

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Ulcombe Church of England Primary School

Vision

One body, many members, learning together surrounded by God's inclusive love.

Ulcombe 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

- Ulcombe is a very small school with a very big heart. Senior leaders are passionate about ensuring that pupils, families and staff at Ulcombe flourish. Nurturing support for the whole school community is exceptional.
- The distinctly Christian vision from 1 Corinthians of one body, many members, is lived out every day. It effectively underpins every decision taken, every policy and every procedure.
- Leaders, including governors, are hugely committed to ensuring the positive wellbeing of pupils and staff. Relationships are rooted in the desire for all to feel understood, listened to and loved.
- Collective worship is a joyful and inclusive part of the school day at Ulcombe. Through this, pupils are inspired to embrace the school vision and to demonstrate it at school and in their own lives.
- Deep and considerable thought has been put into the design of the religious education (RE) curriculum. As a result, it successfully meets the needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Development Points

- Develop and embed a shared language around spirituality for pupils and staff. This is to enable pupils to articulate their understanding of their own spirituality.



Inspection Findings

This is a warm, loving and welcoming school. Ulcombe's Christian vision celebrates diversity and is carefully crafted to reflect the community it serves. Leaders know and understand the needs of pupils and adults well. They have an ambitious and relentless commitment to the championing of their pupils. Flourishing is at the heart of all decision making. Deep levels of trust between the school and its community enable pupils and adults to feel included and appreciated as 'one body.' The vision of the school and of the Aspire federation complement each other, ensuring an effective partnership. There are numerous opportunities to work closely together across the federation. These include pupil sports teams and network meetings for curriculum leaders. All of these provide a supportive culture for the benefit of pupils and staff. Committed governors provide a high level of support and, along with leaders, effectively evaluate the impact of the school's vision. This strengthens Ulcombe's strategic approach and its distinctiveness as a Church school.

The curriculum is shaped by the Christian vision and focuses on the development of the whole child. This means it caters for pupils of all abilities. Staff work diligently to meet the needs of learners including those with SEND. There is also a strong focus on those considered to be vulnerable. Interventions, well matched resources and bespoke approaches ensure these pupils achieve their best. Leaders carefully plan the timetabling of the curriculum so that all pupils can experience the maximum benefit from their learning. Pupils receive a broad and vibrant curriculum that is enriched by visits, visitors and resources. The school offers access to extra-curricular activities during the day such as gardening, choir and games clubs. Pupils flourish as a result of these wide-ranging opportunities to discover and develop new passions and skills. Collaborative events with pupils from the other federation schools broaden horizons. As a result, pupils' viewpoints and life experiences are widened. Staff have recently worked closely with the Diocese of Canterbury to develop their understanding of spiritual development. This work is at an early stage. Staff are not fully confident in being able to identify and plan for spiritual development using the appropriate language.

The day at Ulcombe starts with uplifting and highly inclusive worship, where the whole community comes together. Individual and bespoke experiences are offered so that pupils can benefit from worship. Inspiring messages are shared, and both pupils and staff value the time spent listening, discussing, thinking and singing. Collective worship enhances the spiritual development of adults and pupils within the school. The planning for collective worship recognises the cultures and backgrounds of the pupils. This demonstrates the Christian vision of one body, many members, learning together, in action. It provides pupils with the opportunity to see themselves in the themes discussed. Pupils appreciate how worship helps them with their learning and behaviour, both inside and outside of school. Pupils lack a shared language around spiritual development. This means they find it difficult to express their thoughts and ideas. Excellent support from the federation has enabled the new worship leader to quickly develop confidence, knowledge and skills. All staff regularly lead worship. Members of the church community also lead worship in the school. Pupils, therefore, benefit from and enjoy different styles of Anglican worship during the week.

Leaders are committed to ensuring every single pupil achieves their best. Working closely with families and proactively engaging with numerous external agencies, the school impacts positively on pupils' lives. Parents and carers recognise and appreciate this caring support from the school. They refer to Ulcombe as 'a loving extended family' and somewhere 'where nothing is a problem'. Such is the culture of welcome and acceptance at Ulcombe, staff from across the school go above and beyond in providing advice and practical support. This pastoral work



embodies the school's Christian vision of one body many members. Pupils eagerly and enthusiastically share their understanding of the school 'motto', articulating that 'everyone is included and all joined together'. One pupil notably explained how 'just knowing this means, even when we leave, we will always be part of Ulcombe.' This is evidenced by secondary age ex-pupils coming back to Ulcombe to access support. As a small school, leaders are fully aware of the many roles staff undertake. They actively utilise the supportive structures that being part of a federation brings. Staff appreciate the positive impact this has on workload. This, along with informal welfare checks on each other, results in staff feeling valued and supported.

The RE curriculum at Ulcombe is referred to by all as 'understanding beliefs and worldviews.' The study of Christianity as a living and diverse faith is a significant part of this curriculum. It is a high-profile subject within the school and has clear oversight from senior leaders. Pupils enjoy their RE lessons. They enthusiastically talk about the importance of understanding and respecting what others believe. Leaders plan whole school RE immersion days throughout the year. These focus on concepts such as religious festivals. This ensures pupils are able to make links in their learning across the subject. The RE leader is passionate that pupils can all access high quality learning. The curriculum is balanced, challenging and builds on prior knowledge. Pupils with SEND, or who are vulnerable, are supported well. The curriculum content is regularly reviewed and effectively adapted, making sure it meets the needs of this unique community. RE is relevant, well-resourced and effective due to careful and regular monitoring by leaders. Appropriate assessment systems, support for those new to teaching RE and regular training from within the federation are well embedded.

The sense of love and care for one another permeates throughout the whole of the school. Rooted in the Christian vision of all being surrounded by God's inclusive love, this nurturing approach ensures everyone flourishes. Pupils, staff and parents feel listened to, and in return understand the importance of listening to others. The active school council is divided into three groups, healthy heroes, eco experts and wellbeing warriors. This provides pupils with opportunities to make a difference to the school and the community beyond. These include local litter picks, installing a buddy bench in the playground and becoming a 'friend of the honey bee.' Curriculum units, focusing on themes such as climate change and historic issues of slavery, also support pupils' understanding of justice. Pupils and staff are rightly proud of their inclusive and outward looking school community.

Information

Address	Ulcombe Church of England Primary School, The Street, Ulcombe, Kent, ME17 1DU		
Date	21 st November 2024	URN	118631
Type of school	Voluntary Controlled	No. of pupils	68
Diocese/District	Canterbury		
MAT/Federation	Aspire Federation		
Headteacher	Emma Hickling		
Chair of Governors	Annie Allum		
Inspector	Sarah Alexander 2108		