

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Furneux Pelham Church of England School			
Address	Furneux Pelham, Buntingford SG9 0LH		
Date of inspection	12 November 2019	Status of school	Voluntary controlled primary
Diocese	St Albans	URN	117394

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	Good
Additional Judgement	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good

School context

Furneux Pelham is a primary school with 105 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Few 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 is below national averages. The school is led by co-headteachers, one of whom was previously full time headteacher, the other previously the deputy headteacher.

The school's Christian vision

Together we care, inspire and achieve excellence.

Through working together as a whole school community, each perfectly unique individual is nurtured and inspired to live out our Christian values, striving for excellence in all that they do.

"As each one does its part, the body grows in love." Ephesians 4:16

Key findings

- The distinctive Christian character of Furneux Pelham is actively promoted by leaders and is recognised and appreciated by all members of the school community. However, although the vision statement is at the heart of the school's ambition for every pupil to flourish, the process of utilising the carefully selected Christian text to strengthen its theological foundation has only just begun.
- The partnership between the co-headteachers is exceptional. They share a deep commitment to and ambition for every pupil and exemplify the Christian values of the school in action.
- All staff have high expectations of pupils across the curriculum including religious education (RE). Effective leadership and teaching have resulted in pupil achievement which is consistently well above national averages. As an outworking of the school's vision particularly effective practice has been developed in respect of pupil and staff mental health and wellbeing.
- Collective worship and RE are highly valued by all. Both contribute to the outworking of the school's Christian values but opportunities to reinforce pupils' understanding and appreciation of the vision are not fully utilised.
- Although the importance of prayer and reflection is recognised by all, understanding of spirituality is limited, as is pupil engagement in areas set aside for this purpose.

Areas for development

- Fully utilise the introduction of the selected biblical text from Ephesians to raise the awareness of the Christian foundation of the school's vision and its centrality to all aspects of school life.
- Develop a shared understanding of spirituality, extending opportunities for pupils to explore and flourish in this dimension of their lives.

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 vision statement has been instrumental in driving the ambition of school leaders for every pupil and adult in the school to flourish. As a direct result, all members of the community work together for excellence in all aspects of the life and work of the school. School leaders have identified the need to strengthen the Christian nature of the vision. In consultation with the vicar, they considered carefully which Biblical text would best reflect both their community and the contribution every individual makes as one of God's children. Their selected text from Ephesians underpins this and their vision well. However, the process of introducing this text to pupils and parents has not begun. Underpinning the school's vision statement are a set of well-established Christian values. These are explored systematically and in depth within collective worship. Pupils readily recall stories from the Bible and Jesus' teaching which exemplify each value. They are conscious of how they can demonstrate these values within their own lives. Systems have been established which celebrate when this is the case. A further set of values underpin behaviour and relationships. These have the potential to detract from the impact of the Christian values and vision. The co-headteachers live out the school's vision in their commitment to the school and their work alongside everyone in school. Although the co-headship is new to the school, parents and governors are universally supportive of the arrangement.

School self-evaluation is detailed and accurate, drawing from governor monitoring visits. This results in identification of areas for improvement as a church school. The recent appointment of an experienced foundation governor has created increased capacity for monitoring and evaluating progress against these priorities. One of the co-headteachers is also the RE subject leader. She has great enthusiasm and aspiration for her subject and ably equips teachers to deliver high quality lessons which engage and challenge pupils' thinking.

Effective leadership and consistent high-quality teaching have resulted in excellent outcomes. Pupils, including the most vulnerable, make very good progress from their various starting points. This leads to attainment in English and mathematics which is well above national averages in all measures. A rich and broad curriculum serves to extend opportunities for pupils to flourish. Creative use is made of the extensive and attractive school grounds. There is a varied range of extra-curricular experiences which enrich the curriculum, allowing pupils to pursue particular interests. The high priority given to adult and pupil mental health contributes effectively to well-being. The school and Church work together in a mutually beneficial partnership. Both are regarded by parents as being at the heart of the local community. They look forward to the regular occasions when collective worship takes place in the church. The school benefits from the local partnership of schools, particularly through peer reviews. Governors have accessed training from the diocese but evidence of the school benefitting from further support from this source is limited.

Prayer and reflection are an important part of school life. Its place is firmly established within collective worship. Each class has a reflection area which becomes a particular focus in weekly class worship sessions. Although these are attractive, with a variety of resources, the scope for provoking an active response for pupils is under-developed. This is also the case in the shared reflection space which pupils access infrequently. They are able to discuss spirituality with interest, but have limited understanding of its application in their daily lives.

Pupils' appreciation of difference and diversity beyond their school is limited. The predominantly mono-cultural nature of the local community makes this a challenge for school leaders. The well-balanced RE curriculum gives pupils a good understanding of major world religions. A 'faith tour' is arranged to a range of places of worship. However, some still see diversity as something they would encounter overseas rather than within their own country. The value placed on each person as a unique individual is vividly demonstrated in the display of each pupils' self-portrait in the school hall.

Pupils embody the Christian values. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is excellent and contributes to the sense of calm purpose which pervades the school. Older pupils share in the support and care of their younger peers. A range of responsibilities enables them to develop leadership skills and contribute to the school's future development. In response to the previous inspection, leaders introduced 'Pelham Praise', a pupil group which regularly plans, leads and evaluates collective worship. They work closely with the local vicar as they strive for excellence within their role. Membership of this group is highly prized. Younger pupils eagerly anticipate the opportunity to join. Pupil voice has been enhanced by the innovative introduction of 'Talking Groups'. The whole school meets in mixed age groups to discuss an aspect of the school. During one of these sessions it became apparent that many pupils don't see the connection between the themes explored in worship and their own lives. In response, all leaders of worship now ensure that this is emphasised. The school council actively contributes to the selection of the charities the school supports. Pupils relate their giving to their Christian values of

compassion and generosity. As one pupil expressed it, 'you don't give for any reward, you give to benefit the other person'. In response to the theft of lead from the parish church roof, two pupils initiated fund raising towards the repair. However, pupils are not regularly encouraged to look for opportunities for social action other beyond fund raising.

Pupils look forward to gathering together for worship. Teaching from the Bible and about the person of Jesus is central and key messages are directly related to pupils' lives. Systematic planning serves to reinforce the school's values, but does not contribute effectively to the Christian nature of the vision. The variety of leadership leads to differing styles and forms of collective worship which capture pupils' attention and sometimes provoke deep responses.

The RE curriculum is well balanced and meets statutory requirements. Assessment is used well to inform teachers' planning. There are examples of marking which encourage a deeper response from pupils however, this practice is not consistently employed across the school. Teaching is enriched through a wide range of different approaches and activities, carefully targeted to maintain pupils' enjoyment, interest and engagement. Opportunities are provided for pupils to pause and reflect. They respect and appreciate one another's views when they differ from their own.

Co-headteachers	Brigid Dyson & Louise Foley
Inspector's name and number	Graham Lancaster (713)