

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

### Hormead Church of England (VA) First and Nursery School

#### Vision

Love of Learning, Love of Life itself, and Love of God

"I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

A natural home for all children and adults to have the opportunity to flourish within the community, in a unique and happy school rooted in Christian values.

Christian values: love, cooperation, kindness, honesty, aspiration, courage, resilience

Hormead Church of England (VA) First 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 and associated values, which are deeply rooted in scripture, drive and guide all aspects of school life.
- Leaders have established a nurturing and inclusive learning environment with the vision at its heart. Staff ensure vulnerable children including those with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) are well supported to thrive.
- A culture of belonging, inspired by the vision, ensures each pupil and adult is valued for their uniqueness. Pupils and adults are treated with respect and kindness modelled by a strong, close-knit staff team.

#### Development Points

- Strengthen the robustness of leaders' monitoring of collective worship. This is so leaders are able to effectively evaluate its impact, to ensure collective worship evolves and enhances spiritual development.
- Develop pupils' ability to become more aware of injustice around them. This is so they can make a positive difference as champions of change.
- Embed the recently introduced religious education (RE) curriculum and assessment system. This is to further support the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding of religions and worldviews.



## Inspection Findings

Hormead is a happy, village Church school where pupils thrive. Leaders ensure pupils experience the fullness of life and the Christian vision and values become a lived reality. Pupils appreciate God's world around them, guided by the school's Christian values of love, cooperation, kindness, honesty, aspiration, courage, and resilience. These values shape their daily interactions and foster a deeper understanding of their responsibility to care for and respect creation. The school makes the most of its idyllic rural location and consequently, pupils develop a 'love of life itself'. Leaders have instilled a sense of awe and presence in how pupils approach life. Curiosity and life-long learning are fostered through a 'love of learning'. Pupils feel safe to explore rich, meaningful experiences. Parents are justifiably proud of the school and pupils enjoy attending. Working in partnership with the diocese, leaders continue to enable the school to grow and flourish. For example, with the addition of a nursery for two year olds. Leaders create a loving and fulfilling learning environment where families feel valued and welcome.

The vision is woven into every aspect of the curriculum to support pupils' spiritual growth. Leaders at this highly inclusive school ensure pupils receive the care they need to achieve well both academically and spiritually. Provision for pupils with SEND is a strength of the school with learning adapted to meet their needs. Each class's engagement with the natural world enables planned and spontaneous moments of spiritual development. The school's curriculum consciously fosters a connection with creation through outdoor learning and forest school. For example, to understand the world around them, pupils in the early years go on a walk to spot signs of spring. Additionally, the school's extra-curricular offer includes music and art appreciation to encourage personal reflection. Pupils talk about how they feel emotional reflecting on memories when listening to classical music. Time and space is given to pupils to explore and value powerful spiritual moments that happen at unexpected times. Pupils describe how they feel a deep sense of peace and connection to nature during outdoor art in the forest hut. Without planning for it, they experience a sense of awe. This, and the gratitude that stays with them, shape their understanding of the world and their place in it.

Daily collective worship reaffirms the school's vision and values. Leaders start the day with collective worship to equip pupils for the day ahead, with a strong sense of direction. Pupils of all faiths, and none, are equally welcome. The school enjoys a close partnership with the church. The local reverend develops pupils' understanding of Anglican traditions and events in the Christian calendar. For example, Ash Wednesday and Lent. Pupils engage imaginatively with the retelling of Bible stories, opening a box and using real artefacts. This makes worship accessible and enjoyable for pupils, including those with SEND. Pupils contribute with thoughtful questions and prayer is a collaborative experience. Pupils ably lead collective worship in the local church with each year group responsible for a specific Christian festival. Pupils and parents rightly appreciate the communal experience of singing, performing and celebrating together which nurtures belonging and shared joy. However, leaders do not systematically evaluate collective worship in order to enable improvements in practice to be made.

Pupils and adults are treated well at Hormead. The vision and associated values inspire pupils and adults to enjoy good relationships with each other. This in turn supports their mental health and wellbeing. Mindfulness, art and yoga breathing techniques are effectively used to still pupils and prepare them for learning. The school council informs school improvement initiatives. Pupils feel listened to due to leaders' open door policy promoting a culture of self-worth. Pupils speak with pride about the buddy bench and cosy cabin which help them feel safe at school. Pupils who demonstrate actions linked with the school's values are awarded a 'values heart'. Behaviour is exemplary, bullying is rare and differences are resolved quickly using a restorative approach. Conscious



engagement with the natural environment fosters good health. Pupils eagerly engage in the local tradition of harvesting potatoes epitomising the school's values of cooperation and resilience. The school and church work together to support families in need, financially and emotionally. Leaders maintain a high standard of pastoral care for staff and pupils.

In line with its Christian vision, the school promotes a culture of challenging injustice and developing responsibility for self and others. Through a rich curriculum and a strong focus on justice, pupils recognise inequality both locally and globally. Pupils actively reject stereotypes, respect disability and value diversity. Pupils are keen to make their community a fairer place. They develop a sense of responsibility as playground buddies and through democratically elected leadership roles. These include school, worship and eco councils. They raise money for charity, litter pick in the village and make rules for break times. Partnerships with organisations such as the local food bank, The Children's Society and Children in Need enrich pupil's understanding of service. Nevertheless, pupils' developing awareness of justice has not led them to advocate for positive change and challenge injustice in the wider world.

RE is given a high priority and profile as a core subject. To deepen pupils' knowledge, in response to staff feedback, leaders recently adopted an engaging, enquiry based RE curriculum. The new curriculum, although yet to be embedded, is carefully sequenced to offer challenge, balance and relevance. Staff training, with support and guidance from the RE lead, has improved best practice. RE is well resourced including digital resources, a range of artefacts and a dedicated section in the library. Children participate in a variety of memorable visits, workshops and hands-on experiences to enhance their learning about, and from, religion. These include places of worship visits, Shabbat meals in class whilst studying Judaism and baking hot cross buns for Easter. Parent visitors share religious practices including Muslim prayer and learning about the Holi festival. The new curriculum is ambitious and inclusive allowing pupils to explore their own beliefs while appreciating the diversity of faiths and worldviews. However, with the new curriculum not being fully embedded, pupils' knowledge is not secure about a range of religions and worldviews.

The quality of teaching and learning of RE is strong. Pupils are given opportunities to develop critical thinking skills, empathy and respect by understanding their own and other worldviews. For example, pupils enjoy using drama to explore significant events in the life of Jesus. Inspirational and highly valued floor books detail pupil's spiritual journeys capturing pupil voice, reflections, and significant events in the Church calendar. This helps pupils remember and reflect on key aspects of Christianity, deepening their spiritual journey. Pupils use their floor books to revisit learning and share progress with parents. Teachers assess progress using the windows, mirrors and doors model at the end of each unit to inform appropriate challenge. Leaders regularly monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in RE. The school provides a nurturing and inclusive environment where all can thrive, reflecting its commitment to enabling 'life in all its fullness'.

## Information

Address	Great Hormead, Buntingford, Hertfordshire SG9 0NR		
Date	05 March 2025	URN	117439
Type of school	Voluntary Aided	No. of pupils	133
Diocese	St Albans		
Headteacher	Lynda Cowler		
Chair of Governors	Michael Johnson		
Inspector	Nicola James		