

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

<b>Northlew and Ashbury Parochial Church of England School</b>			
<b>Address</b>	Northlew, Okehampton, Devon EX20 3PB		
<b>Date of inspection</b>	15 October 2019	<b>Status of school</b>	Primary academy inspected as VC Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust
<b>Diocese</b>	Exeter	<b>URN</b>	145340

<b>Overall Judgement</b>	<b>How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Additional Judgements</b>	<b>The impact of collective worship</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Good</b>

### School context

Northlew and Ashbury is a primary school with 41 pupils on roll. All the current pupils are of White British heritage. No pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages. The school joined the Dartmoor federation in 2015. The federation joined the Dartmoor MAT in January 2018. There have been significant changes in senior leadership and staffing, including the executive headteacher, head of school and vicar.

### The school's Christian vision

'Let Your Light Shine' Matthew 5: 15-16 A curriculum that nurtures and encourages our Christian values of endurance, friendship, trust, peace and forgiveness

### Key findings

- The new leaders' passionate commitment to inclusion ensures that every child has opportunities to shine and flourish. Inclusion is the heartbeat of this school.
- Partnership with the federation and the MAT has sustained this small school during a time of staffing instability. However, progress in implementing the recommendations from the previous inspection has been slow. It is only in the last year that the Christian character of the school has begun to strengthen.
- Pupils behave well and are safe because of adults' consistent and respectful approach to helping them learn. Whilst this is a significant outworking of the vision, it is not reflected in the behaviour policy.
- The new leaders have refreshed the school's Christian values and woven them throughout the curriculum. Pupils now choose to use them independently in and out of school.
- Pupils flourish as leaders. They are not yet, however, involved in leading worship.

### Areas for development

- Establish formal and robust systems for planning, monitoring and evaluating collective worship so that governors, clergy, staff and pupils understand clearly the school's effectiveness as a Church school.
- For the MAT to ensure that policies specific to this school are rooted in the Christian vision so that they more accurately reflect the school's Christian foundation.
- Access in a more strategic way the expertise and support available from the incumbent, the Church and the diocese to deepen and enrich collective worship and religious education. Strengthen and develop links with Church schools in and beyond the MAT to help this school monitor its effectiveness as a Church school.
- Involve pupils in planning, leading and evaluating worship in order to support 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**

The new school leaders have successfully reinvigorated the school's Christian values. They have ensured that the Christian vision, 'Let your light shine', is discernible and applied effectively. One pupil explained the vision, represented by an image of a lighthouse, 'like people leading the way for some other people who are sad'. A governor describes the Christian ethos of the school now as 'stronger than it has ever been'. Parents agree that there is 'lots more enthusiasm and excitement' and they give examples from home of children living out the vision. The head of school refers to the vision as being everywhere: 'It's our life'.

The visual environment supports the vision. A display showing the Lord's Prayer has a central position in the library. Pupils say they enjoy thinking about it when they are working nearby. The verse from Matthew 5 was chosen because leaders noticed that some pupils 'didn't feel that they had a light to shine'. 'Light' in this highly inclusive school means academic aspiration for everyone, exemplary conduct and relationship with 'yourself, the world and God'. It also includes shining a light on darkness in the world, and in 'opening people's eyes to deprivation'. Leaders are tenacious in seeking the light in every pupil and providing opportunities for them all to shine. Because of this all pupils, including the vulnerable, flourish. Systems for improving attendance are rigorous.

Sensitive, respectful and skilled management of behaviour is a huge strength of this small school. It clearly reflects the Christian vision and values, although this is not evident in the behaviour policy. Standards have risen rapidly since the appointment of the head of school. Her passionate commitment to inclusion and her consistent modelling of high expectations are inspirational. She has created a hospitable climate where pupils with diverse needs and backgrounds treat one another with dignity and respect. The school's Christian values support pupils in their attitudes to learning. Successes are celebrated in newsletters for parents. All of this is underpinned by a school ethos of spirituality where adults and pupils take seriously opportunities to reflect. Pupils speak thoughtfully about how they use reflection time during collective worship. Remarks such as this are typical: 'I think maybe I shouldn't have done that or done it in a kinder way'. One pupil said, 'When you pray and everyone's quiet, it makes the stress go away'. Other pupils say they think about forgiveness or 'Jesus dying on the cross'. Referencing Jesus as 'the light of the world', leaders ensure that worship is inclusive and invitational. It is an effective expression of the school's vision. Adults are skilled in offering moments of remarkable silence as well as times for louder engagement.

Pupils flourish as leaders in this small school, although they do not yet lead worship. Pupil voice is a significant strength. After formally applying for their roles, a dedicated group of pupils take seriously their leadership responsibilities on the ethos team or as playleaders or librarians. Pupil librarians notice which children visit the library infrequently and they take it upon themselves to follow-up these children and encourage them to read. The pupils on the ethos committee play a strategic role in school improvement. They ask questions such as, 'Do you feel safe in school?' and, 'Do you think behaviour is good?' and their findings are published. Coaching and mentoring is a strong feature of the teachers' professional development and training. It is also used with pupils, for example in enabling the playleaders to develop counselling skills.

The curriculum is rich and exciting. Pupils benefit from being part of bigger groups within the MAT for sporting events and a residential visit to Bristol. The use of big questions is effective in helping pupils explore and articulate spiritual and ethical issues. This is clearly seen in RE and across the curriculum as well as in collective worship. Excellent and empathetic listening, in lessons and during worship, helps to create emotionally safe spaces. Pupils express their own convictions and disagree well. Written work in RE, however, sometimes does not engage pupils or allow them to show deep thinking. Attendance at recent diocesan training has ensured that both the head of school and the Key Stage 2 teacher are confident and effective teachers of RE. Curriculum and worship themes which shine the light on injustice, inequality and deprivation motivate pupils to social action. They manage their own charity events and they support a rural Church school in South Africa. Prompted by the vision, pupils ensured that the village community received personal, handwritten invitations to their recent coffee morning.

Partnership with the MAT has been beneficial in providing support for this small school during a difficult period. However, progress in developing the school as a Church school has, until recently, been limited. Progress in

implementing the recommendations from the previous inspection has been slow. Governors are knowledgeable and involved and they ensure that there is discussion of the school's Christian character at board level. However, formal systems for planning and monitoring collective worship are not robust. The current policy for collective worship does not make clear the expectations of Church school worship or reflect current practice in the school. The behaviour policy is one shared by all the primary schools and one secondary school in the MAT. Governors are reviewing it and adding primary-specific appendices. However, the review has not yet considered the need for the policy for this school to reflect its Christian vision. MAT structures are in place for staff to work in cross-school groups. Until very recently though, opportunities for the Church schools in the MAT to work together were missed. The MAT RE Curriculum Community is in its infancy.

Recent relationship with the diocese, although good, has been limited to RE training. Mutually beneficial relationships with the local Church and the Methodist circuit have enabled pupils to gain an appreciation of different expressions of Christian worship. Some pupils list initiatives, such as the Easter Experience, organised by members of the Methodist church, among their 'favourite RE'. School leaders have not however asked for advice from the local church, the new vicar or foundation governors when writing the policy for collective worship.

Parental confidence in the school is high. Conversations with families of different worshipping communities are characterised by understanding and respect. Communication is good. A recent parent consultation had a one hundred per cent response. Parents value the school's teaching pupils to be vigilant in looking out for one another. Wellbeing, for pupils and adults, is a priority. Parents say, 'They listen and you can talk to anyone.'

Executive headteacher Head of school	Phil Whittley Janine Cook
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