



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Berkley Church of England VA First School	
Address	Berkley, Frome, BA11 5JH

School vision
<p>We are a small school, with big ideas, adopting a creative approach to ensure that every child is supported in order to flourish and thrive; to see and develop their true potential. Our vision and ethos of the school is based on the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5: 14- 16; 'You are the light that gives light to the world. In the same way, let your light shine before others, live so that they may see your good works.'</p> <p>We are children of the community and guided by Faith.</p>
School strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a highly relevant Christian vision lived by the whole school. This has a clear impact on everyone's personal lives. • A strong sense of a caring family pervades the school and wider community. This has a significant positive effect on mental health and wellbeing. • High quality and effective Christian leadership gives clear direction to staff and pupils alike. • Collective worship is well planned and executed with pupil involvement. It highlights the vision and plays an important role in spiritual development. • Religious education (RE) teaching produces pupils who speak confidently about faith matters. The high quality curriculum ensures development in a relevant context.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broaden thinking about improvement as a Church school making it more visible in the development plan. This will ensure the school community is clear about future strategic direction. • Formally identify opportunities for promoting rich spiritual development in all curriculum subjects. This is in order to show pupils that spirituality pervades all areas of life. • Develop understanding of different Christian religious practices around the world so pupils appreciate God may be recognised in various ways.
Inspection findings
<p>Berkley Church of England Voluntary Aided First School has a strong Christian vision. Sensitively created, and with regard to the local context, pupils are all very familiar with the idea of 'Let your light shine'. They encourage one another in doing this from the moment they join the school. An effective buddy system means that Year 4 pupils support those in reception in realising the vision. Many friendships formed continue beyond the school years, and as a result the vision enriches lives. Further impact is clearly seen in the wider community engendering a keen sense of family. A committed group of governors, with a range of skills, monitors the vision. This is evident in reports from regular visits. The proforma encourages frequent consideration of Christian distinctiveness.</p>

Leadership is very mindful of the vision, and it is clearly lived in their encouragement of one another. Governors have some strategic view of development as a Church school but currently this is focussed on one particular issue. As a result of this the breadth of ideas for the future is slightly limited. Links with the Diocese of Bath and Wells are appreciated by the leadership team. As an example, the impact of RE and other training is clearly evident.

The vision encourages a stimulating curriculum following the 'Let your light shine' idea in all areas. Pupils are confident reflective learners seen in their willingness to discuss a variety of subjects. They indicate their interest through lively responses to challenges and questions in class. This extends to all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Allowing their personal light to shine is also clearly seen in an appetite for learning which allows them to flourish. Quiet reflective spaces outdoors and in classrooms support learning, and pupils readily explain how these are used. A shared understanding of spirituality is evident, and teaching staff spontaneously discuss this. However, opportunities for spiritual development in all curriculum subjects are not formally documented.

Collective worship is well organised, and has a clear impact seen in the eager willingness of pupil participation. It links with the vision through a set of values derived from the idea of letting your light shine. Pupils are involved in a variety of age appropriate ways, with some contributing a skill in music beyond their years. Their comments on worship are recorded and shared to drive future planning. They understand the place of prayer in school and personal life. An example of this is seen in their explanation of how to use a prayer tree. A spirit of thankfulness for God's world and creation is evident in their Harvest worship reflections. There is an extended clergy vacancy, but strong links are maintained with the church. A member of staff is always present at the termly family service. Pupils are encouraged to attend with parents or carers and do so occasionally. Weekly visits to the building ensures that pupils are knowledgeable about the church. Their familiarity with it promotes a knowledge of Anglican practice. They demonstrate an understanding of Christian symbols. As an example, they explain the idea of the Trinity symbolised by an apple. The worship is inclusive and invitational. This is clearly demonstrated by some use of sign language and actions to accompany singing. Pupils are inspired through worship. As an example their celebration of Harvest demonstrates their personal thankfulness and concern for the less fortunate. All this clearly indicates the impact of worship on spiritual development.

The vision promotes the idea of helping everyone's light to shine, and as a result pupils really care for one another. They behave well and are very considerate. All this is kept in their minds through an innovative system of lanyards. Pupils who show a particular Christian value are given a special one to wear for the day. They are keen to be awarded these, and are pleased to explain their achievements. As a result, character development is particularly strong. The school council speak proudly of being elected to the role, and are very mindful of their responsibilities. Pastoral care in this school is outstanding. All staff, whatever their role, speak of how the community helps their mental health and wellbeing. One example is a yoga day promoting this. Staff rightly speak of the 'Berkley blanket' enfolding them. Nurture of colleagues new to the profession is also evident through careful professional development. There is strong outreach to families through transition arrangements into reception, and onwards to middle school. As a result, pupils continue to be encouraged to 'let their light shine' wherever they go. Parents correctly value the weekly newsletter, so that they feel involved in all events. They speak enthusiastically of the Church school ethos and its impact, especially in terms of a caring community.

Pupils have some understanding of the Christian quest for justice. Some can link this with the vision and the idea of letting the light of others shine. The school council champion their activities in supporting such charities as cancer in children. Some wider awareness is also evident through their knowledge of 'toilet twinning' and involvement in it. The impact of this is seen in their

understanding of deprivation and concern to help. Pupils have a very strong sense of community, and the range of activities ensures an appreciation of the idea of Christian responsibility.

RE is very well organised throughout the school evident in an extensive planning file. Statutory and church requirements are met. Staff involvement in diocesan training develops confident teaching and learning. The subject has a clear impact on the lives of the pupils and their personal spirituality. This is seen in the natural way they discuss faith matters. They have some understanding of the effect that religion might have on other peoples' lives. Pupils readily talk about their knowledge of Christianity and the basics of some world faiths. They show an understanding of religious symbols in explaining their significance. Floor and individual books indicate a mix of learning and age appropriate pupil reflection. Evidence of progress in skills is seen in these across the year groups. However, at the moment there is little understanding of Christianity as a multicultural world faith.

The quality of RE teaching is good, with a gently reflective approach evident. As a result, this promotes both knowledge and understanding evident in discussion with pupils. The age appropriate curriculum stimulates thinking and personal spiritual development. Progress is effectively monitored through regular assessment. The scheme shows that most pupils are meeting or exceeding expectations. Assessment is also used to identify difficult areas, and as result it informs future planning.

The inspection findings indicate that Berkley Church of England Voluntary Aided First School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
Inspection date	19 October 2023	URN	123743
VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary aided	Pupils on roll	99
Diocese	Bath & Wells		
MAT/Federation			
Headteacher	Suzanne Thompson		
Chair	Elizabeth Halliwell		
Inspector	Jeremy Hellier	No.	899