

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Payhembury Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Address	Payhembury, Nr Honiton, Devon, EX14 3HT		
Date of inspection	04/02/2020	Status of school	Voluntary controlled primary
Diocese	Exeter	URN	113360

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Excellent
Additional Judgement	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Excellent

School context

Payhembury is a primary school with 102 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also in line with national averages. The school is in the 5th year of a federation with a nearby school, and received a grade of 'good' from Ofsted in the latest short inspection.

The school's Christian vision Our Vision

Living, loving and learning forever:
Becoming the best as we journey together.

Jesus came to bring life in all its fullness and in the first miracle at Cana in Galilee Jesus showed that fullness means abundant and extra-ordinary, the finest, sparkling, and the best it can be. John Ch 10:10b, Ch 2:1-12

Key findings

- Payhembury school is a beacon of Christian love and security. The vision has recently been refreshed and inspires the whole community, with the source Bible text expanded thoughtfully so that it is child-friendly.
- Leadership is key: the Christian faith of the head and executive head shines in everything they do. All staff, governors and pupils do their utmost to live out the Christian values.
- Caring and loving relationships underpin the mental health, well being and security that enable all to give of their best. This love leads naturally to courageous advocacy – pupils 'sparkle' in helping others and taking the initiative in finding ways in which to do so.
- The passion and skill of the religious education (RE) co-ordinator have inspired staff and children across the federation and beyond. Worship adds depth to the spiritual elements of the school, exploring Jesus' life and teachings. Pupils play key roles in planning, leading and evaluation.
- The church and school communities are interwoven and, with the unified vision seeking fullness of life and a passion for outreach, have grown to be the Christian heart of the village.

Areas for development

- Extend the sharing of excellent curricular practice, particularly in RE and worship, across the diocese so as to support and enable other local schools.
- Establish new global links to build further on the pupils' already strong understanding of other cultures.
- Extend the school's current practice in spiritual development to provide further planned opportunities both in and beyond the curriculum to deepen the pupils' spiritual understanding.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

Payhembury school exemplifies Christian values and shines brightly in the local community. The executive head and the headteacher have led the way in establishing the vision to bring life in all its fullness to every pupil and family. As one staff member put it, 'Love comes first in this school.' The federation with a nearby school has developed exceptionally well, bringing co-operation and flexibility to improve staff training and the sharing of expertise. The chair of governors said, 'The children are all flourishing – you can't argue with that.' The executive headteacher is fully committed and actively contributes to the work of the diocese. She is a key member of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE), and the school/federation is regarded as a centre of excellence, reflecting the Christian vision and seeking to ensure that all flourish.

The care and support given to all pupils is demonstrated quietly yet powerfully in the loving and selfless way in which the vulnerable are nurtured. Those who have suffered trauma and isolation in their young lives are given redemptive love and kindness so as to rebuild and establish confidence. This extends to the wider community. Damaged families are restored sensitively with close partnerships with staff from out of school agencies. The staff team act as advocates for families, building trust and co-operation. A parent spoke of 'feeling embraced' by the school when moving here. This ethos of loving encouragement builds resilience in all the pupils, who are secure and ready to ask and try to answer difficult questions without inhibition or fear. This also leads to excellent attendance, well above national targets, and consistently good to outstanding academic data. The leadership's response to Ofsted's expectations in English and maths has been vigorous, as is the case in the areas for development identified in the previous denominational report.

Relationships within and well beyond the school are strong and clearly based on Christian values, in line with the refreshed vision. The church links are fostered through the involvement of the vicar in worship in both school and church. Perhaps more significantly, many church members are welcomed into school to present Bible stories through 'Open the Book' dramatic worship. They also run a 'Bible and biscuit' (BBC) club and several events in church and the village hall such as 'Pentecost experience' and a 'Light party' as an alternative to Halloween. These opportunities for spiritual development strengthen the links between the communities.

The exceptional work done to support pupils' mental well-being and health includes that given to others by the group of pupil 'well being ambassadors'. They are constantly 'on the look out' for anyone who seems sad. This open and loving approach extends strongly to staff also. The induction, training and support for all adults in school are exemplary. Several members of staff have had their careers restored by the sensitive and careful work done through prayer, love and awareness of the need to guard everyone's mental health. One commented tellingly that 'the children have taught me to find my space.' Another added, 'we can always ask – even silly questions!'

The blending into the whole curriculum of 'Philosophy for Children' (P4C) has made asking and exploring big questions a natural extension of the vision. The executive head inspires children and adults to 'sparkle', demonstrating life in all its fullness. The commitment with which innovations in the curriculum and extra curricula activities are pursued is striking. Character-building trips and visits such as the sixteen-mile Exmoor challenge (Year 6), and the Holocaust Memorial Day in Exeter cathedral, at which the choir sang 'Refuge', are good examples. A trip to Parliament opened pupils' minds to the process of law-making and stimulated their developing sense of courageous advocacy. A refugee Syrian boy's plight studied in the Year 5/6 class added reinforcement and empathy for refugees generally. They are initiating schemes to decrease plastic use and raise money to buy trees. A recent 'spiritual journey' overview provided encouragement as to the progress made throughout the school. An excellent example from the youngest class is the 'Elmer week', during which they explored diversity and the senses of belonging, being and becoming. Global links are underdeveloped although the school has supported a charity working in Melanesia and Burundi.

Worship in school and church is characterised by warmth, sincerity, variety and relevance. Pupils play a crucial role in planning, leading and evaluating. A riveting example included all three roles. Drama, reflection, prayers,

singing and poetry all entirely led by pupils on the theme of refugees, led into challenging examples of our responsibility to help others. A dramatisation of 'The Good Samaritan' was enhanced by the 'refuge' song and a reflection: 'Think about how you can be a refuge.' Another worship leader added, 'God is our refuge – he will never abandon us'. The Ethos group members involved linked the theme to a plan to sell cakes to raise money for refugees. The pupils are remarkably empathetic and keen to make a difference both to the needy and to God's creation. Caring for the natural world matters to them. However, worship has not yet fully explored the Christian belief in the Holy Spirit.

RE is vibrant and exciting. The asking of difficult questions is celebrated and embraced by staff and pupils alike. Using drama, discussion, visits and media, Christianity and a range of world faiths are explored with openness and academic rigour. A parent stated boldly, 'It's a fantastic school with inclusive, wonderful RE.' Pupils are clear about the value of studying world faiths, one saying 'it unlocks a whole new belief. If you meet a Hindu you'll communicate!' The teaching and learning are outstanding. The co-ordinator is full of enthusiasm and skill, and is leading the way forward with staff from both schools in the federation, and positively participates in the local RE meetings. She is rightly proud that the confidence of staff and pupils has grown rapidly. The new syllabus has been successfully introduced, along with 'Understanding Christianity', which she describes as 'an amazing resource'. P4C is subtly but deliberately used in RE and throughout the curriculum, giving greater emphasis to the big questions.

Parents and carers are fulsome in their praise for the school's Christian ethos and values. Five of these have a high profile: perseverance, acceptance, respect, care and honesty (PARCH). The whole school family fully understand these and use them at home and school. One parent said that she and her daughter will readily say, when either lets standards slip, 'That's not very PARCH!' The respect, care and honesty with which everyone is treated is exceptional. Pupils exhibit remarkable self-control, and they all acknowledge that this stems from the Christian values. They are co-operating in 'becoming the best' that they can be. A staff member said, 'It's magical. It's a privilege to work here.'

Executive head/Head of school	Penny Hammett/Nick Blaydon
Inspector's name and number	Mike Graham 286