

# Keeping on Track ~ Record of Visit

*Supporting our schools to be Deeply Christian in Serving the Common Good*

<b>Name of school</b>	<b>Huxley C of E (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School</b>
<b>Head teacher</b>	Rachel Gourley
<b>Person Visited</b>	Rachel Gourley Headteacher Laura Rhodes Vicar Deborah Fearnleigh RE Lead
<b>Date of Visit</b>	07/02/2024
<b>Name of Consultant</b>	Joanne Hyslop
<b>Purpose of Visit</b>	<b>Audit of church school distinctiveness and update on the school's evaluation under SIAMS 2023 Framework</b>
<p><b>Theologically rooted Christian Vision of the school</b>  <b>To what extent does the school have an established and impactful Christian vision? How deeply is it rooted in Christian thinking and theology?</b></p>	
<p><b>Context</b></p> <p>Huxley is a small rural school with 37 pupils on roll. When the headteacher took up post there were just five pupils on roll. At the time of this appointment, the school faced significant challenges and was at serious risk of closure. The headteacher describes this time as very difficult for the whole school community. The school has recently become part of the Diocesan Multi Academy Trust (CDAT). The headteacher considers this to be a very positive move. Morale amongst staff appears to be high and the headteacher is excited about the future of the school as part of CDAT.</p> <p>The school is unique in that it offers pupils the opportunity to be on a flexible timetable. Many pupils are home educated as well as attending school. Consequently, partnerships with parents are considered paramount as school and parents are in effect joint educators. Of those 37 pupils who are registered at the school, 32 (86%) are on a flexible timetable. The school caters for pupils with complex needs including autism. Pupils travel from well outside the catchment area to attend the school because of the offer of the flexible timetable.</p>	

## **The Christian vision of Huxley is:**

With God's love, we can fly.

We aim high and embrace life in all its fullness.

The Bible verse 'those who trust in the Lord, they will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles' (Isaiah 40:31) has been selected by the school as an appropriate theological link.

The school has recently introduced sessions which look at how the vision and values can be lived out. These focus on developing the pupils' understanding of their school's vision and associated values. There are twelve values which the school consider over a two-year cycle.

The consultant asked the headteacher to explain the vision and how this links to the context of the school. The headteacher explained that the chosen Bible quote is about strength. This links the vision to the fact that the pupils who attend Huxley face many challenges and often need additional strength and resilience to overcome these. Staff see their role as providing pupils with the tools they need to build that strength and resilience.

Given the fact that the pupil community is so diverse, acceptance and adaptation to meet the needs of all individuals are vital. Leaders explain that the pupils who attend the school accept one another and the fact that they are all different with ease. Leaders have worked hard to create a curriculum that meets the needs of all. A complex timetable shows the number of hours allocated to each subject. This ensures that even though pupils only attend school for part of the week, they access a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum. This links to the vision which highlights the point that there should be no limits to what individuals can achieve.

Leaders regularly re-evaluate the vision and feel strongly that it remains the correct one for Huxley. They feel that the vision is something that attracts both families and staff to Huxley. The headteacher explained how when parents come to look around the school, they are often at a genuine crisis point in their lives because their children have been unable to access fulltime education. They liken this to the way the Israelites felt in their chosen Bible quote.

The school have recently become part of CDAT. It is felt that the vision of CDAT fully complements the school's vision. The headteacher explained some of the ways that leaders and staff feel that this partnership will benefit the school. The consultant suggested that other schools in the trust may well benefit from her expertise around Flexi-schooling.

**How effectively is the Christian vision monitored? What evidence is there of it impacting on the flourishing of pupils and adults?**

The headteacher was able to explain some of the ways in which the Christian vision is monitored. These include learning walks and pupil and parent questionnaires. Results from recent questionnaires reflect the impact of the vision. For example, one word many pupils used to describe Huxley was 'safe' whilst parents explained that they value the fact that they 'feel accepted.' Letters from parents clearly demonstrate the impact of the caring and inclusive vision.

Although governors do visit the school they have not been significantly involved in monitoring and self-evaluation of the school as a Church school. It was agreed that this should be an area of development. The vicar is a regular visitor to school and is also a parent. She explained that she feels that the vision is deeply embedded and is having a positive impact on both adults and pupils alike.

A discussion was held around ways that leaders could develop more formal systems for the monitoring and self-evaluation of the school as a Church school. The headteacher explained that much of the focus in recent times had been around making the school sustainable. Leaders are now wanting to consider ways to further develop the distinctiveness of the school as a Church school.

**How is the Christian vision celebrated, seen and heard across the school environment and digital platforms?**

The headteacher provided the consultant with a tour of the school. The environment is very calm and distinctly Christian in nature. The vision is clear. Some initiatives, such as the development of the outdoor prayer area, are in the early stages. Leaders feel that once complete, these will further enhance the environment.

The website clearly reflects the fact that Huxley is a Church school. The videos on the home page describe the importance of the vision and how this links to the context of the school. The website is currently being re-developed and new pages will be added. Social media pages and the Newsletter fully reflect the fact that the school is a Church school. Policies, such as the behaviour policy reflect the vision of high aspirations and acceptance.

