

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Barley Church of England VA 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 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 supports 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 in which monitoring and evaluation activities are led by the governing body. This is to support leaders in further improving the effectiveness of the religious education (RE) curriculum and the impact of collective worship.
- Build upon 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 Christian vision at Barley Church of England VA First School reflects its Anglican tradition. This enables adults and pupils to thrive and live life in all its fullness. The school aims to 'instill faith, curiosity, wellbeing and confidence' in all members of its community. This vision is underpinned by a focus on different Christian values throughout the year. This enables the schools to focus on developing character in their pupils. Pupils and their parents value how this enhances the lives of their children and their families. A clear understanding of the values goes home with pupils and therefore these values are well-understood by them. Parents describe how their children often regulate their behaviour at home by referring to the values they are taught at school. For example, they know what kindness looks like and play well with their siblings at home as a result.

The school's curriculum reflects its Christian vision. Leaders and staff ensure pupils are given a wealth of opportunities to experience a rich curriculum and a generous extracurricular offer. There are many instances where pupils are encouraged to be curious about the world around them. Curriculum areas are planned to give time for pupils to ask questions and develop their confidence as learners. The curriculum also ensures pupils are encouraged to experience the wonder of the world around them. This enriches their spiritual development. For example, a lesson on the biology of fish was enhanced by a film exploring a coral reef, creating a sense of awe. They then showed their curiosity in asking questions confidently before focusing on learning the parts of the fish. The learning experience for pupils is greatly enhanced by rich extracurricular provision. Pupils are supported to experience the wider world by the generous provision of trips, visits and visitors. The curriculum is ambitious and challenging and builds confidence in pupils.

Collective worship is well-planned and effectively led. The worship reflects the Church year and its major festivals. It provides opportunities to discuss key events in the life of the school and in the wider world. The support of local clergy is given generously and greatly enhances the worship in school. Worship helps pupils focus on key Christian values and these are linked to the seasons of the year. For example, harvest is a time for thankfulness. Adults talk about the effect of worship on their spiritual development. They describe worship as 'taking them to a special place'. Parents describe the impact worship has on their children and the way in which it supports their child's spiritual development. Quiet spaces for reflection are also part of the way the school supports pupils to develop their spirituality. This impacts within and beyond the school, for instance during difficult times such as a family bereavement. There is no evidence of effective monitoring of collective worship from the governing body. Therefore, governors do not currently support and challenge the school to develop this aspect its work.

The school uses its Christian vision to ensure that individuals are at the heart of its work. Every pupil is known very well. Therefore, the school is quick to act at times when a pupil needs more support than usual. Pupils who have additional needs and special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully integrated into the life of the school. They are well-supported and the adaptations they need are offered generously. Staff are proactive to ensure pupils with SEND are not left struggling. This ensures that pupils live well together and are respectful of each other's differences. The language of the Christian values supports pupils in everyday situations. Pupils are able to articulate how to resolve conflicts and pupils are noticeably understanding of each other and interact well. For example, playtime stopped spontaneously when a pupil fell while pupils assured themselves that no harm had been done. An apology was offered, and quieter play resumed, all without an adult intervening. This highlights how they positively live out the Christian values they have been taught. Adults also understand the benefits of the impact of the Christian vision and know they are treated well. Leaders are very mindful of the impact of workload. School policies are checked to ensure they are not burdensome. The judicious provision of career and professional development opportunities are valued by staff. A very clear team ethos is evident in the school. There is a culture of providing both professional and personal support. This means that the adults who



work in the school can flourish. This is reflected in a culture of wellbeing which extends to pupils who are cared for by well-supported teachers.

Pupils at Barley are encouraged to consider issues in the world around them. They have joined a campaign to care for the local chalk streams and understand the unique ecology which makes them so special. Pupils are passionate about actively challenging the damage caused by sewage coming into the local streams. Letters sent to local and national politicians clearly explain pupils' concerns and enable them to act with responsibility for their local area. Consequently, pupils are helped to become agents of change and to influence issues close to their hearts.

In partnership with a local residential home, the school has developed a rich opportunity for older pupils. Pupils visit the residents regularly. The jointly planned activities enrich both residents and pupils. They share art projects, reading, meals and even sports events with older people. This ensures pupils gain a rich understanding of the challenges facing an older generation. This develops their empathy and enhances their confidence communicating with others. The work also strengthens their respect for people different from themselves.

RE is knowledgeably led, and the curriculum is planned effectively. The organisation of RE ensures that teaching and learning is well-balanced and purposefully structured. Clear planning ensures that prior learning is reinforced when concepts are revisited. Pupils have the opportunity to revisit and deepen their understanding of key religious beliefs and practices as they grow older. A supportive approach to staff development ensures that teachers are generally confident with the subject matter. Therefore, the teaching is usually effective. However, on occasions, staff are unable to see the oversimplifications contained within some resources they use. Opportunities for staff training in RE to enhance their confidence are limited. Senior staff regularly monitor the teaching of RE and this improves the experience of pupils in lessons. Monitoring by the governing body is less robust. Consequently, the impact of governor challenge and support to the teaching of RE is limited.

Teachers ensure that pupils are thoroughly engaged with their learning. Strong assessment practices mean that teachers know how well pupils are learning and when topics are causing misunderstandings. They then adjust their teaching accordingly. A rich provision of activities, trips and visits enhance the work in the classroom. This ensures pupils are keen to learn which enriches their curiosity about the ways in which different people worship.

Information

Address	2 Church End, Barley, Royston SG8 8JP		
Date	23 September 2024	URN	117386
Type of school	Voluntary Aided	No. of pupils	29
Diocese	St Albans		
MAT/Federation	Barley Barkway Federation		
Headteacher	Sharon Brown		
Chair of Governors	Amy Martin		
Inspector	Gill Jackson		