

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

### Bitterley Church of England Primary School

#### Vision

This vision statement, deeply rooted in Christian theology, encapsulates who we are: a loving and caring school community where all are happy, valued and respected.

It also captures what we want for our pupils – to be courageous in their academic and life choices; to be strong and resilient learners who don't give up when things are challenging and support each other.

Additionally, we encourage children to explore their own spirituality and wonder about life's big questions in a supportive and nurturing environment.

"Be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love" (1 Corinthians 16:13-14)

Bitterley 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 school's deeply embedded Christian vision is widely understood and actively embraced by the school community. It guides the decisions and behaviours of both staff and pupils, creating a transformative impact on their lives and experiences.
- School leaders are dedicated to delivering a rigorous curriculum that encourages pupils to approach learning with love, strength and courage. This shared purpose is reinforced through a strong partnership with the Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust (DHMAT).
- Collective worship is deeply cherished by both pupils and staff. Collaborations with the local church enhance the spiritual journey of worship, uniting the community and fostering a deeper connection to the vision. This experience meaningfully shapes pupils' perspectives on their role in the world.
- Strong, positive relationships form the foundation of the school, with wellbeing a top priority. This creates a caring and inclusive environment where both staff and pupils feel appreciated and supported.
- Pupils find religious education (RE) lessons engaging and recognise how they contribute to their personal growth and understanding of others. This is due to the effective leadership and teaching of the subject.

#### Development Points

- Strengthen the RE curriculum to include a broader exploration of different beliefs and practices within each religion. This is to deepen pupils' understanding of the diversity among individuals who follow the same faith.



## Inspection Findings

Deeply rooted in its rural context, Bitterley is a welcoming, warm and joyful school. Their distinctly Christian vision is known, understood and fully embedded within the life and work of the school. By being 'courageous, strong and doing everything in love' the school enables pupils and adults to express and develop their unique gifts. Leaders consider deeply what is best for pupils, their parents and carers, staff and the local community. The school's Christian ethos is embraced wholeheartedly by the school family. This thoughtfully developed vision is intricately woven into aspects of daily school life, positively impacting on the wider school community. The 'Tree of Hope' draws people in from the local community to engage with the messages that are shared on it. The Christian vision guides the decisions and actions of leaders, including governors. This fosters an atmosphere where pupils and families feel supported and valued. Parents appreciate the 'loving family environment' of the school, commenting 'it's wonderful all the staff know all of the children.' Bitterley cultivates a compassionate and inclusive environment deeply rooted in Christian values, where pupils draw inspiration from biblical teachings. They integrate these principles into their daily lives. The school's vision fosters a culture of love, enriching the lives of both pupils and their families. Within this nurturing atmosphere, parents and carers witness their children thriving. Staff feel personally and professionally supported and appreciated. Parents highly value the staff's accessibility, guidance and care, which often exceed expectations.

The school's vision underpins its curriculum, ensuring pupils can engage fully in learning, with support if necessary. Leaders have designed a challenging curriculum with high expectations, offering rich learning experiences and prioritising spiritual development. Pupils are encouraged to be curious, ask big questions and find belonging, with spirituality woven into subjects. Staff carefully align subject plans with the school's values. Consequently, these inspire perseverance in learning, enabling pupils to 'to show courage when things are hard'. Pupils are encouraged to discuss big questions. Time is provided for silence and stillness, fostering a shared understanding of spirituality in school. The curriculum is tailored to provide fair access for pupils, including those considered vulnerable. Consequently, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are able to engage and thrive.

Inspired by their vision, collective worship unites staff and pupils, creating a sense of being part of one loving family. It reminds pupils and staff how their vision helps everyone to grow, providing a precious time of togetherness. The daily pattern of worship provides pupils with a sense of familiarity, with time provided for moments of calm. Areas around school, both in classrooms and outside, enable pupils to share thoughts and prayers. Moments for stillness, reflection and prayer are examples of the varied opportunities for spiritual development. These allow pupils and adults to revisit, reflect on and discuss their thoughts and emotions. Consequently, they are able to explore how Bible stories relate to their daily lives and relationships. The well-planned worship programme ensures worship is a joyous time. Pupils look forward to being involved in drama and readings. Local clergy support the worshipping life of the school regularly. Parents are invited weekly to share worship and celebrate with their children. As a direct result of the carefully planned provision, collective worship at Bitterley provides valued opportunities for the spiritual flourishing of adults and pupils.

The school's vision encourages a caring and inclusive environment, strengthened by strong ties with the DHMAT and Hereford Diocese. A deep commitment to wellbeing is evident. Adults feel valued and supported, as they 'are recognised and given lots of opportunities'. Supportive, compassionate colleagues ensure pupils and adults are cared for, heard and treated fairly. Pupils receive opportunities for nurture and support. Training for staff on areas such as emotional support, together with weekly drop-in sessions and nurture groups, enhance pupil wellbeing.



Bramble, Mabel and Dottie, the school dogs, also play an important role in supporting pupils and staff. They help to promote a sense of calm, reducing anxieties. Parents and carers greatly appreciate the love, warmth and care their children experience from staff and peers. They emphasise how the school's values nurture an environment of respect and kindness among pupils. Leaders at all levels support the wellbeing of both staff and pupils, taking proactive measures to keep this focus central to the school's vision.

Guided by their Christian vision, this small school community emphasises responsibility, reflection and respect for diversity through meaningful pupil opportunities. Pupils value each other's contributions, creating a welcoming environment where adults and pupils are accepted for who they are. Their positive and caring actions and discussions highlight their strong understanding of issues of injustice in society. Pupils are inspired to take on leadership roles in areas such as worship, sport and participating in the school council. They also engage in fundraising and awareness events for charities and have been advocates for several campaigns in their local community. These include litter picking and recycling campaigns and trying to increase disabled access to the local park. Consequently, pupils actively use their sense of responsibility to make a meaningful difference to the lives of others.

School leaders have successfully established effective provision in RE, ensuring it has a high profile in school. Pupils enjoy RE lessons, and understand why it is such an important subject. Teachers access a range of training that ensures they have a good understanding of the RE curriculum. It is well-structured to ensure that pupils build on prior knowledge. Pupils are confident in talking about a range of faiths and have an understanding of a range of different worldviews. However, opportunities to fully explore the diversity of beliefs within specific religious traditions, including different Christian denominations, are less developed. As a result, pupils often hold a narrow or stereotypical view of how people live out their personal faith.

Teaching and learning in RE is effective. School leaders are committed to ensuring RE is delivered with skill and enthusiasm. Relevant, regular training, in association with the diocese, ensures subject expertise is effectively shared among teachers, enhancing their confidence. Pupils are proud of their work and make good progress which is carefully tracked through appropriate assessment and monitoring. Teachers identify those needing extra support or challenge, shaping future lessons. The enriching experiences pupils gain in lessons play a vital role in their personal and spiritual growth. Complex issues are addressed effectively, preparing them well for future stages of development. Lessons are engaging, thought-provoking, and enjoyable, with pupils thriving on the variety of activities they encounter. This dynamic approach ensures they make good progress in RE.

## Information

Address	Bitterley, Ludlow, SY8 3HF		
Date	13 February 2025	URN	142142
Type of school	Academy	No. of pupils	85
Diocese/District	Hereford		
MAT/Federation	Diocese of Hereford MAT		
Headteacher	Kerrie Lewis		
Chair of Governors	Jon Hughes		
Inspector	David Dunn		