

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

## Barkway (VA) Church of England First School

### Vision

Our Federation vision is to work with parents and governors and the Diocese of St. Albans to provide an outstanding Christian education, inspiring confidence and enthusiasm as well as positively impacting and preparing pupils for the rest of their lives. We look to instill 'faith, curiosity, wellbeing and confidence' in our pupils so they are ready to face the challenges of the world around them and start their lifelong learning journey. We will foster academic, emotional, spiritual and cultural well-being for all leading to 'life in all its fullness' (John 10).

### Strengths

- A supportive, caring culture is inspired by the school's Christian vision and values. This ensures pupils and adults are treated well and flourish as a result.
- Leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's vision and the way it is underpinned by Christian values. This positively affects pupils' confidence, wellbeing and curiosity about their world.
- Collective worship is at the heart of school life. It is a clear expression of the school's vision and values and strengthens the spiritual development of pupils and adults. The positive relationship with local clergy further enriches pupils' experience of worship.
- The school's curriculum and enrichment programme is shaped by the school's vision. It is accessible, motivational and inspirational. Therefore, the school ensures pupils are well-prepared for their next steps.
- The wellbeing of all is given high priority by school leaders. Resources are dedicated to building a fully inclusive community. This means that pupils and adults feel welcome and are nurtured for growth.

### Development Points

- Extend the ways that governors evaluate and monitor the impact of the Christian vision and the foundation of the school.
- Strengthen current good practice in RE to further develop the ability of all teachers to deliver high quality RE. This is to enhance pupils' learning about a diverse range of religions and worldviews, including Christianity.



## Inspection Findings

The school's Christian vision is based on the Anglican traditions of the school. It meets the needs of the pupils and adults within the school community. The choice of words of the vision is meaningful to pupils and adults alike. The vision is well-embedded and is a reality in the lives of members of the school's community. Pupils develop confidence through the way their teachers encourage independence. The clear focus on values is referred to throughout the school. This gives pupils and adults a vocabulary to deal with everyday situations and encourages self-advocacy to flourish. The associated values give a clear framework for managing behaviour. For example, pupils understand the need for forgiveness and making reparations after falling out. The school's Christian vision is rightly described as the 'thread that binds our community together'.

The school's curriculum reflects its Christian foundation. Teachers take opportunities to weave an understanding of the school's vision and values into the whole curriculum. Bible stories are used as frameworks for literacy development in the Reception class. They are skilfully used to help the pupils understand the school's values. For example, the Bible story about the ten lepers is used as a literacy text. However, it also supports the focus on thankfulness during the Harvest season. The school makes a generous extracurricular offer. This is to ensure that pupils are given a range of experiences to encourage their curiosity about the world around them. This also helps build confidence as the pupils successfully encounter new ideas and places. Curiosity is encouraged across the curriculum and is modelled by the adults in the school. The focus on wellbeing underpins the building of confidence in the pupils as learners. This ensures they are emotionally secure enough to absorb new ideas and concepts.

Collective worship is effectively planned to give the school community an opportunity to 'rise above the ordinary'. Worship is creatively linked across the schools within the Federation with good use of technology. As part of the daily life of the school, this time together is fundamental to growing the ethos of the school. Collective worship is enhanced by strong and strengthening links with the local church. It also gives adults a valued space for reflection. It is a rewarding time that gives pupils time to reflect on their own spirituality. Pupils enjoy the different collective worship activities, joining in with enthusiasm with favourite songs and prayers. Parents value the challenging 'big questions' that their children bring home. This means that the conversation about faith continues at home and supports the families the school serves. It enables parents to work in partnership with the school to support their child's spiritual and moral development. Pupils who have special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are able to share fully in the worshipping life of the school. Skilful adaptations are made to ensure worship is meaningful and accessible to all. Effective links with the local church and its supportive vicar ensure the school sits at the heart of its community. Staff appreciate knowing they are cared for by the local church community. Governors are involved in some monitoring of worship. However, the impact of this on the development of collective worship is limited.

Barkway is a compassionate and caring school that puts people at the heart of decision making. Pupils with SEND are fully integrated into the life of the school. They are loved and supported along with all the other pupils. Even the youngest pupils use language derived from the school's Christian values to respond to situations. For example, they say, 'when people hurt you, they should be kind and say sorry'. Wellbeing is a clear focus from school leaders, including governors. Policies reflect a clear Christian ethos and the outworking of the school's vision. For example, the school's marking policy has recently been adapted to ensure it doesn't become burdensome on staff. The school's Christian values are shown in their response to their pupils and their families during times of need. Recently arrived refugee families are welcomed and supported. They are well looked-after during a difficult season in their lives. Staff career aspirations are encouraged and funding for professional development has been maintained. A noticeably caring atmosphere pervades. Adults describe being able to be themselves and know they will be met with care and understanding.



The school has worked effectively to ensure pupils experience life outside their immediate area. The school participates enthusiastically in community events and seeks opportunities to widen the pupils' experiences. Even the youngest pupils are encouraged to think about issues in the wider world. When discussing the Harvest service a Year 1 pupil mentioned people who couldn't afford food. She was able to develop her understanding of the work of the local food bank with her teacher. This highlights the ways in which pupils are encouraged to develop an understanding of injustice and their role in advocating for change.

Religious education (RE) is well-structured, and pupils can build on their prior learning as they move through the schools. Learning is sequenced well, in conjunction with staff across the Federation. The confidence of staff in their delivery of RE, and their understanding of the distinction between RE and worship is inconsistent. Monitoring of RE by school staff is effective and there are clear development points for this subject area. However, monitoring by the governing body is less robust. Therefore, opportunities to use the expertise of governors to improve the provision of RE are missed. Effective planning ensures that the curriculum is balanced and relevant to pupils. Pupils are given the opportunities to consider Christianity as a world faith, and learn about and evaluate other worldviews and faiths. This supports pupils in developing their own spirituality. They are also well able to understand the impact of faith on the lives of other people.

## Information

Address	84 High Street, Barkway, Royston, Hertfordshire, SG8 8EF		
Date	24 September 2024	URN	117422
Type of school	Voluntary Aided	No. of pupils	15
Diocese	St Albans		
MAT/Federation	Barley Barkway Federation		
Headteacher	Sharon Brown		
Chair of Governors	Amy Martin		
Inspector	Gill Jackson		