

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Fordcombe Church of England Primary School

Vision

‘Inspiring every child to shine in God’s Light’

We look to Jesus who teaches us that we can:

- ‘be a light’, that we are all unique, all worthy, all capable of growth;
- that through finding success at school all children and adults can ‘shine their light’ with pride and confidence;
- and that through Christ’s love and guidance we can ‘share God’s light’;

inspiring others so that all in the Fordcombe family flourish and achieve fullness.

Fordcombe 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.

Strengths

- The powerful Christian vision of shining in God’s light is rooted in biblical teaching. Permeating all aspects of daily life at this school, it effectively underpins decisions, policies and procedures.
- Inspiring leaders are determined that the Christian vision is a lived reality. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and the flourishing of each one is a priority.
- Inclusion is a significant strength at Fordcombe. The school's welcoming and loving culture enables pupils and adults to thrive even during challenging times.
- Collective worship, driven by the vision, is well planned and inclusive. Joyful singing and meaningful moments of reflection provide opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils and adults.
- The vision drives curriculum content providing pupils with the chance to shine. This enables them to develop their skills, talents and self-confidence so that they become the best they can be.

Development Points

- Strengthen the process of evaluation of the impact of the vision by leaders at all levels. This is to make certain that effective actions for improvement impact the flourishing of pupils and staff.
- Develop the use of assessment in religious education (RE) to better inform teaching and learning. This is to ensure pupils have opportunity to explore deeper ideas, questions and worldview perspectives in their learning.
- Embed a shared understanding of spirituality across the school to ensure it is an explicitly planned part of the curriculum. This is so that pupils have discrete opportunities to deepen their own spirituality.



Inspection Findings

The well-established Christian vision of shining in God's light is at the centre of life at Fordcombe. Led by passionate leaders and supported by the trust, adults and pupils experience and live out the vision each day. This is a small, welcoming school full of joy where people flourish. Governors and senior leaders carefully consider the vision when making decisions. This ensures that the development and wellbeing of people is a priority. Leaders, staff and governors are rightly proud of the difference that focusing on the vision makes. Notables are the creative approaches and personalised plans to support the learning and mental health of the most vulnerable pupils. Families talk confidently about how the school culture makes a positive contribution to their lives. The associated values of love, hope, respect, honesty, perseverance and forgiveness are well understood by families, pupils and adults. Deliberate actions by leaders ensure that the values are part of the language used in the daily life of this school. This ensures that both these and the vision impact positively on attitudes and behaviours. These values are lived out in school and support pupils and adults to 'be the light' and 'share God's light'. Recent work, driven by the trust, has provided a framework for reviewing the impact of the vision on all aspects of school life. This is in its infancy and therefore has not impacted significantly on the self-evaluation process for governors.

The curriculum is shaped by the vision and matches the school's context. This means that pupils, regardless of their starting points, have multiple opportunities to discover and develop their talents. This supports their flourishing. Staff work diligently to meet learners' needs including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There is also a strong focus on those considered to be vulnerable. Interventions, well-matched resources and bespoke approaches ensure these pupils thrive. Driven by the trust the introduction of quality reading texts raises themes that broaden pupils' understanding of the world around them. This includes energy, climate change and migration. The rich extra-curricular experiences provide opportunities for pupils to 'shine their light'. Notable among these are talent shows, drama performances and wellbeing afternoons. The introduction of these afternoons is driven by the pupil council. Pupils work together across year groups on engaging projects such as junk modelling and scrapbooking. Links with external organisations provide older pupils with support for transition. The school has correctly identified the need to develop pupils' understanding of spirituality across the curriculum. Training has inspired staff to recognise opportunities for pupils to flourish spiritually and enhance these with 'I wonder' questions. However, the lack of explicit reference to spirituality within the curriculum means that opportunities are insufficiently planned for.

Collective worship is well planned and led. Leaders carefully weave the school values into themes for worship, deepening the understanding of biblical teachings for pupils and adults. Worship is a joyful moment within the daily life of the school. Active leadership roles are valued by pupils allowing them to 'shine' and support their younger peers. SEND pupils are well-supported by adults and peers during worship. This enriches the inclusive nature of worship and creates a powerful sense of togetherness. Inspiring messages are shared and those present value the time spent listening, discussing, thinking and singing. Moments of stillness and reflection provide opportunities to ponder and respond to the messages in worship. Based on the teachings of Jesus this supports spiritual growth, challenging pupils' thinking and their future actions. Many pupils are eager to share their own prayers, both prepared and spontaneous, at the end of worship time. This reinforces the value of prayer for spiritual flourishing. All staff regularly lead worship. Members of the church, along with other external organisations, also lead worship in the school. Pupils, therefore, benefit from and enjoy a wide variety of worship experiences. Special services in the church such as Harvest Festival, Ash Wednesday, Remembrance and Easter, punctuate the school year. This allows pupils the opportunity to reflect on key events in the Christian calendar.



The school's vision drives a culture of respect and kindness towards individuals. Responding with love, empathy and wisdom, leaders ensure pupils and adults thrive. Staff are supported by leaders and by one another viewing the school as 'family'. Leaders have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the needs of pupils and staff. This is a result of trusting relationships, enabling issues to be identified early and supported in good time. The use of resources to provide for emotional development, alongside a range of other therapies ensures support for those who require it. Proactive work by the school to access additional services such as counselling also positively impacts on pupils' flourishing. Parents and carers speak passionately about staff supporting them as well as their children. In times of crisis the strong and caring culture serves the school community extremely well.

Pupils understand their own inherent value and that they have a unique place within Fordcombe School. The vision helps them recognise their differing strengths and needs, so that they 'shine and share God's light'. They have an understanding that justice means everyone has what they need to succeed. Pupils know their opinions are important in bringing about change and are empowered to make a difference to others. Reflections held in worship led to pupils being inspired to support and promote the message of fair trade with adults and families. There are meaningful leadership roles for the oldest pupils such as sports and arts captains, along with the school-wide pupil council. These roles inspire them to make a positive difference in their school and local community through events and charitable acts. Links with trust schools, along with other local schools and organisations, further contribute to this outward looking approach.

As a result of subject monitoring and evaluation, and with support from the diocese, leaders are implementing a new RE curriculum. The complex nature of differing numbers of year groups within classes has involved considerable planning when devising the curriculum. The outcome of this is an effective curriculum that is broad and balanced, allowing pupils to build on their knowledge of faith and worldviews. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning in RE and value the wide range of activities provided. Their books capture the variety of drama, craft, writing and art activities they use to express themselves. These wide-ranging activities help pupils remember their learning effectively. The use of key questions in each topic provides regular opportunity for debate. This allows pupils to share their knowledge and listen to the views of others.

Teaching is good. Leaders effectively monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning which informs future training and planning. Systems are in place and staff at all levels have a good understanding of pupils' attainment in RE. However, varied use is made of ongoing assessment to determine next steps for pupils. Consequently, not all pupils are able to build on their knowledge and understanding. This slows the progress of some.

Information

Address	The Green, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN3 0RY		
Date	9 May 2025	URN	146400
Type of school	Voluntary Aided Academy	No. of pupils	60
Diocese	Rochester		
MAT/Federation	The Tenax Schools Trust		
Headteacher	Chris Blackburn		
Chair of Governors	Sue Woods		
Inspector	Sarah Alexander		