

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Downham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Vision

Inspiring all to soar to new heights. 'Those who trust in the Lord will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles.' Isaiah 40:31

Downham Church of England Voluntary Controlled 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.

Notable Strengths

- The Christian vision is driving confident and ambitious leadership that has restored stability and raised expectations. Decisions by leaders and governors place pupils' flourishing at the centre, widening opportunities in learning, enrichment and inclusion.
- A rich range of opportunities and responsibilities has been inspired by the vision. This broadens pupils' experiences, enabling them to 'soar to new heights'.
- Collective worship supports the spiritual development of pupils. It is well led, drawing the school community together in meaningful reflection and learning about God.
- A deeply caring and respectful ethos ensures that pupils and adults are known, valued and well supported.
- Religious education (RE) is well led. The structured curriculum offers pupils engaging encounters with Christianity, other faiths and worldviews, enriched through visits and visitors.

Development Points

- Strengthen opportunities for spirituality across the curriculum so that pupils encounter regular and meaningful moments for stillness, reflection and deeper thinking.
- Strengthen governor monitoring and evaluation so that the influence of collective worship on pupils' attitudes and choices is clearly identified.
- Develop pupils' understanding of justice. Use this to widen the opportunities for pupils to respond when they see injustice within the wider world.



Inspection Findings

Vision and Leadership

Leadership at Downham is shaped by a Christian vision that has brought stability and clear purpose after a turbulent period. The vision draws on biblical teaching that speaks of renewed strength and hope. Leaders apply the vision to guide decisions that raise aspirations for pupils and strengthen expectations for staff. This direction has lifted morale and restored trust. Parents and carers value a renewed sense of welcome and say that the school 'feels like it has its spark back'. This reflects a strong sense of belonging being fostered across the community. Recent training for staff, linked to the vision, has clarified expectations and strengthened confidence in the classroom. Staff appreciate this clarity and recognise its effect on their practice. Pupils understand the vision and appreciate how it shapes perseverance and determination. A recent French club activity showed the school value of creativity. Pupils chose to translate the vision and create posters linking its theme of 'soaring' in learning. These developments have contributed to rising ambition and a shared sense of identity rooted in the vision. Governors understand the significance of the vision and are developing their confidence in evaluating its influence on the life of the school. They apply it well to their decision making, but are less clear on the impact it is having on the lives of the pupils.

Vision and Curriculum

The curriculum is shaped by the Christian vision and underpinned by the school's values. These guide pupils to experience challenge, collaborate with others, express themselves creatively and think with growing independence. The values influence classroom practice and encourage pupils to persevere, question and explore ideas with confidence. Targeted support helps pupils who are considered vulnerable to access learning securely, enabling them to experience success in their learning alongside their peers. Spiritual development is secure in collective worship and RE, where pupils experience regular moments of stillness, reflection and meaning. Across other subjects, this is developing. Staff have a shared understanding of spiritual development and use it to frame reflection, though practice varies between subjects. Pupils experience awe and wonder in reflective outdoor work. These examples show promise but are not planned with uniform intent. The vision drives leaders' approach to personal development within the wider curriculum. Pupils value opportunities, such as within the forest school, cross-country, musical performance and creative workshops. They recognise how these experiences build confidence and help them to attempt challenges.

Worship and Spirituality

Collective worship shapes the tone of the school day by creating a calm space where pupils can pause, reflect and encounter biblical ideas. It allows individuals to connect with God or reflect in their own way by offering time for stillness that many value. This rhythm supports the school's shared approach to spirituality and deepens the reflective culture. Worship is structured around the school's values. Each half term explores a value through stories about God and Jesus. This approach gives pupils regular opportunities to think about how their values influence responses and behaviour. Pupils and staff recognise worship as a time to 'think more deeply' and give examples of themes, such as courage and compassion, shaping their understanding. Contributions from clergy bring varied perspectives and traditions, enhancing understanding of differences within Christian worship. Thoughtful adaptations ensure that pupils with additional needs feel confident and welcomed. Pupil monitoring during worship gives leaders insight into what pupils value and notice. Monitoring by governors is less developed and does not provide insight into its long-term impact. Worship offers stability, reflects the Christian vision and provides a source of strength and calm for the school community.

Vision and School Culture

Relationships across the school reflect the Christian vision through calm interactions, thoughtful support and a strong commitment to dignity. The culture promotes belonging and pupils explain that they feel known,



understood and encouraged to be themselves. Support for those who have additional needs enables them to participate actively in school life. Personalised communication strategies and bespoke help for pupils increase their confidence and engagement. The Nurture Room plays an important role, with staff providing calm guidance that helps pupils to manage their emotions and rebuild confidence. This approach strengthens their readiness to learn and supports positive relationships across the school. Staff consistently demonstrate patience, kindness and respect, which contribute to a stable and welcoming atmosphere. Leaders show concern for staff wellbeing, responding with sensitivity to personal needs and protecting work–life balance through clear communication and flexibility. This strengthens trust and sustains a culture where staff feel valued and able to give their best.

Vision, Justice and Responsibility

The Christian vision shapes the school’s approach to responsibility and service. Pupils take part in charitable action with commitment, including shoebox collections, food bank support and links with a local care home. These experiences nurture empathy and help pupils to recognise the impact of serving others. Collective worship gives pupils some understanding of wider issues of injustice, for example, when they reflect on why some people lack safety or food. However, encounters beyond worship are less developed. Fairness appears in stories and discussion, but opportunities are not planned in a way that builds understanding over time. Pupils question whether situations are fair and challenge unkind behaviour, although their responses arise from personal encounters, rather than structured learning. This is because there are limited planned opportunities for pupils to explore broader issues of justice. Leaders are beginning to address this within the curriculum, although developments are in the early stages. Thus, currently, pupils do not fully recognise how they can take responsible action to tackle injustice within the wider world.

Religious Education

RE is well led and shaped by a clear curriculum that supports pupils in developing a secure knowledge of Christianity and several world faiths. The RE leader provides direction and ensures that curriculum planning reflects sound theological understanding. Curriculum progression is mapped carefully so that ideas build in complexity as pupils move through the school. This enables pupils to make meaningful connections between beliefs, practices and the place of faith in people’s lives. Pupils recognise differences within Christianity and appreciate hearing varied perspectives from clergy and visitors. The curriculum includes global examples, such as how Christians in Mexico celebrate Christmas through Las Posadas, which broadens pupils’ understanding of Christianity as a diverse faith. In the Early Years, learning about the nativity is deepened through forest school experiences that help children explore meaning through play and imagination. Adaptations for pupils with additional needs ensure that they can access key ideas with confidence. As a result, pupils across the school develop a sound knowledge and understanding of Christianity and a range of other world faiths and worldviews.

Information

Address	Church Road, Ramsden Heath, Billericay, Essex, CM11 1NU		
Date	27 November 2025	URN	115119
Type of school	Voluntary controlled	No. of pupils	174
Diocese	Chelmsford		
Headteacher	Theresa Walker		
Chair of Governors	Linda Wright		
Inspector	David Huntingford		