



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

### West Kingsdown Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Address Fawkham Road, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN15 6JP

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**

**Excellent**

#### School's vision

West Kingsdown is a welcoming and nurturing environment, where each individual is supported to develop morally, spiritually, socially, culturally and academically. Our extended community, through our Christian values of Love, Courage, Trust and Respect encourage each other in faith to 'Let your light shine.' (Matthew 5).

#### Key findings

- The headteacher, supported by other leaders and governors, has taken the school on a transformational journey. As a result of innovative practice, bold decisions and a desire for every member of the West Kingsdown community to be their best, all flourish.
- The commitment of the senior leadership team and pastoral team to enable all to 'Let their light shine' by providing individualised support and nurture is exemplary. For many children and their families the love, care and education they receive has been life changing.
- Shaped by the Christian vision, the creative curriculum and range of wider opportunities provide rich learning experiences for all. Spiritual moments happen within school life but are not always intentionally planned across the curriculum.
- Pupils speak positively about their religious education (RE) lessons, however inconsistencies in the delivery of the RE curriculum result in some pupils not being challenged enough through the tasks set and lesson discussions.
- Collective worship is an area of excellence in the school. Pupils regularly lead and evaluate worship, talking passionately about the central role collective worship plays in their daily life. The strong connection with the local parish church and community enhances worship further.

#### Areas for development

- Broaden opportunities for the whole school community to be further inspired by the Christian vision to act as courageous advocates, who stand up for the vulnerable and challenge injustice.
- Intentionally map out moments for spiritual development across the curriculum so that all can grow spiritually and have a language to express and celebrate these moments.
- Develop a consistent and effective approach to planning and teaching the RE curriculum so that all pupils flourish in RE.

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

West Kingsdown is a deeply caring and welcoming community that considers the needs of all pupils and adults; the school vision 'Let your light shine' and school values are central to this. This is evident in the way the school leaders and staff find every opportunity to illuminate the light that shines within and out of each member of the community, enabling them to flourish and be the best they can be. School leaders have worked tirelessly to create an enriching and nurturing learning environment where pupils thrive from whatever their starting point. Beautiful and biblically inspired artwork, created by the pupils with their resident artist, frame the walls and calm, peaceful nooks encourage the pupils to read, reflect and pray.

Over the past two years as the school looked to federate with another Church of England primary school, governors stuck closely to the school's vision and continue to be guided by it in all strategic decisions and actions. Governor monitoring is effective. Through robust challenge and questioning they ensure the Christian character and vision of the school is maintained and standards and expectations of all are high.

The school has built strong relationships with parents and the wider community by opening its doors and extending a warm welcome to all. This relationship has blossomed due to the practical support given by the school during lockdown and community events that happen within the school; parent and toddler group, intergenerational café and classroom sharing sessions for parents and carers. The vicar is a constant support to the staff and school families by being a visible presence in and around the school.

The school pastoral team, enabled by the headteacher, are solution focused, meeting regularly to discuss how they can best meet the needs of all pupils. They feel called to be advocates for all those whose 'lights are at their dimmest'. By putting in place preventative rather than reactive strategies and interventions, pupils flourish as they are upheld and nourished to fully embrace all the school provides. The addition of Eve, a therapy dog, to the school community has brought joy and hope to many children and staff members. Time with her has given children the courage to begin communicating and share their feelings of anxiety and worry openly. Parents speak emotionally about the transformational impact the school has had on their children. They described how the dedication of the skilled staff team and the adaptable and approachable nature of the headteacher and pastoral team is enabling each of their children to make progress in every area of their life. One parent said, "This is the first time I have been listened to and the needs of my children and myself have been seen."

Reflecting the school's vision, a new ambitious and knowledge rich curriculum has been launched; inspiring pupils to think deeply, explore countries and cultures different to their own and meet people who have lived amazing lives. As a result of this curriculum and the wide range of trips, visits and experiences, pupils glean empowering knowledge, curiosity and a love of learning. Forest school, mountain biking and regular outdoor learning further provide opportunities for pupils to learn within and from nature. Pupils are trusted to risk manage how they use equipment in forest school and on the playground, which has developed both their independence and resilience. The school has an approach to spiritual development, but this is not fully developed or embedded throughout the whole curriculum. Collective worship, forest school and RE celebrate and encourage moments of spirituality and pupils and staff talk about the significance of these times to them.

Pupils behave well, have a positive attitude towards their learning and are fully supportive and respectful of each other. 'Let your light shine' is part of the everyday language of the school as everyone is encouraged to find and celebrate what makes them shine each day. Pupils spoke passionately about the importance of enabling the lights of others to shine by being kind, generous and loving. The school community gathers regularly to raise money for different charities, often having been inspired during worship. One pupil explained that "sharing what we have with others is doing God's job on

earth.” However, examples of how the vision inspires the pupils to be agents of change and challenge situations of injustice locally and globally, are yet to be explored as a community.

The headteacher, who is also the leader of RE, has raised the expectation and profile of RE within the curriculum. Pupils understand and articulate the importance of learning about the lives of believers and are proud of the work they complete in RE. Within lessons, pupils ask and discuss big questions, exploring their thoughts through a range of tasks and activities. However, opportunities to extend pupils’ thinking and allow them to demonstrate their learning are missed in some lessons. As a consequence, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and are not able to recall previous learning or use correct vocabulary and terminology.

Collective worship brings life and inspiration into the school day and beyond. Worship is truly inclusive and invitational, with everyone knowing how to respectfully behave, act and respond if they choose to join in with elements of worship or not. Pupils shared the joy collective worship brings and were keen to describe biblical stories that had positively transformed their thinking, behaviour and attitude. Across the week, a range of people lead worship, bringing with them a variety of styles. Leading Lights, a group of enthusiastic year 6 pupils, lead worship every week. This group, facilitated by the chair of governors, meets regularly to plan acts of worship, write prayers for each day and evaluate and reflect on previous acts of worship. Their natural style and confidence has blossomed over time thanks to the loving and respectful culture of the school. In turn, their leadership and sharing of the Christian message blesses all those who join them for worship. Prayer is highly valued within collective worship and during the school day. Prayer spaces have been created in communal areas to provide opportunities for the school community to reflect and pray. Pupils have a deep and personal understanding about prayer “We use prayer to talk to God, it brings us closer in relationship with him.”

### Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	23 March 2022	URN	130948
Date of previous inspection	17 June 2015		
School status	Voluntary controlled primary school	NOR	158
Name of MAT/Federation	n/a		
Diocese	Rochester		
Headteacher	Benjamin Hulme		
Pupil profile	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.		
Additional significant information (if needed)			
Inspector’s name	Rebecca Swansbury	No.	970