

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### St Leonard's Church of England VA Lower School

#### Vision

At St Leonard's our Christian faith and values form the basis of everything we do. We are 'growing and learning together with God's love'.

Our school community is inspired by the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-23). We are encouraged to think about how the smallest things have the greatest potential when provided with the best conditions for growth.

We have high aspirations for all of our pupils and our staff. We aim to provide a learning experience and environment, that will enable everyone to develop deep roots and to grow and flourish in their own unique way.

St Leonard's Church of England VA Lower 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 Christian vision at St Leonard's is based on deep understanding of the needs of pupils and the context of the community. Consequently, it supports the flourishing of pupils and adults by becoming the rich soil they need to achieve and thrive.
- Wellbeing has a high priority. This creates an extremely caring culture where pupils and adults are treated well. This results in a happy school.
- Leaders nurture and care for members of the school community as the unique people they are. This enables them to customise support for pupils and adults as individuals.
- Pupils have a strong sense of their responsibility to themselves and each other leading to positive relationships and exemplary behaviour.
- Collective worship is inclusive and thoughtfully planned. Pupils and staff value the calm, peaceful opportunities for reflection and prayer, enhancing their spiritual growth.

#### Development Points

- Extend the approach to spirituality used in collective worship into all areas of the planned curriculum. This is in order to deepen the opportunities for pupils' spiritual development already in place.
- Embed the delivery of the revised religious education (RE) curriculum. This is to enable pupils to grow their knowledge and understanding of religion and worldviews.
- Develop pupils' passion for working for justice. This will enable them to have a greater understanding of their responsibility to have a positive impact on others' lives and the environment.



## Inspection Findings

Pupils and adults at St Leonard's thrive and flourish. This is achieved by leaders' relentless focus on their Christian vision. They know their community well. This enables them to accurately provide the 'rich soil' needed for individuals to grow and achieve. The school's vision is embodied through its sunflower logo and a focus on Christian values. These permeate the life of the school. Pupils speak confidently about the ways in which these values support them to develop. They understand the Parable of the Sower, in which the vision is rooted. They appreciate how the school values are the nutrients enabling them to 'root firm and grow strong', as one pupil commented. Leaders and staff engage well with training from the diocese. This has supported the development of St Leonard's as a Church school. Leaders including governors monitor the work of the school thoroughly. They draw accurate evaluations of aspects of the school's work. However, leaders' conclusions about the impact of the school's vision are not formal. This limits the development of St Leonard's as a Church school.

The school's vision helps deliver a curriculum which is engaging and relevant. Driven by their vision, leaders' ambition to identify and break down barriers to learning for pupils with vulnerabilities is relentless. Adults have been trained in a range of interventions. They know leaders welcome their suggestions for further professional development to best support pupils' needs. The school engages well with a range of external agencies. Across the curriculum, spontaneous moments for spiritual development are seized. This is especially evident in forest school activities, which pupils love. Time for reflection is often used, including 'chime time' in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Leaders have mapped opportunities across the curriculum. For example, big questions such as 'Why is our world wonderful?' in Year 2 geography. However, these are not identified to pupils as they occur. This limits the extent to which they can identify these moments and restricts their spiritual flourishing.

The values through which the school vision is delivered form the structure for daily collective worship. Pupils see this as a time to learn about God and Jesus. They develop a greater appreciation of the relevance of faith today. Through collective worship pupils encounter Bible stories that are chosen to link with each value. For example, they accurately explain how perseverance was shown in the story of Joseph and Mary's flight to Egypt. This helps them focus on how they can be more persistent with issues they may face. Partnership with the parish is strong. The parish priest leads worship weekly and is fully involved in the life of the school. This supports the spiritual flourishing and wellbeing of pupils and adults. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship by governors and pupil worship leaders helps guide developments. In collective worship, pupils develop an understanding of why people pray. Opportunities for prayer are invitational. One pupil noted that prayer is 'a chance to speak to God, who is always there to hear it.' Staff value acts of collective worship as times to be calm and peaceful. Through collective worship, pupils and adults are enriched spiritually, in an inclusive way.

St Leonard's is a happy school where members aim to be the 'good soil' for one another. This is a result of the high-quality relationships and a deeply embedded culture where everyone strives to treat each other well. In line with their vision, staff describe themselves as being 'rooted' here, with a real feeling of community. Leaders prioritise knowing and understanding everyone at St Leonard's as a unique individual. There is a focus on wellbeing and positive mental health. Support for pupils and adults is broad, including therapies and interventions. Leonard, the teddy bear, sits in the library and responds with advice to pupil letters asking for help or reinforcement. Pupils explain how they can ask an adult for 'talk time' when they have something worrying them. In-school provision is supplemented with external professional mental health programmes. This commitment to inclusion is summed up by governors who want the school to 'be a home for everyone.' Parents feel this sense of welcome and care for



themselves. Leaders ensure they create a culture in which people feel equipped to deal with challenges they may face. The school values of courage, trust and perseverance underpin this. This is the school's vision in action, providing the nutrients needed to flourish. Consequently, pupil behaviour is exemplary. Where needed, opportunities for reflection and recompense form the basis of the school's restorative approach to behaviour.

Staff nurture pupils who are well rounded individuals with a strong moral compass. Planned opportunities ensure pupils develop a sense of responsibility as they grow through St Leonard's. This is embodied in their Learning Charter. Leadership roles become available as pupils grow through the school. Pupils act as school council members, worship leaders and playground buddies. Less formally, pupils read to children in other classes and care for the school rabbits. These roles build pupils' confidence and understanding of responsibility for others. Pupils begin to develop an understanding of their responsibility for the environment through the curriculum, especially in science, and collecting single-use waste plastics. Through pupils' active engagement with charity activities, decided by the school council, they encounter issues of justice. They collect and distribute food boxes to the elderly in the village and for the local foodbank. Further afield, they sponsor a vulnerable child through a national Christian charity. These moments ensure they ponder whether life is fair. However, they are not committed to working for justice independently in their school or wider community.

Leaders ensure that RE has a high profile. Pupils enjoy their lessons. They celebrate their differences and understand that people do not all need to think or believe the same things. The RE curriculum supports pupils in gaining knowledge and understanding of a range of religions. Pupils value this growth in knowledge in order to be better people and respect others. Leaders' monitoring and evaluation of RE provision is accurate. As a result, curriculum plans have been reviewed recently to incorporate non-religious worldviews and to increase the philosophical content. This is now being implemented, but it is too early to impact on pupil outcomes.

RE is taught well. This is due to strong, supportive leadership and the staff training provided through the diocese and RE leader. Assessments help staff identify pupils who have grasped key content. The outcomes of these assessments are used to address misconceptions or deepen knowledge. Consequently, pupils make pleasing progress in RE.

## Information

Address	Thrift Road, Heath and Reach, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, LU7 0AX		
Date	24 January 2025	URN	109618
Type of school	Voluntary Aided	No. of pupils	122
Diocese	St Albans		
Headteacher	Sarah Bowley		
Chair of Governors	Lauren Johnston		
Inspector	Rob Halls		