**How does Religious Education meet the Church of England's Statement of Entitlement?**

The school is currently in the process of moving to the Questful RE scheme. Leaders are mindful that this is a significant change. Given the complexities of the flexible timetable, this will take some time to embed. Leaders have carefully considered the balance between Christianity and other world faiths and have opted for a 70%

- 30% mix. Staff have attended training with the diocese and have worked with Sue Glover, the RE consultant for the diocese.

The acting RE lead was confident about the requirements of the Statement of Entitlement. Careful consideration of how to ensure sufficient time is dedicated to RE has been made. To meet statutory requirements additional RE is provided for parents to deliver at home.

The RE lead asked about the use of floor books. The consultant stressed that this was a personal choice for schools to make but that it was important to ensure that progress for all pupils could be demonstrated.

The school has not yet considered systems for assessment within the new scheme. The consultant reassured the RE lead that the diocese is encouraging schools to use this academic year to become familiar with the new scheme.

The mixed age classes are well catered for with additional staff ensuring that different topics can be delivered to different aged pupils. The vicar is a qualified RE teacher and has offered to support with some Key Stage One RE teaching.

**What is the impact of Collective Worship on the spiritual life of the school?  
In what ways is it inspiring, invitational and inclusive?**

Collective worship is led by the headteacher, the vicar or class teachers. The school uses published resources such as Roots and Fruits to support with the delivery of worship. The consultant explained that there are other resources by the same publisher which the school may find useful. These are aimed at younger pupils - Jack in the Box and Oscar the Owl.

The school has recently introduced child-led worship with the Ethos Group. This is in the initial stages but is something that pupils are enjoying. The consultant stressed that SIAMS will be looking for how worship is impacting positively on spiritual flourishing.

Worship is largely based around the school's twelve chosen values. There are opportunities to reflect, pray and link Bible stories to the pupils' own lives. Parents attend some worship sessions, and this is an area that the headteacher would like to develop further. There are close links with the local church community and the vicar. Pupil feedback about worship is positive. Leaders are developing systems for more formal monitoring of worship.

**SPIRITUALITY**

A brief conversation was held about spiritual development. This is an area that the headteacher is keen to develop. The grounds are extensive and peaceful. Pupils

have access to a woodland area and an outdoor reading caravan. They also care for two school hens. The headteacher is keen to develop an outdoor prayer space. Ways of using the outdoor space to promote spiritual development were discussed.

### **COURAGEOUS ADVOCACY**

Examples of the ways in which pupils act as advocates for change were provided. These include acting as mini governors and members of the school Ethos Group. The pupil voice appears to be strong and context driven. An example of this is the way in which pupils advocate the benefits of Flexi-schooling. For example, they have recently written to the Children's Commissioner to stress the importance of Flexi-schooling for all pupils who would benefit from this. Video clips on the website also focus on pupil voice. In these video clips, the pupils talk clearly about the Christian vision.

### **Agreed current strengths**

- A deeply held Christian vision which links directly to the unique context of the school.
- A highly inclusive and nurturing Church school family where everyone is valued for who they are.
- A carefully considered broad and balanced curriculum. This links directly to the vision and aims to meet the needs of all learners.

### **Agreed areas for development**

- Develop the ways in which all leaders, including the governing body, monitor and evaluate the impact of the Christian vision.
- Embed the new RE scheme of work, including systems for assessment.
- Explore opportunities within CDAT to not only learn from other Church schools but to share your expertise about Flexi-schooling.

### **Useful links**

#### **Chester Diocese CPD Programme**

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/cdbe?>

#### **Church of England Vision for Education**

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/vision-education>

#### **'Bring the Vision Alive'**

<https://www.cefel.org.uk/visionresources/>

#### **SIAMS 2023 Framework**

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/church-schools-and-academies/siams-inspections>

**CEEO Statement of Entitlement for RE**

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/re-statement-of-entitlement-for-church-schools.pdf>

**CEEO Guidance for Collective Worship**

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/news-releases/church-england-sets-out-guidance-collective-worship>

**Courageous Advocacy**

<https://d3hgrrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/60638a2c87045/content/pages/documents/courageous-advocacy-final-.pdf>

**Spiritual Development**

<https://www.brookland.kent.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/CE-Spiritual-Development-220515.pdf>

**Valuing All God's Children**

[https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/valuing-all-gods-children-july-2019\\_0.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/valuing-all-gods-children-july-2019_0.pdf)

Faith at Home – CEEO Worship resources

<https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/faith-home/i-am-school-leader>

Jumping Fish Publications

<http://gloucester.anglican.org/schools/jumping-fish-publications/>

Imaginer

<http://www.imaginer.co.uk/>

RE Online

<https://www.reonline.org.uk/>

Understanding Christianity

<http://www.understandingchristianity.org.uk/>

Global Neighbours scheme

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/schools/global-neighbours/about-accreditation-scheme>

Archbishop of York Young Leaders

<https://www.archbishopofyorkyouthtrust.co.uk/young-leaders-award/>