

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Dunton C of E VC Lower School			
Address	High Street, Dunton, Biggleswade SG18 8RN		
Date of inspection	16 January 2020	Status of school	Voluntary controlled lower
Diocese	St Albans	URN	109599

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	Requires Improvement
Additional Judgement	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Requires Improvement

School context

Dunton C of E VC Lower School is a small first school with 67 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 below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below national averages. The headteacher was appointed since the last inspection and is jointly head of another small school, working closely in a federation. Two of the three classes have new teachers this academic year.

The school's Christian vision

'Believing and Achieving Together'

Every child is inspired to achieve within our safe and happy school. We teach children to embrace the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life. Nurturing relationships are built between school, home, church and community. Everyone is valued and able to grow in the love of God.

Key findings

- The headteacher has worked to develop the school as a Church school. However, the school's Christian vision is not widely known, referred to or theologically underpinned, limiting its impact across the full work of the school. This affects policies and practice, including in religious education (RE) and collective worship.
- There is a supportive and caring ethos where warm relationships mean that everyone feels part of one family. This has been largely maintained since the last inspection through various changes in staffing.
- Respect is shown by pupils to each other including those with SEND, those from a variety of backgrounds and to adults within the school, village or church communities.
- Academic outcomes are not securely strong across all groups of pupils. Pupils have limited opportunities to respond to injustices in the wider world or engage in social action projects arising from curriculum subjects.
- The school does not have a shared understanding of spirituality. This limits pupils' spiritual development and opportunities to develop it across the school day are missed.

Areas for development

- Review and develop the school's Christian vision with a theological basis, ensuring its impact across the full work of the school. Offer training to governors and all staff so they have a clear understanding of the importance of this within current thinking for Church schools.
- Put in place cohesive, regular RE so that pupils' knowledge and understanding of a range of major faiths and worldviews improves, ensuring that the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for pupils in RE is met.
- Develop a shared understanding of spiritual development for the school, to enrich experiences for pupils.
- Improve pupil involvement in collective worship, including in monitoring and evaluation, to enhance their spiritual development.

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

This is a happy and supportive school that has caring relationships between staff, pupils and parents. However, the school's vision is not sufficiently distinctively Christian in its wording or implementation, nor is it theologically underpinned. The headteacher articulates a Christian basis for the vision but knowledge of this is not widely shared. This limits the impact of the vision and associated values across the full work of the school. Governors have not engaged with training to keep up to date with current thinking in Church school education. Knowledge of this is limited to the headteacher. She has a good understanding of the need to develop an inclusive and distinctive Christian vision to ensure the Christian foundation of the school. The school is aware that there is much work to do. Values education is an established feature of the school. The values are not overtly distinctively Christian but are well embedded in school life. The values are often explained and links made with Christian teaching within worship. Pupils who exhibit values, such as responsibility or patience, are rewarded in weekly achievement assemblies. They look forward to the award of the values cup 'to the person who has been the nicest'.

The school gives priority to Christian collective worship. Since the last inspection the school has ensured some pupil involvement in it, partly fulfilling an area to improve from the last inspection. Links with the local parish church have been well maintained despite a long period without a permanent vicar in post. Pupils look forward to a range of visitors who work in partnership with the school to enhance worship experiences. Other partnerships, such as with the other school in the federation, have ensured continuity of leadership with a shared headteacher and governing board. Work with the diocese has focused recently on possible changes to school organisation locally.

The school is currently reviewing the curriculum. There is no a shared understanding of spiritual development so opportunities for pupils to grow spiritually are not planned for across the curriculum. There is minimal use of reflection areas in classrooms. The effectiveness of the school in meeting pupils' needs has been variable in recent years. It shows a downward trend in Year 1 phonics scores and a recent drop in Key Stage 1 maths outcomes. The school places great emphasis on meeting the needs of all pupils through its vision to ensure 'every child is inspired to achieve'. It is effective in identifying additional needs and has financially prioritised meeting individual needs through the provision of support from teaching assistants. Parents appreciate this approach. One parent commented that the school has 'gone above and beyond' to support their child with additional needs and 'nothing is too much for them'. Another agreed saying, 'it's a wonderful school'. Whilst some vulnerable pupils are making progress, none have made accelerated progress according to the school's current data records.

This is a school where members of its community are treated with dignity and respect. It is a supportive environment for those of differing abilities and backgrounds. Procedures ensure pupils are protected from bullying. However, the recently reviewed behaviour policy does not mention the school's vision or values. Therefore, opportunities for practising forgiveness and reconciliation linked to Christian teaching, are lost. Difference is celebrated and was shown by a pupil who learned sign language at home so she could sign a phrase in assembly. Curriculum opportunities to celebrate difference are more limited. Pupils are encouraged to ask and answer big questions in RE lessons. For example, a pupil asked, 'how did Jesus get his powers?' This was in response to another saying, 'Jesus and God were giving the disciples their powers' when studying the story of the day of Pentecost. Opportunities for pupils to engage in social action and be courageous advocates for change are limited and not driven by a distinctive Christian vision. Pupils voted to adopt an animal, a polar bear, when studying the environment and raised money for this.

Collective worship offers time for pupils and adults to experience times of prayer, stillness, stories and festivals of the church year. Pupils' enthusiastic singing is an uplifting feature, as is their knowledge of their school prayer. Some pupils have an age appropriate understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They have a firm knowledge of a range of Bible stories such as the lost sheep. One explained the meaning as 'when someone comes back to God and is happy'. There are also times when worship focuses on the school's values such as friendship. For example, a pupil said that 'as we're a church school, we all have to be friends'. All pupils really look forward to church led worship and the visits of the 'Open the Book' team, often greeting those adults when they meet them in the village. Worship is predominantly adult-led and planned, limiting pupils' ownership, engagement and their spiritual development. The school council is involved in some evaluations and pupil voice

feedback but collective worship has not been a subject for this. There are currently insufficient opportunities for pupils to take the lead in planning, leading and evaluating acts of collective worship. The lack of a coherent theologically based Christian vision and associated values limits the impact of worship and pupils' and adults' spiritual development.

RE is seen as important in this Church school but time spent on it is limited. RE reflects the school vision to show 'everyone is valued and able to grow in the love of God'. Pupils have a sound knowledge of Christianity as a living world faith through the use of the 'Understanding Christianity' resource. Provision meets statutory obligations but the current programme of study is lacking focus on a range of religions and worldviews in addition to Christianity. This means pupils' knowledge and understanding of faiths is limited and pupils are not receiving their entitlement in line with Church of England guidance. However, some use has been made of annual visits to places of worship such as St Albans Abbey and a faith tour in Bedford. Work in pupils' books reflects the limited time spent on the subject. Few activities give opportunity for pupils to respond in different ways according to their ability. Development of RE provision has been hampered by changes in staffing. The RE lead for the school is new to post this academic year, replacing a shared coordinator across both schools in the federation. This decision was made to raise the profile of the subject.

Headteacher	Nancy Sheehan
Inspector's name and number	Liz Youngman 465