



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

West Malling Church of England Primary School and The McGinty Speech and Language Centre

Address Old Cricket Ground, Norman Road, West Malling, Kent, TN12 0BA

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Overall grade **Good**

The impact of collective worship **Good**

School's vision

As God's children we grow and learn together, encouraging everyone in our community to 'let their light shine' (Matthew 5.16).

We strive to be the best we can be, knowing that 'what we will be has not yet been revealed' (1 John 3.2). Through love, trust, compassion, hope, forgiveness and perseverance, we flourish as one inclusive family.

Key findings

- The Christian vision is woven through school life so that the community actively embrace inclusion and flourishing. As a result, pupils express their thoughts and act with certainty.
- The school's vision inspires valuable partnerships leading to mutual support and guidance. As a result, the school and wider community learn together.
- Most school staff connect their strong sense of belonging with aspects of the school's Christian distinctiveness. Even so, the connection between these aspects and the unique Church foundation is not fully appreciated by everyone.
- Religious education (RE) teaching is ambitious and well-led across the whole school. RE provision contributes significantly towards cultural awareness.
- Collective worship reflects the school's inclusive vision as it welcomes and invites all to contribute. Pupil involvement in collective worship, although emerging, is not embedded.

Areas for development

- Deepen the understanding of the Christian identity, so that all the school community recognise the centrality of the school's Christian vision.
- Further develop the opportunity for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate collective worship in order to enrich the spiritual development of staff and pupils.

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 West Malling school community are unified in their desire to see every person flourish. The biblically underpinned vision drives relationships at all levels as pupils and staff choose to encourage one another to 'let their light shine'. Staff have a tangible sense of what it means to belong to a Church school community. Most understand how the vision connects with the daily life of the school, its worship, and the relationship with the local church. However, maintaining the school's Christian character is not understood by everyone to the same degree.

A mutually beneficial network of partnerships has been fostered over time, with local schools through the Diocese and the multi-academy trust. West Malling seek and share support and wisdom from other schools. This means the community grow with those around them. The professional development provided by the Diocese is applied effectively in the school. The headteacher is currently undertaking a professional qualification in Church school leadership. The local vicar is a frequent figure in school life. His support and knowledge are drawn upon to lead collective worship, support subject knowledge in RE and in times of need.

Governors are fully committed to the school's Christian foundation, viewing their role as that of stewards with their actions found in love. Through governor meetings they carefully monitor the Church school character as they visit lessons and join collective worship, both in the school and the local church. Governors ensure the school's development plan is inspired by the vision.

During the pandemic the school's Christian vision motivated all staff as they continued learning. The online lessons were reviewed and adapted to suit pupils' needs from one lockdown to the next. This resulted in renewed enthusiasm and perseverance from pupils. The support in the same period from the speech and language centre was both swift and highly responsive. Profound personal stories illustrate how the school's leadership appropriately prioritised the wellbeing of all. For example, when a pupil needed mental health care, the school took swift action to source funding.

Inspired by the Christian vision, school leaders have ensured that policies reflect the school's curriculum for relationships and sex education. The impressive array of extra-curricular activities gives all pupils the chance to be the 'best they can be'. This aspiration leads staff in the speech and language centre to hone and review their practice regularly with pupils' needs prioritised. Recognition is given to the need for pupils to have a mixture of cultural experiences. This gives rise to popular educational visits, including places of worship of faiths that are not represented in the school. The vision directs decisions around whether pupils are best served in the integrated classes or specialist groups. Many pupils openly share their thoughts and reflections with ease. They speak with authority as they know their opinion is valued. Pupils say that receiving kindness spurs them on to show kindness to others. They are encouraged to consider questions that challenge their views. Exploring what it means to help others, provides them with opportunities to ask 'big questions' about the world around them.

The inclusive focus of the Christian vision means that diversity and difference are clearly embraced. One way is through choosing and promoting books showing cultural diversity. Pupils recognise that the school community is 'open to all sorts of people' and as a result is stronger. Staff and pupils acknowledge they are God's children no matter what their background or ability. The chance to support a local charity is greatly valued by pupils as it provides them with an opportunity to look beyond themselves and take action. Pupils enjoy reflecting on what this means for them in the wider world. They identify that being kind is a way of reflecting who Jesus is, 'because it's caring'. Led by the vision, behaviour is very good, and forgiveness is a main pillar of school life. There are very few incidents of bullying, and these are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Driven by the vision, RE teaching is effective and ambitious across the whole school. RE teaching for pupils in the speech and language centre effectively illustrates this. Complex concepts, such as Christian teaching on the meaning of salvation, is not minimised or ignored but tackled, head-on and with confidence. The highly effective RE leader, sensibly

draws on advice from the Diocese. She has wisely crafted the curriculum and pupil assessment, weighing the locally agreed syllabus with advice from the Diocese. This ensures the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for RE is met. The teaching of world religions is recognised as an essential part of the RE curriculum. Reflecting the inspection findings, parents share how this has increased their children’s cultural awareness. Teachers feel confident in their subject knowledge because of the RE lead’s support and that given by the local vicar. Well-chosen teaching resources have a significant impact on pupils’ knowledge of Christianity. This, along with skillful and knowledgeable classroom practice, means pupils retrieve and use knowledge with accuracy.

The exploration of complex topics is not confined to RE but continues in collective worship. The school are invited to reflect on themes, such as the kingdom of God, through the teachings of Jesus. Diocesan collective worship plans are adapted to suit the community. Pupils grow spiritually and learn as they share their thoughts in front of the school. Whether the worship is led by the local vicar, headteacher or another adult, pupils are offered a chance to explore, pause and sing in response. The school’s gathering prayer reflects the school’s vision. It is understood and appreciated by all year groups and staff, enabled by the inclusive routine of saying and signing every phrase. Moments using music and silence are provided, with some staff identifying the spiritual nature of ‘God’s presence’ being with them. School worship is given priority and continued throughout the pandemic lockdown. The young worship leaders’ group is in its’ infancy. Nevertheless, they are not short of plans for greater pupil and staff spiritual development. Whether it be an increase in them leading collective worship, planning new displays or evaluating provision. After all, as one pupil said, ‘everyone can learn, no matter how old you are’.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	9 March 2022	URN	138737
Date of previous inspection	27 March 2015		
School status	Voluntary controlled academy converter primary school	NOR	198
Name of MAT/Federation	Tenax Schools Trust		
Diocese	Rochester		
Headteacher	David Rye		
Pupil profile	The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is in line with national averages.		
	The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)			
Inspector’s name	Fiona Foreman	No.	966