

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Francis Horndale Church of England Primary School

Vision

‘Let your light shine bright.’

During the Sermon on the Mount, found in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus addressed a crowd:

“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

St Francis Horndale 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.

Notable Strengths

- St Francis Horndale’s vision, deeply rooted in the Bible, is central to its life and purpose. It is a beacon of light that shines hope into the school community. It is the pivotal factor that leads to the flourishing of pupils and staff.
- Collective worship is the foundation upon which spiritual flourishing grows. It enables pupils and adults to apply the vision and values to their daily lives.
- Driven by the Christian vision, this school is a loving, inclusive community. Support for pupils, especially those who have additional needs and those who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is transformational.
- Leaders have worked tirelessly to create exceptionally strong partnerships with the church ministry team, the local authority and diocese. These partnerships reflect the school’s values of love, trust and koinonia. They have deepened and enriched a culture where wellbeing is valued and protected.
- Leaders have raised the profile of religious education (RE). It is recognised and valued as a core subject by staff and pupils. Lively lessons engage pupils and have enhanced their enjoyment and understanding.

Development Points

- Embed the Christian vision and values in key stage 1 and early years to strengthen and enrich the whole of the newly merged school.
- Develop a shared and consistent approach to spirituality within this new school community. This is so that pupils and adults recognise how experiences within and beyond the curriculum contribute to their spiritual development.
- Deepen pupils’ understanding of world religions in RE. This is so that they understand how individual practices within a single faith may vary from person to person and within communities.



Inspection Findings

Vision and Leadership

At St Francis Horndale Church of England Primary School, adults and pupils shine bright, supporting each other with love so that they can flourish together. The school's vision can be seen everywhere, from signs on doors, to displays around school, to the lighthouse badges that pupils wear. These constant reminders reinforce the school's ambitious mission to bring hope to the school and its community. The vision is strongly promoted by governors. They are in school each week, monitoring and evaluating the impact of the vision with school leaders. Leaders have made courageous strategic decisions with the vision at the centre of their thinking. An example of this is the recent decision to merge the junior and infant schools, so that all pupils can flourish together. The love, the nurture and the trust that pupils have for each other and for the adults who support them is clearly evident. Pupils in key stage 1 and early years have an emerging understanding of how the school vision can impact their daily lives.

Vision and Curriculum

The vision is central to the school's curriculum. There are many and varied opportunities within lessons for pupils to speak up, to share their ideas and to ask searching questions. Staff skilfully develop pupils' curiosity, enabling time within their teaching for them to explore questions that arise in lesson time. Pupils trust the teaching staff in this school. They know that their ideas are important and that they will be listened to. Pupils' ideas and questions feed directly into teachers' planning, shaping learning so that it is relevant to them. School leaders have placed spirituality at the heart of the curriculum, particularly across key stage 2. This compliments the opportunities to ask questions, encouraging pupils to 'look in' themselves and to 'look out' at how they can support others. This makes learning a deeply personal experience and results in a curriculum that is constantly evolving. Because of the recent school merger, this is not fully embedded in key stage 1. As a result, opportunities for these younger pupils to flourish spiritually are not as strong.

Worship and Spirituality

Collective worship is an oasis of calm in the busy school day. It offers pupils and staff the opportunity to reflect and to think about how they can show kindness and support to others. Collective worship is highly prized in this school community, with songs and prayers joined in with great enthusiasm. Pupils hear many voices during worship, including volunteers from the local church ministry team. They respect and trust these people. School leaders and worship leaders from the ministry team work closely together so that worship is carefully planned. This means that messages of love and community are connected across the different worship times each week; pupil engagement is increased because of these connections. Whether through story, song or opportunities to explore prayer, worship is led with sensitivity and passion. The range of encouraging voices in worship enables those gathered to reflect and feel part of a loving, spiritual community. This enables pupils and staff to bring the spirituality they experience in worship into their daily lives and learning.

Vision and School Culture

Loving relationships sit at the heart of St Francis Horndale. Rooted in its Christian vision, it is a place full of encouragement where pupils and staff thrive. Staff care deeply about pupils and have taken the time to understand them as individuals. Driven by the school's vision, staff help pupils to grow into confident, expressive young people. Pupils and staff follow the example set by senior leaders, treating each other with kindness and respect. Staff support each other and work as a team to support pupils in their care. As a result, the school community is a place of safety where pupils are accepted and loved. Staff support each other, which contributes to their flourishing, with additional opportunities for supervision and counselling provided by leaders. Staff and pupils are proud to be a part of this caring school where they feel valued and recognised as individuals. School leaders understand the needs of this community and have put in place dedicated nurture provision and forest schooling opportunities for pupils. This nurturing school, therefore, enables each pupil to thrive.

Vision, Justice and Responsibility

This is a school that tells its pupils they can make a positive difference to society. Nourished by the strong vision, pupils are urged to shine their light out. They talk with pride about the positive differences they make in school



and in their community. This sense of belonging makes pupils proud of the school and where they live. They work directly with school leaders to explore ways in which school life can be improved. They are strong advocates for each other, celebrating their differences and speaking out for one another. Pupils think deeply about the needs of their local area and have organised litter picks and food banks. These examples show how connected they are to their community. Aspirations are raised by school. Career days have included representatives from different professions. Pupils now talk about the careers they aspire to, such as becoming engineers or scientists. The change in pupils' confidence so evident in school is gratefully commented on by parents and carers. St Francis Horndale's strong values empower pupils to step into the next stage of their lives with confidence.

Religious Education

Following recent changes, learning in RE is more varied and thought provoking. Leaders have worked with the diocesan board of education to ensure that the curriculum at St Francis Horndale flows in a logical and progressive way. Lessons are engaging because leaders have ensured that pupils' curiosity and questioning are central to their learning. Pupils understand that discovering how people live out their beliefs can help us to reach understanding and reduce conflict in the world. This shows thinking beyond the classroom. It is evidence of how their spirituality is helping them think about the impact they can have in a connected world. However, pupils in key stage 1 do not have a clear understanding about how beliefs and practices may vary within different religions.

Pupils at St Francis Horndale learn well in RE lessons and make good progress. This is clear from the way in which teachers assess. They find out what pupils know at the beginning of a topic, reassessing understanding and knowledge in the lessons that follow. Pupils take part in self-assessment at the end of each lesson; this is then checked by the teacher for accuracy. Because of this rigorous approach, teachers know which pupils need extra support and which are ready for extra challenge. Teachers know how well their pupils are doing and use this understanding to adapt their lessons. This results in a series of lessons that connect learning well, week by week. This is why pupils make such clear progress in RE.

Information

Address	Scholars Path, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham, DL5 7HB		
Date	23 September 2025	URN	114267
Type of school	Voluntary Aided	No. of pupils	148
Diocese	Durham and Newcastle		
Headteacher	Lisa Lakey		
Chair of Governors	David Bowes		
Inspector	Rob Goffee		