

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

## Wittersham Church of England Primary Voluntary Aided School

### Vision

We strive to collaborate with all members of our community to feel valued, nurtured and empowered as they embark upon their journey to become the very best that God intended. Throughout their voyage of discovery with us, we ensure all children are provided with a rich curriculum, experiences which promote courage and a strong moral purpose underpinned by our Christian values; preparing them to become compassionate citizens within our rural community and the wider world.

Wittersham 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 school's vision is a genuine reality that enables the school community to flourish. They journey together inspired by the Bible and the story of the road to Emmaus.
- The school is a place where the deeply embedded Christian vision has a transformational impact. Governors, leaders, staff, pupils and parents value and live 'The Wittersham Way'.
- The school fosters loving relationships, where pupils and adults are welcomed and are treated with dignity and respect. This is particularly evident in the school's nurture of those who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- Strong partnerships with the local church and clergy shape and enhance collective worship. Staff and pupils appreciate the regular services in church that spiritually nurture the whole school community.

### Development Points

- Enhance the religious education (RE) curriculum to ensure all pupils study a range of world religions. This is to enable pupils to gain a deeper appreciation of diversity.
- Deepen opportunities for pupils to engage with issues of local and global injustice so, where appropriate, they can make a positive difference.



## Inspection Findings

Wittersham Church of England Primary School is a place of kindness and love, driven by its Christian vision. This is inspired by the Bible, particularly the story of the road to Emmaus. This story teaches pupils to reflect on their own lives, recognising that the journey of life and faith looks different for everyone. The school emphasises intentional and spontaneous spiritual moments. An example was shared of a walk in the country being punctuated by a murmur of birds passing overhead. This moment was built upon back in the classroom and in collective worship. The vision includes the 'Wittersham Way' which are the 'three C's' of compassion, courage, and cooperation. These shape behaviours and prepare children for their next steps. Pupils demonstrate compassion by supporting peers through initiatives like the buddy bench. This gives pupils a place to speak to others if they are feeling or lonely or sad. Pupils and parents appreciate the many acts of kindness modelled by staff. Worship includes the sharing of acts of compassion and encouraging pupils to show kindness. Courage is fostered through activities like residential trips or planning and leading worship. Cooperation is nurtured through experiences such as forest school, where children are taught to work well together.

What is taught and the extracurricular offer reflect the school's vision. Pupils flourish because the curriculum is designed to meet their needs in a rural community. The curriculum is well sequenced. Great care is taken to make sure that mixed aged classes are catered for and that children can build on their prior learning. Forest school, trips to the river and local landmarks enrich the experiences for children. Pupils are invited to consider their learning through the lens of the vision. Leaders are intentional in the reading books they select for topics, with books for each age group selected to reinforce the 'three C's'. Children learn about significant people in history who have demonstrated great courage, such as Martin Luther King. Pupils are confident to be brave in their own learning and to consider different viewpoints. Cooperation is seen across the curriculum. This was evident in a science experiment which required pupils to work collaboratively to solve problems and complete tasks. The curriculum is enriched by wider pursuits and clubs. These are wide and varied and include music, art and sports. Spiritual development is strong at the school. It is at the heart of the curriculum with intentional opportunities for reflection and contemplation woven throughout. Spontaneous moments, such as contemplating the awe of a sunset, arise when pupils are immersed in the nature surrounding the school. Pupils are asked to consider the 'big questions' in life. Impressively they are keen to hear and consider the views of others, before reflecting again on their own viewpoint.

RE has a high priority at Wittersham. It is well planned and well sequenced using relevant enquiry-based questions. Leaders carefully consider these questions such as 'what is the good news that Jesus brings?'. For each question pupils are encouraged to think deeply and to reflect personally. The questions build on learning from previous topics. At the start of each new theme in RE, leaders support learning. This is done by teachers providing pupils with the key vocabulary and essential knowledge. Pupils learn about a range of religious and non-religious world views. However, from work in books not all pupils have the opportunities to reflect more deeply on different faiths. As a result, pupils can lack an understanding of diverse viewpoints. Pupils offer their opinions and confidently share their thoughts respectfully with others. Classrooms displays and the school environment reflect the importance placed on the teaching of RE. In classrooms, responses to 'big questions' are displayed and show strong whole class engagement. Assessment is productive and is used to inform future teaching and learning. The leadership of RE is enhanced by the effective monitoring and oversight by governors. The school has benefited from strong support from their diocese and works well in partnership with local schools.

Pupils and staff are welcomed and are treated with dignity and respect. Caring relationships are evident across the school. Pupils are happy and want to come to the school. This is because leaders have enabled a whole school culture in which pupils and staff feel nurtured and empowered to be their best. Pupils and staff



appreciate the dedicated nurture room which provides a quiet and reflective space. Innovative approaches support children with SEND. The Orchard provision provides a bespoke morning curriculum for a small group of children. These pupils actively participate in worship and school life. Staff value the nurturing environment, supporting one another and benefiting from leadership that prioritises their professional development. A well-being survey shows that staff are overwhelmingly positive about the support they receive at the school. It is encouraging that staff feel valued, respected, and supported by their colleagues. Governors provide strong support for leaders. The school is a family where every child is known, and this is greatly appreciated by parents. Loving relationships begin even before children start at the school. Older pupils send welcoming letters and teddy bear picnics help ensure a smooth and joyful transition.

Collective worship is the pulse of daily life. It brings the community together, deepening understanding of the relevance of the vision and Christian values. These shape lives and attitudes. For instance, pupils can share many stories from the Bible and importantly can relate these of their own lives. Spirituality in the school is personal and is expressed in many forms. Collective worship provides invitational moments for children to reflect. Pupils are happy and safe to share their reflections with others without judgment. Highly effective partnerships enhance worship. Church leaders work with pupils to plan school worships in the church including Harvest and Advent services. Pupils, staff and parents appreciate the time together at church in the weekly acts of worship. Governors fully understand their role and their actions are driven by the school's vision. They pay high regard to monitoring the quality of collective worship. Staff at the school take an active role in worship. They enjoy the time worshipping together. Staff at all levels work hard to help children with SEND access each worship through a range of appropriate and caring adaptations.

The school's ethos is built on preparing pupils to become compassionate citizens. Pupils learn the importance of fairness, compassion, and respect. Most pupils can reflect on their own lives and relate this to the experiences of others. Leaders offer some opportunities for pupils to engage with local and global injustices. However, some pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to engage with these issues. This means that not all pupils get the opportunity to become agents of change. Pupils are taking the lead on some areas of justice and responsibility. This is demonstrated by younger pupils in worship asking others to help them to tidy up their environment by litter picking. Pupils themselves also initiated 'Eco Leaders' who want to protect the environment for future generations. The school actively support local and national charities. In their final year, all pupils take on roles of responsibility, such as becoming a spiritual leader. They take these roles seriously and are role models to younger pupils.

## Information

Address	The Street, Wittersham, Tenterden, Kent, TN30 7EA		
Date	19 November 2024	URN	118740
Type of school	Voluntary Aided	No. of pupils	137
Diocese/District	Canterbury		
Headteacher	Stella Coulson (Acting)		
Chair of Governors	John Collins		
Inspector	Mark Talbot		