

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Trefonen Church of England VC Primary School

Vision

“She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retains her.” (Proverbs 3:18):

This is a father’s speech to his son, telling him to trust in God, pursue wisdom, happiness and success and treat others properly. The message is for all of our pupils to achieve wisdom, happiness and success, whilst treating others kindly.

Just like the ‘tree of life’, by nurturing the roots, our school aims to help all of our pupils to flourish academically, socially, and emotionally, offering them guidance and wisdom on their journey of self-discovery and preparing them to become wise, happy and successful individuals. This key message leads all that we do at Trefonen School.

Strengths

- Collective worship is inclusive and invitational. It enables pupils to have moments of stillness, to reflect on Bible stories and ask deep questions. As a result, pupils develop well spiritually.
- The school has created a culture which fosters a welcoming and inclusive environment. The community live well together and members are treated with care and compassion.
- Tailored, nurturing support for adults and pupils who are vulnerable, empowers them to achieve both academically and personally.

Development Points

- School leaders have not ensured that there is a Christian vision for the school that is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. Therefore, clarify the vision and its biblical roots so that it is widely known and drives the development of the school.
- Once the vision is established and understood, ensure that it shapes the curriculum so that learning and personal growth is maximised.
- Furthermore, ensure that the Christian vision creates a culture in which pupils and adults are treated well.
- Once the vision has shaped the internal culture of the school, establish an understanding of justice and responsibility with pupils, so that they recognise the role that they can play in improving the lives of others.
- The provision and priority of religious education (RE) does not result in an effective curriculum. Therefore, improve the delivery of the RE curriculum. Plan clear steps for progression in learning in order to maximise pupils’ knowledge.



Inspection Findings

Trefonen's Christian vision for pupils to become wise, happy and successful individuals is understood by the headteacher and deputy head. They are able to explain how this is rooted in the Bible and how it meets the needs of the community. However, it is not known or understood by other members of the school, including governors. As a result, it is not driving decision making or school improvement. Furthermore, there are no systems in place to evaluate the impact of the vision on pupil and adult development. The day-to-day experiences of the school community are lived out through ten values, with respect being central to them all. Some pupils can talk about these and can explain why they are important. For example, when talking about empathy, pupils describe the way that they could help if someone is having a difficult time. However, the vision, values and Christian roots of them are not aligned. As a result, there is little understanding of how they might impact the school's work.

The school's curriculum is inspired by the pupils' connection with nature and the world. They talk enthusiastically about outdoor learning. Mixed-age groupings in class promote collaboration and pupils enjoy learning together. This supports the strong relationships across the school. However, the school's Christian vision is currently not applied to the curriculum. As a result, it is not used to shape the learning experiences. Pupils are curious, engaged and purposeful. Those who are vulnerable are supported particularly well. The inclusion of those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities is a strength of the school. Leaders are determined to ensure that pupils can overcome barriers to learning. There is swift identification of need, and strong relationships with parents ensure that adaptations are well thought out. Subsequently, pupils gain access to the tailored provision and nurturing environment they need. This results in a sense of belonging and meaningful participation in school life. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to explore spirituality. They are able to explain that it is about connecting with something bigger. One pupil talked about having 'a warm feeling inside' when feeling proud.

Collective worship is very much valued and leaders have carefully considered when this takes place. It provides a peaceful end to the school day which allows for stillness and reflection. This is so that the impact is taken beyond school life. One pupil talked about how the teachings during collective worship resulted in him having a different attitude when playing football. The school's core value of respect influences the worship life of the school. As a result, all pupils are included and invited to take part. They enjoy holding the candles, leading prayers and reading from the Bible to support each other's spiritual reflection and growth. Prayer is an important part of school life and pupils can clearly explain that they are talking to God. Through a partnership with churches in the local area, a schools' Christian worker is a regular visitor. Her contributions, along with a variety of formats within school, allow pupils to experience a variety of different worship styles. Visits to church on special occasions are valued, and parents talk about how uplifting these services are. The worship life of the school has an important and encouraging impact on the school community.

Pupils and adults feel well-cared for at Trefonen. However, this is a result of their core value of respect, rather than the school's vision. Effective strategies are in place to help those who need them. Leaders' decisions to appoint a welfare administrator ensures that there is support for pupils and their families. The introduction of 'The Owl's Nest' provides a safe space for those who need time in a calming environment. Pupils conduct themselves well and, in the playground, pupils of different ages delight in playing together. They talk about how they feel supported by adults to work through any conflict that may arise. A strong sense of treating everyone equally permeates the school. Staff look after each other and enjoy being part of the team. The school is in a period of transition with a



significant change in staff. They are growing in their varied roles as a direct impact of leaders' considered investment in development opportunities. Through caring relationships, staff new to school are well equipped to meet any challenges. Leaders at all levels are proactive in providing support to ensure staff's wellbeing is paramount. This is closely monitored by governors. As a result, staff feel trusted and supported.

Pupils are unable to describe age-appropriate ways they could make a positive difference in their community and beyond. Nevertheless, there are many opportunities for them to take on responsibilities, such as wellbeing champions and prayer monitors. Pupils with these roles are proud of the tasks they undertake. They are encouraged by helping and supporting their peers. Through roles, such as the school council, pupils promote supporting causes that are important and meaningful to them. Examples of this include planting trees and litter picking. Pupils across the school explore inequality in the world. Peace prayers, written by the children, show an understanding of war coming from greed and selfishness. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to discuss those who have brought positive changes to the world. Consequently, they are not able to talk about what is meant by justice and responsibility.

RE has a prominent place within the curriculum. Monitoring and evaluative activities of the leader of RE identified that pupils' knowledge of Christianity was not strong. Consequently, there has been a change in curriculum content. This is not embedded and therefore, the impact is not clear. Lessons have been developed so that pupils understand the big story of the Bible and Christian concepts. However, pupils' knowledge of beliefs central to Christianity, such as the Trinity, is very weak. Equally, knowledge of other faiths and worldviews is limited. This is also impeded as the progression of core learning is not clear, and prior skills and understanding are not identified and built upon. However, lessons do provide the opportunity for pupils to develop and discuss their own beliefs. They engage in deep questions such as, 'Is Jesus a good king?' which fosters exploration, research and reflection.

Information

Address	School Lane, Trefonen, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 9DY		
Date	28 November 2024	URN	123507
Type of school	Voluntary Controlled	No. of pupils	124
Diocese/District	Lichfield		
Headteacher	Cathy Dunleavy		
Chair of Governors	Malcolm Kirk		
Inspector	Caroline Mackenzie		