

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Dorchester St Birinus Church of England Primary School

Vision

At Dorchester Church of England Primary School, we aim to enable and empower our children to become 'Happy, healthy, informed individuals.'

Our vision is supported by the teaching of Jesus in the Bible.

'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No-one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.' Matthew 5:14-16

Dorchester St Birinus Church of England Primary School is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. It has the following notable strengths.

Strengths

- The Christian vision provides a strong foundation for this welcoming school, enabling it to shine brightly in the community. Pupils and adults are nurtured as unique individuals. This means they develop important levels of confidence and flourish as learners.
- Leaders are inspired by the Christian vision to craft an ambitious curriculum. Adults provide pupils with stimulating and enriching opportunities. Consequently, they confidently articulate their spiritual responses to moments of awe and wonder.
- Positive relationships with clergy from the local abbey enrich the deeply spiritual life of the school. Pupils and adults flourish because they experience exciting, thought-provoking worship. Opportunities for prayer and reflection deepen an understanding of the Christian vision.
- The wellbeing of people is prioritised by leaders. Adults ensure that strategies support the most vulnerable, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This means that loving relationships enable individuals to shine brightly.
- The religious education (RE) curriculum is well-planned and sequential. It provides pupils with rich opportunities to extend their knowledge of religions and worldviews. Engaging and enquiry-based activities excite pupils, prompting them to be curious.

Development Points

- Extend leaders' monitoring schedule to include the evaluation of RE. This is to support the development of the curriculum to deepen pupils' understanding.
- Empower pupils to utilise their awareness of injustice beyond their local area. This is to enable them to be agents of change and shine their light for the good of others.



Inspection Findings

St Birinus Church of England Primary School offers a welcoming and inclusive culture. The Christian vision guides the aspirational and compassionate decision-making of leaders, including governors. This is reflected in their effective evaluation of policies and strategic planning. They clearly understand the needs of the school community and how the vision supports people to live well. Leaders' careful inclusive approach means that pupils with SEND are provided with appropriate resources to learn alongside their peers. Their needs are regularly evaluated involving parents. Pupils challenge using respectful negotiation skills to improve their experience of school life. Hence, agreeing on which equipment can be used during playtimes. People are known and cherished for their uniqueness. This allows them to use their talents for the good of the school community. Carefully chosen values, for example, compassion, knowledge and diversity underpin caring relationships. These enable pupils and adults to shine whilst serving each other with kindness. This fosters a culture where trust is paramount, and mistakes are valuable learning experiences.

Adults craft a vision-inspired curriculum that embraces the rural setting of the school. This means that pupils benefit from rich outdoor learning experiences and share a love of nature. Forest school outings provide important moments for exploration and collaboration. Wider opportunities to engage with specialists or visits to impressive buildings enhance learning. One pupil describes a 'buzzy feeling' when he enters the local abbey. Teachers maximise the use of the local area, providing exciting activities that nourish pupils' spiritual responses. Additionally, adults provide carefully selected topics to broaden knowledge and foster spiritual growth. Participation in a local opera stimulates pupils, nurturing their confidence and musical ability. Teachers sensitively encourage them to use their own language to describe these shared or personal experiences. Pupils are encouraged to be curious and to challenge and exchange views, which extends their deeper thinking. Experiments in science prompt excitement and inquisitiveness. As a result of specialist resources, pupils make informed connections and apply their learning well.

The deeply embedded relationship with local clergy and the 'Open the Book' team enrich the worship life of the school. Pupils and adults flourish spiritually because they have regular opportunities to reflect upon the vision. Meaningful discussions about the termly value prompt deep thinking. The 'I wonder box' allows pupils to pose big questions such as 'could octopi rule the world?' These thought-provoking contributions generate inspiring conversations creating a spiritual cohesion that draws people together. Adults and pupils enthusiastically sing about the vision and the power of light. This reinforces the impact of the vision on their spiritual growth. Invitational prayers remind people of their special talents and how they can serve others. Leaders ensure that Christian festivals and holy days are opportunities for inspirational spiritual development. Pupils respond with excitement to the burning of their Lenten intentions to create ash for marking the cross. This fosters an understanding of Jesus' sacrifice in an appropriate yet inclusive way. Prayer is invitational and appreciated because it offers moments to connect with God or reflect quietly.



Leaders foster a culture built on loving and empathetic relationships. Adults model positive, courteous interactions which means pupils behave well towards each other. Weekly certificates and rewards celebrate those who live out the school's vision. This reinforces their understanding of using personal gifts for the flourishing of others. Older pupils instinctively support their younger peers in times of need or during social times. They readily explain the importance of using their 'light' in the service of those around them. Adults utilise a range of resources to support the emotional needs of pupils. For example, the presence of an electronic dog calms those who are distressed. The wide variety of clubs engages pupils, allowing them to pursue individual interests. Partnerships with local schools provide valuable opportunities for pupils to engage in sport and grow in confidence. Governors take the wellbeing of people, including the most vulnerable, seriously. Their strategic decisions and expertise ensure that families are signposted to specialist agencies. Parents speak highly of the emotional support available and the willingness of staff to listen. The transparent, respectful relationships guarantee that any concerns are dealt with quickly.

Pupils successfully demonstrate their responsibility towards others. They clearly understand how to treat people fairly whilst respecting diversity. Adults seize appropriate opportunities for pupils to learn about injustice and how they live the school's vision to benefit others. This means pupils recognise that their actions prompt change for good. Their successful campaign to install an adaptive swing in the local playground enables those with SEND equal access. The school's contribution to the fund-raising ox trail project, in aid of a local hospice, informs pupils of this essential service. Similarly, the school's participation in the Dorchester festival strengthens local partnerships while creating funds for charitable organisations. Whilst such projects extend pupils' understanding of their voice and ethical choices, these are only within the local area. Their knowledge of how they can be agents of change more widely is limited.

Leaders prioritise the planning and development of RE. They ensure that teachers have the subject knowledge and confidence to plan with accuracy and detail. The curriculum is balanced and effective, introducing pupils to a range of religions and worldviews. Although leaders make wise decisions regarding the sequence of learning, their regular monitoring is not fully established. There are rich opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of key Christian concepts. This enables them to make connections and form comparisons as they broaden their knowledge of religious beliefs. Topics are enquiry-based, developing pupils' skills to interpret and respond to sacred texts. This allows them to appreciate the importance of the Bible. Teachers carefully plan activities to broaden pupils' understanding of religious communities. A visit to the local mosque deepens their knowledge of daily prayer. Adults carefully choose resources to reflect diversity within religious practice. As a result, pupils demonstrate their awareness that worship can vary in different places.

Information

Address	Queen Street, Dorchester, Wallingford OX10 7HR		
Date	5 March 2025	URN	123129
Type of school	Voluntary Controlled	No. of pupils	76
Diocese	Oxford		
Headteacher	Joanna Staples		
Chair of Governors	Jonathan Stewart		
Inspector	Helen Crolla		