

**Truro Diocese
Summary Visit Note**

Academy: St Issey CE	Head of School: Chris Parham
Visit by: K Fitzsimmons, DDE	Chair of Governors: Heather Holder-Powell
RE Leader plus email: Lou Roseveare	Clerk to Governors plus email:
Date of Visit: 05/01/2023	Diocese rag-rating: Green

Overall effectiveness	OFSTED: 3 (2016)	SIAMS: 3 (March 2017)	School SE: 2
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Purpose of the visit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To offer support, guidance and advice to leaders of Church of England schools. • To monitor and evaluate the school’s effectiveness against the CE vision and values: wisdom, knowledge and skills; hope and aspiration; community and living well together; educating for dignity and respect. • To review the school’s Christian distinctiveness and the impact that this has on teaching, learning and pupil outcomes over time. • To evaluate the school’s readiness for SIAMs and OFSTED inspections and offer support through our annual review and evaluation.

Summary of discussions and observations

‘Be strong and courageous.’ (Joshua 1:9)

On my visit today to St. Issey Church of England Primary School, I was delighted to see evidence of an embedded vision and values underpinning work across the life of the school community. With a pupil population of 86 (from 55 in 2019) now seeing the school oversubscribed, it really is a story of sustained improvement, which has provided the community with a strong primary school offering and a rich curriculum. Parents and carers are clearly positive and optimistic about the offer of the school. On my recent visit to the school's nativity, families attending showed their warmth and appreciation for all the school had to offer.

The head teacher demonstrates an unerring commitment to pupils and staff and values every aspect of school life is making a difference be that through academic outcomes, which are exceptionally strong or through the enhanced provision of the wider curriculum.

The head has brought together a useful summary of current state and points of focus in his SEF, hard copy provided. This form is a useful and succinct account of the strengths of the school and provides a helpful and meaningful document to understand the breadth of the school's work and the improvements that have been made.

Action Point to clarify the definition of wider curriculum for the staff chart in the evaluation form.

The head is focusing this year on further embedding curriculum work and reviewing provision around an enhanced transition offer for year six. The school population has historically been one with significant levels of mobility. However, with the improved nursery offering now seeing pupils remaining with the school from the age of two, the population is becoming more stable. This is evident in classes across the school. For the older children in Upper Key Stage two, there are the remnants of the mixed community of children who joined the school, which does see some variation in behaviour. However, there is no diminution of standards and expectations from staff. Indeed it was observed that children settled well from having gone to their phonics and shared reading activities, transitioning seamlessly and positively into silent reading. Again, this is evident in the outcomes achieved in Key Stage 2 SATs, which were significantly above national average.

Enormous amounts of work have happened in developing the RE curriculum and focusing on spirituality. The school's definition of spirituality as a piece of our puzzle - pieces of puzzles of ourselves and of our world - is a truly inspirational and encouraging basis for discussions and understanding around the spiritual identity of children and adults in the school community. From discussions it seems to be one which adults and children are engaging in well.

The school prayer was written by the staff team and fully reflects the vision and values of the school, it can be seen to underpin practice and policy going forward. Pupils have been picking apart the prayer in collective worship, through floor books and discussion, ensuring that all pupils really understand it and can interpret it and articulate it to others.

In discussion around values, the lead explained that hope had been the most difficult value for children to articulate clearly. Work has focused on moving this understanding beyond that of wishing for better that a hope filled future is our gift from God. There is some work around biblical hope and there is a clear connection made to the school parable, The Good Samaritan.

The RE lead has been developing the curriculum plans and knowledge organisers which will be in place after Easter, with each unit demonstrating its place in the progression of the curriculum reflecting the agreed syllabus. This enables pupils to consider big questions and understand prior knowledge, and for staff to have high expectations of vocabulary and application. The next steps in this is to take forward a coherent approach to assessment which can be clearly articulated.

