

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| Ebchester Church of England VC Primary School | |
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| Address | Shaw Lane, Ebchester, Consett, DH8 0QB |
| School vision | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">‘Love your neighbour as yourself’ – Matthew 22:39</p> <p>‘At Ebchester CE Primary School, love lies at the centre of everything we do. Following the example set by Jesus, we create a culture of compassion. Every individual is valued, respected and cared for so that pupils can flourish into successful learners, caring individuals and responsible citizens.’</p> | |
| School strengths | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a school built on Christian-based compassion and an authentic love for others. The vision matches the needs of the community. It makes a profound difference to the personal development and learning of pupils and staff. • Relationships at Ebchester are welcoming and respectful. As a result, pupils, including those who are more vulnerable, are embraced and enabled to be the best that they can be. • Religious education (RE) is impressive. The curriculum is carefully crafted to ensure that pupils appreciate their place in our diverse society. • Partnerships with the local church and community, families and the diocese are exceptionally close. The school is blessed in the support from governors, many of whom are long-serving. Their commitment sustains and strengthens the ties with the parish church. • Collective worship is fully inclusive. It is key to binding the school and wider community together. Worship provides rich spiritual nourishment. | |
| Areas for development | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders to explore further ways to capture the impact of the Christian vision. This is so that it explicitly supports the development of this Church school. • Extend the recent work on spirituality so that pupils and adults may more confidently express their spiritual growth. • Build on pupils’ desire to be good neighbours beyond the local area and so grow their skills as responsible citizens. | |
| Inspection findings | |
| <p>Ebchester lives and breathes the example of the teachings of Jesus. Love for all is the hallmark of this school. Leaders carefully consider the biblical inspiration of the vision. Matthew’s gospel is a well-laid foundation upon which the daily life of the school is built. Consequently, the vision is highly effective in supporting all ages to thrive in their personal development and learning. Leaders know the needs of their pupils and families extremely well. They make decisions to ensure that barriers to learning or personal growth are removed. For example, additional funding is provided to enable pupils to have more individualised support when they have special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND). Several families choose to travel to Ebchester so that their children may attend the</p> | |

school. Parents trust that each child is welcomed and nurtured. Leaders promote the vision in their strategic work, particularly through ongoing staff development, such as training as forest school leaders. Members of teaching and support staff are valued. They are encouraged to harness their own interests and talents in their work with pupils. Leaders, including governors, see the impact of the vision during their lesson visits and discussions with learners. Monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum and pupil outcomes is regular and informative. At this stage, there are informal systems to note the impact of the school's Christian aspects. As a result, such aspects are less evident in school development plans.

The curriculum includes frequent issues that spark pupils' curiosity and concern. They take inspiration from anti-bullying themes to consider individual liberty. As a result, they made flags to celebrate their own unique personalities. The programme for personal, social and health education is adapted so that pupils respond with compassion to those marginalised in society. It is natural for them to assume leadership roles. The integration of the Archbishops Young Leaders award is key to this. Pupils challenge injustice, even holding political leaders to account when they heard about a littering offence. They also know that times are hard. Staff encourage them to explore the 'why' behind social injustice. This is an outworking of the recent inclusion of justice as a core Christian value. The school council nominates local charities, like the Consett food bank and 'warm spaces' for fundraising activities. Their campaigning for social justice is because of the depth of engagement with the vision of being good neighbours. Pupils' concern is, however, currently focused on local needs and does not include more widespread or global causes.

Work is underway to establish the shared understanding of spirituality. Pupils are at an early stage of applying the concept of 'wows, ows and nows' as ways to respond to different life experiences. Nevertheless, the curriculum and extra-curricular activities provide rich spiritual nourishment. Leaders already identify that there is more to do in giving pupils and adults the confidence to express their spiritual growth.

What makes Ebchester such a special place is the quality of its relationships. A culture of gentle good humour pervades the community. Pupils are safe and appreciate that they have friends across the age range. It is impressive that even younger learners talk of how Bible stories help them to make sense of life. Behaviour is excellent. Those who have additional needs are sensitively guided to manage their emotions and overcome anxieties. Pupils are good shepherds as well as neighbours and look out for each other. They have a voice and contribute to decision making in school. The active school council liaises with leaders to offer extracurricular activities like the popular movie club, chess and girls' football.

The school fosters its partnership with the local church. Several governors, who are also parishioners, continue to support as volunteers. It is clear that the lives of older neighbours and friends are enriched by these links. Partnership with the diocese is also instrumental in the success of the school. Using the expertise from diocesan advisers, leaders ensure that staff are well-supported and informed. For example, teaching of high quality RE.

Collective worship is an important start to every day. 'Assembly' has a clear Anglican structure. All present are welcomed and invited to share prayer or reflection, as pupils' own views allow. Themes for worship follow Bible stories and the main events in the Christian year. Links with the parish church and the 'Messy Church' team are mutually nourishing. This means that the lack of an incumbent has not affected the close bond between school and parish. Parents also acknowledge the benefits of sharing the Bible-based values during services in school and church. Time for worship means each day begins with a sense of coming together. In this way, pupils and adults share in the wider life of the Anglican church.



RE is a significant strength of the school. Work in books demonstrates that learners make meaningful links between topics studied. They ask questions, research and explain their thinking. Pupils take pride in their work and are confident to talk of their learning. Work in books comes alive when they explain for example, what a holy and loving God would say about deforestation. Pupils have a depth of understanding which surpasses that encountered in other schools. They see the vision in their RE work, citing that ‘a loving God has compassion for both victim and bully’. RE gives pupils the knowledge to find the common ground between many religions. Notable is the focus on acquiring subject specific vocabulary. For example, when explaining the meaning of ‘holy’. They rightly comment that ‘being holy means you don’t like sin’. Lessons include a range of religions and worldviews. This supports pupils to grow in their understanding of diversity within our multi-cultural world.

The inspection findings indicate that Ebchester Church of England Primary School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

| Information | | | |
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| Inspection date | 22 November 2023 | URN | 114214 |
| VC/VA/Academy | Voluntary controlled | Pupils on roll | 91 |
| Diocese | Durham;Newcastle | | |
| MAT/Federation | | | |
| Headteacher | Rachel Clasper | | |
| Chair | Geoff Gibson | | |
| Inspector | Allyson Taylor | No. | 768 |