

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Ditchling St Margaret's Church of England Primary School	
Address	Lewes Road, Ditchling, Hassocks, BN6 8TU

School vision
‘Learning Together, Building Success’. Together, with God’s guidance, we work with confidence and wisdom to inspire a love of learning for the future. We are an inclusive community where Christian values empower us. We are ambitious for our children and want them to achieve excellence in all aspects of life and reach their full potential within a caring Christian environment that enables all to flourish. Together we will: Persevere when times are challenging, Show respect to all those around us, Above all, be kind to one another living ‘life in all its fullness’ John 10: 10
School strengths
• The vision and values profoundly underpin and flow consistently through all aspects of school life. They securely inform the school’s curriculum and practices, and firmly drive school developments. • Strong, vibrant leadership and teamwork, fully supported by the whole school community, is driving school development enabling everyone to flourish. • The school tangibly radiates a deeply caring, compassionate and nurturing ethos. This is clearly reflected in the strong, positive relationships and behaviour the school demonstrate towards each other and the wider community. • Collective worship is central to school life securely expressing and promoting the vision. Together with the high-quality religious education provision, it strongly supports the spiritual development of the school community. • The school has extremely close, mutually beneficial partnerships with the local church and community, the education trust and local school networks. These positively support the curriculum in achieving the vision.
Areas for development
• Develop ways for the school to engage with the wider national or global community in order to further support the curriculum and strengthen pupils understanding of diversity. • Extend the existing quality links with the college and schools within the education trust. This is to provide greater opportunities for spiritual development beyond the school’s own environment.

Inspection findings

Ditchling St Margaret's vision and three values is at the heart of this impressive and popular school. They were adopted two years ago when the school joined the Hurst Education Trust and a new headteacher, staff and governors were appointed. The vision and values closely resonate with the trust and fully reflect the needs and aspirations of the local community. The vision and values holistically shape the operational and strategic development of the school. Robust and effective monitoring and evaluation systems, involving the whole school community, inform school development needs. School leaders, governors and the trust have a secure knowledge of the school ensuring school development decisions align with the vision. Strong, inspirational leadership and vibrant teamwork, fully supported by the school community, passionately drive school developments enabling everyone to flourish. The vision and values are well known by all members of the school community. Pupils can easily recall bible stories that promote the values, and give practical examples of how they impact positively on them.

The vision and values firmly underpin and flow consistently through all aspects of the school's curriculum and practices. Carefully planned spiritual development opportunities within the curriculum promote the vision and values. Highly valued partnerships with the local church and community, the trust and local school networks solidly support the curriculum. New curriculum resources funded by the trust provide high quality learning experiences enriched by an extensive range of wider learning opportunities. These include creative arts week, forest school and using Hurst College facilities such as science laboratories. An impressive range of extra-curricular activities enhance these. Careful adaption of the curriculum provision and resources ensures vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs (SEND) are fully supported. Clear opportunities to celebrate diversity and promote respect are integrated across the curriculum. Pupils have a strong sense of equality and justice. They are keen advocates for change and engage with the community on social action projects. For example, charitable fundraising, supporting a local foodbank, and a protest cycle ride to highlight local road safety concerns. Partnerships with the wider national and global community to support the curriculum and strengthen understanding of diversity are underdeveloped.

The vision of learning together in respect and kindness is resolutely lived. The school tangibly radiates a deeply caring, compassionate and nurturing ethos. This is clearly reflected in the strong positive relationships and behaviour the school demonstrate towards each other and the local community. For example, pupils helping out in the community and inviting the community into school to say thank you for their support. Pupils are courteous and polite, displaying teamwork in class and at play, and support each other in various ways. An extensive range of pupil responsibility groups such as play leaders and school councillors promote these relationships. Staff give genuine, caring support to each other personally and professionally. Positive professional development opportunities through the diocese and local school network strengthen this support ensuring staff feel confident in their teaching.

Good mental health and wellbeing of the school community have high importance, are robustly promoted and financially supported by the trust. Quality provision enables pupils to recognise and regulate their emotions and behaviour. These include wellbeing clubs, sensory circuits, a special room where pupils can explore and manage their emotions, and therapy dogs. The pupils' wellbeing, health and mindfulness group, and peer mediators enhance this provision. Forgiveness and reconciliation are firmly understood and lived when relationships temporarily breakdown. Consequently, pupils keenly attend and enjoy school, display exemplary behaviour, demonstrate a love of learning and a pride in their work. Staff wellbeing is equally important with specially trained mental health first aiders offering a counselling service. Wellbeing is a regular governor meeting item with appropriate action taken as necessary such as amending workload pressures.

Consequently, staff are dedicated, feel valued and respected resulting in high levels of retention.

Collective worship is central to school life. It is a joyful time of the whole school community coming together as one to explore the vision and values. It strongly supports the school's aim for the community to develop spiritually in their understanding of themselves and others. For example, worship showing the aurora borealis helped develop pupils' sense of wonder and respect. Pupils keenly engage with worship. The pupil worship ambassadors share readings, bible stories and prayers, developing their self-esteem and confidence. Discussion in worship promotes awareness of personal feelings, emotions, attitudes and beliefs which pupils confidently share. Anglican traditions securely underpin worship helping shape pupils' knowledge and understanding of them and their meaning. For example, pupils can explain that a lighted candle represents Jesus being the light of the world. Worship is strongly supported by the trust and the local church. Worship delivered by the church community is eagerly anticipated and church services such as Education Sunday are held in school. Consequently, pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity as a living faith and the different ways Christians worship is developed.

Prayer and reflection opportunities form an integral part of worship, reinforced by interactive reflection areas in classrooms. Prayer Spaces held in the nearby church greatly enrich these opportunities. Prayer and reflection strongly support the effective spiritual development provided by the school curriculum. A shared understanding of spirituality ensures opportunities for spiritual flourishing are planned and integrated into the curriculum and school environment. For example, opportunities for pupils to experience awe and wonder in science. Regular forest school experiences enhance these spiritual opportunities. Opportunities for spiritual development beyond the school's own environment are under developed. Pupils' entries in the classroom reflection journals clearly record the impact worship, prayer and reflection have on them.

Religious education (RE) is an important core subject within the curriculum. It accurately meets the expectations of the Church of England across all age ranges within the school. It strongly promotes the vision and spiritual development through high quality provision using diocesan approved teaching materials. Pupils actively engage with biblical text and theological ideas in various faiths and world views, strengthening their understanding of diversity. Pupils demonstrate secure understanding of Christianity and other world views and confidently discuss challenging questions. Strong RE leadership ensures planning is appropriately sequenced, well balanced and challenging. Appropriate evaluation and assessment enable pupils to reflect effectively on their learning. Pupils enjoy RE and confidently articulate what they have learned. Regular school based and diocesan staff training, and networking with other schools ensures that quality RE is sustained. Robust monitoring and evaluation by school and trust leaders is used effectively to inform RE development plans.

The inspection findings indicate that Ditchling St Margaret's Primary School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
Inspection date	23 May 2024	URN	114500
VC/VA/Academy	Academy	Pupils on roll	173
Diocese	Chichester		
MAT/Federation	Hurst Education Trust		
Headteacher	Amy Clarke		
Chair	Tim Manly		
Inspector	Richard Dyer	No.	513