The RE curriculum has focused on the key areas of making connections and ways of knowing. Making connections is included as an explicit part of the curriculum planning documentation and staff are encouraged to do this explicitly through questioning. There is a recap quiz at the start of each RE teaching session, and this may be developed to include a specific question around connections. The RE lead is confident that children can talk well about their RE knowledge and recent survey results show that children are talking about it at home with parents and carers.

The statement supporting the work on RE is an extremely positive and bold statement around the importance of RE in developing the whole child. This importance reflects the school's vision and values of respecting others views as we would wish our own to be respected, understanding that each of us comes with a different view of the world. An example of this was given from the Collective Crew, a group of pupils who lead collective worship, who acknowledge each of their own points of view. Some of them are very clear that they are not Christian, but they are respectful of others and the place of the Christian faith in their school.

The school has moved to a pupil voice afternoon as part of its assessment process, whereby subject leads rotate around classrooms to talk to groups of children about the progress they've made in each of their subject areas, establishing people voice around what they've learned, but also attitudes to learning skills development and areas for improvement. This reflects the schools commitment to developing opportunities for speech, language and communication based activities to support learners, especially following the pandemic. This approach will be further developed going forward to potentially include governors.

The school has been courageous as its vision encourages all pupils and staff to be in its work on social studies. Understanding that there is a moral obligation to address key issues in society, notably in recent years around racism, but also around other extreme views which can exist in within communities. They've explored innovative and creative ways of exploring these issues, being bold in showing that it matters that our young people are given the opportunity to develop the broadest minds in order to become the best citizens. In this we see the vision clearly guiding their work across the life of the school. This is seen in the breadth of reading books and learning themes across the school, ensuring a broad and global aspect to reading for pleasure as well as in teaching practice.

The school sees early reading and writing are significant areas of strength. Systems for teaching Early Reading are fully embedded across the school and writing is a key aspect of learning from the very first days that children join the school. Writing at length is encouraged in all classes and again is an area of strength and skill which is shown in books and in displays across the school.

The head teacher identified areas of strength in Maths, reading, writing, RE, history and art, with some developing areas around music and PE and the science curriculum. All areas adhere to the existing strong curriculum systems showing the school's movement towards a fully coherent and consistent curriculum. It is well planned for a rolling mixed age profile within the school.

The head teacher clearly understands the SEND focus required across the curriculum. We discussed areas of meeting individual need, as well as understanding how the school meets collective need. The key questions here being firstly, what is your most significant area of need across the school? The school identified this as speech language and communication. The follow up question, therefore, is how is the curriculum devised and developed to address that most significant area of need? The head teacher and team are confident that the activities, approaches and intent underpinning the curriculum enable all children to develop in their speech, language and communication needs and provide opportunities for them to grow and learn. An example of this would be the delivery of persuasive speeches following the study of persuasive techniques, evidence of which was seen in the on the display table in the school corridor.

The school is also supporting trainee teachers. This is a clear indication of the standard of current practice which is able to support those new to the profession and provide an encouraging and inspiring place to learn to be a teacher.

In discussions around governance, it is clear that the school has undergone some changes which see new people joining and, as per recommended best practice, a change of chair. This can be a difficult time to integrate new governors and also for a new chair to take up the role and feel that they are doing an effective job. However, it is clear that the new members of the governing body are joining with enthusiasm.

Action Point to connect with Claire Kendle for additional support in both of training the chair and developing the work of governors in monitoring and evaluation.

SIAMS: the framework for SIAMS will change from September 2023 and St Issey will fall into the new framework for inspection. Key training opportunities are available for all schools in the later part of this academic year which the school will engage in. There will also be the opportunity to support individually for specific areas of need, e.g. support visits, training available for staff, training for governors.

Action Point to link with the Trust Board to explore their understanding of the new SIAMS framework and their role as trustees in supporting the flourishing of the Church of England Primary School in the trust.

In summary, this was an inspirational and exceptional visit today. I enjoyed every moment of my time in school and especially spending time in classrooms seeing engaged, excited learners experiencing high quality teaching and learning in a thoroughly inviting and exciting environment.