family who meet the needs of the whole school community exceptionally. The distinctive Christian vision of 'Each child is uniquely created and loved by God' is the foundation and guiding principle of all the school seeks to do. It is tangibly felt and embodied by each member of the school community. Many speak about how God made them to be unique and the importance of celebrating this. The genuine love and respect for one another flows naturally out of the children and adults, cherishing the inherent worth of each created life. School leaders have ensured that the vision and values are deeply embedded at all levels, so they drive and shape every policy, action and behaviour. However, the theological underpinning of the school's vision has not been fully cemented, so cannot be articulated by all. Parents described how they chose St Barnabas' because of its strong Christian values, palpable welcome and acceptance for all. They felt strongly that their child would be richer for being educated in this diverse community.

The school is led well. A culture of Christ-like hospitality, support and compassion is modelled and exemplified by the headteacher which in turn ensures all relationships within the school follow this example. Staff explained how their lives and role in school have been transformed by senior leaders, who put their trust and confidence in them, which enabled them to progress and grow as individuals.

Governors are proactive and supportive of the school. Many of them play an active role in school life. Their governor meetings, discussions and monitoring are framed by the Christian vision, as they understand the importance of creating a safe environment where every unique character can thrive and develop.

The school benefits positively from its connection to the parish church and vicar, Father John. This relationship brings and gives life to the school, the families and wider community. Father John's constant presence and nurture of every member of the school family is transformational. Staff shared how he will go out of his way to ensure pupils, staff and parents are remembered, feel loved and known through his actions and conversations.

The school has created an innovative and vision inspired curriculum, which promotes discussion, provides challenge and enables pupils to connect and build on previous learning. School leaders made a conscious decision to provide a wealth of enriching and aspirational opportunities for all pupils, many of which would not be experience outside of school. All cultures and faiths represented within the school are celebrated and valued. Many commented on the beauty and colour this celebration of diversity brings to the lives and experiences of the pupils.

Opportunities are intentionally planned in across the curriculum to develop pupils' spirituality and to open their minds to issues locally, nationally and globally. Pupils are regularly encouraged to reflect on their learning and consider how they could act to bring change to the world. The school has successfully begun work on shaping a shared understanding of spirituality. The creation of 'Ow' and 'Wow' boards across the school has provided a space to capture the thoughts and reflections of pupils, many of which have flowed from philosophical classroom discussions. As a result, children are articulate deep thinkers, who demonstrate a maturity and sensitivity in their responses to situations and questions around faith, culture, global disadvantage and deprivation.

School leaders seek to provide an individualised approach to supporting pupils, especially the most vulnerable. The SENCO and pastoral team have created a safe space for parents and pupils, ensuring all feel heard and supported. Their tenacity and heart for each child




ensures that pupils have what they need to thrive and staff feel equipped to provide an education that promotes independence and aspiration. As a consequence, most pupils behave and learn well together. Where pupils are found to be struggling academically or emotionally, provision is quickly and compassionately put in place for that child. The school has invested in an effective mental health programme for pupils, which is having a positive impact on well-being and emotional literacy.

Collective worship is an integral and joyous part of the school day. Pupils and staff speak of the impact this time together has on them emotionally and spiritually. Following the tradition of the parish church, children regularly attend whole school or class mass in the Church, with many being involved as servers. Father John has created an inclusive culture where all members of the community, regardless of faith or culture, feel welcome to attend and join in with school mass and significant Christian celebrations in the church. Through the rich and varied diet of collective worship, pupils have a deep understanding of the Bible, Christian faith and church history. Prayer is valued and plays a central role in worship and daily school life. Currently, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to be still and reflect personally or take greater ownership of planning and leading whole acts of worship.

RE is a strong feature of the school and was the inspiration behind the design and expectations of whole school curriculum. The RE leader is incredibly dedicated and knowledgeable. She uses this expertise to walk alongside colleagues to empower and enable them to teach effective RE. Diocesan training and network sessions support the RE leader to provide high quality staff development and ensure RE provision is in line with current national thinking. There is a clear action plan in place, which together with an effective system of monitoring means that leaders are aware of the areas to improve and develop. Father John regularly teaches RE lessons, this adds richness and a real life Christian voice for the pupils. He also provides welcome support to staff when planning more challenging areas of the RE curriculum. Pupils are enthusiastic about RE and are proud of the work they produce. "RE is my favourite lesson, I really enjoy it, especially when I have to think hard." However, not all pupils are explicitly taught key religious terminology within lessons. For some pupils, this is restricting their ability to make connections and fully articulate their learning. Pupils articulated the importance of learning about people and their beliefs in RE lessons. One pupil said, "In a school where different religions are represented, we must learn about and understand one another so we can be respectful." Most pupils are able to critically analyse religious texts in an advanced way. The knowledge gleaned from this supports their understanding of religious concepts.

The St Barnabas' school community should 'lift their head' with pride and confidence in celebration of all it is doing to provide an enriching and aspirational environment where all know they are uniquely created and loved by God.



	The effectiveness of RE is		Good
	<p>The RE curriculum uses the diocesan syllabus alongside Understanding Christianity. Effective teaching and support ensures that the majority of pupils achieve well and make good progress in RE. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity and world faiths is secure as a result of rich discussions, high quality questioning and challenge within lessons.</p>		
Information			
School	Tunbridge Wells St Barnabas Church of England VA Primary School	Inspection date	17 January 2023
URN	118724	VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary aided
Diocese/District	Rochester	Pupils on roll	202
Headteacher	Moira Duncombe		
Chair of Governors	Father John Caster		
Inspector	Rebecca Swansbury	No.	970