

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Esh Church of England Primary School

Vision

‘Building together’ from Matthew 7:24-27

When ‘building together’, we put into practice the teachings of Jesus as we support, encourage and work as a whole school community to act out our Christians values of Respect, Compassion and Perseverance.

Esh 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.

Notable Strengths

- The school’s clearly understood Christian vision, inspired by the wise and foolish builders, is embraced by the school community. It provides a strong foundation for staff and pupils, so that respect, compassion and perseverance shape attitudes, relationships and daily practice.
- Strong, nurturing relationships and dedicated wellbeing support, form the cornerstone of the school’s vision, enabling staff and pupils to thrive.
- Pupils have a strong understanding of justice, and as such, actively seek ways to challenge and address injustice.
- Collective worship is central to school life. It nurtures thoughtful and meaningful reflection, enabling staff and pupils to flourish spiritually.
- Ambitious leadership ensures pupils access a religious education (RE) curriculum that deepens understanding of world faiths and non-religious worldviews. This helps pupils develop respect and thoughtful, informed views for living in a diverse society

Development Points

- Embed deliberate, planned opportunities for spiritual development throughout the curriculum to deepen pupils’ spiritual growth.
- To further develop assessment in line with multi-disciplinary RE curriculum. This is to inform teaching and have a positive impact on pupil progress.



Inspection Findings

Vision and Leadership

At Esh, the school's vision is clearly understood and firmly grounded in its own unique setting. It shapes decision-making and underpins a culture that is caring, connected and aspirational. This commitment to "building together" equips adults and pupils with the skills needed to grow and confidently face life's challenges. Leaders model servant leadership, working alongside staff and pupils to offer support and provide sensitive challenge. Governors and leaders of the multi-academy trust (MAT) rigorously monitor practice and actively seek staff voice. Their careful overview enables informed decisions that strengthen the work of the school. The bold decision to open a nursery demonstrates this. It helps pupils begin their learning journey within a caring environment with strong foundations. Focused, vision-led leadership is rooted in relationships that extend across the school community. Close links with the church, diocese and MAT enhance the school's ability to make its vision a lived reality. These partnerships nurture learning and wellbeing, creating a supportive environment where pupils and adults flourish. Families feel known and welcomed, confident to ask questions and participate fully in school life. Through these partnerships and a deep understanding of pupils and families, the school builds a culture of trust and shared purpose.

Vision and Curriculum

The curriculum is thoughtfully shaped around the school's vision, promoting ambition and inclusivity so pupils have the opportunity to thrive. Staff provide early intervention and tailored support, ensuring learning meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Alongside this, the school environment is carefully adapted to reduce barriers and promote independence. These measures help pupils feel safe, valued and ready to learn. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, reflecting its commitment to firm foundations for life. For example, the gardening club gives pupils an active role in caring for creation. Its calm, reflective space also offers opportunities for pupils and staff to nurture their own growth. The embedded shared understanding of spirituality, supported by 'spiritual backpacks', helps pupils thrive. These backpacks encourage pupils to pause, make thoughtful choices, and show kindness, even during life's storms. They also demonstrate that this is a personal journey, not restricted to set times or formal spaces. Yet, moments of awe, wonder and challenge are not obvious to pupils across the curriculum. This limits their ability to recognise that spirituality can be experienced in all areas of learning.

Worship and Spirituality

Collective worship is highly valued, invitational and is firmly rooted in the school's vision and values. Each day, pupils and staff gather as a community, strengthening unity and creating opportunities for shared reflection and spiritual growth. Weekly, the local reverend leads worship, while church services for key Christian festivals unite the community, nurturing belonging. Planning is thoughtful yet flexible, ensuring worship remains relevant and meaningful. Hymns are sung with joyful enthusiasm, creating a feeling of warmth and togetherness. Pupils listen attentively when others speak, reflecting the importance placed on these occasions and enabling thoughtful reflection. Collective worship guides staff and pupils in an authentic, inclusive journey of personal growth and spirituality. For example, exploring Jesus' 'I am' statements inspired curiosity and deeper thinking. Ideas are often captured in discussions or on the reflection board, sparking conversation and encouraging further exploration. Thoughtful adaptations ensure pupils remain included, sustaining connection and involvement. This steady rhythm of worship lies at the heart of school life, creating space for spiritual depth and shared flourishing.

Vision and School Culture

The school's vision shapes a culture where respect, compassion and perseverance, empower individuals to feel safe and valued. Pupils and staff from different communities unite with a shared purpose, strengthening the sense of belonging to the school. Together, they successfully shape a supportive environment. Pupils behave



well, warmly welcoming others. They enjoy sharing what school means to them and talking about their learning. Their openness and positive attitudes reflect the culture of trust and security. Various leadership opportunities empower pupils to make meaningful contributions, shaping daily life. For example, they lead on efforts to tackle the parking issue in the area. Pupils take pride in their roles and the work they do. Wellbeing is at the heart of school life. Staff and pupils are aware of the help that is available and know how to access it. There is a comprehensive package of support including access to trained professionals within school and from the trust. Staff know their opinions matter and appreciate supportive measures, including resources that reduce time-consuming tasks. This reflects that action follows feedback demonstrating leaders' commitment to ensuring the school vision is a lived reality.

Vision, Justice and Responsibility

Pupils demonstrate a clear grasp of what justice means, recognising fairness and responsibility in their actions. They draw inspiration from discussions about key individuals who have campaigned for justice and are linked to individual classes. These role models encourage perseverance, a core school value and remind pupils that change requires courage and commitment. In different aspects of school life including leadership roles, pupils are given a platform to shine and serve others. They show care for the community and the wider world through initiatives like planting flowers to boost bee populations. They also provide food waste bins for use in the classrooms. These actions, inspired by noticing environmental harm, show how pupils work together to make a meaningful impact. Through their work they strengthen relationships, challenge injustice and support spiritual growth.

Religious Education

RE is valued by staff and pupils. Leaders provide passionate, knowledgeable direction for RE. It is rigorously monitored and evaluated to ensure it meets pupils' needs. A desire for continual improvement has ensured that bold decisions are made when necessary to support pupil progress. The RE curriculum is well resourced, robust and thoughtfully sequenced. Its spiral design enables pupils to build knowledge and understanding of world faiths and non-religious views over time. Three cartoon characters support a multidisciplinary approach to RE. This strategy is helping pupils deepen their understanding. Staff are supported in curriculum delivery through a robust training offer and guidance on the use of high-quality resources.

Pupils enjoy RE, understand its importance and make good progress. Teachers effectively use knowledge organisers to help pupils consolidate prior learning and develop a secure understanding of key vocabulary. 'I wonder' questions at the end of lessons gives pupils a valuable chance to reflect. Their responses are then used to inform future learning. Staff track progress carefully and feedback is thoughtful. Assessment informs teaching and learning. However, refining it further would support the school's multidisciplinary approach to teaching. This could show progress in different areas of RE and help teachers plan lessons to meet individual needs. RE at Esh nurtures pupils' understanding, empathy and critical thinking, preparing them for life-long learning.

Information

Address	Esh Village, Esh, Durham, DH7 9QR		
Date	17 November 2025	URN	148303
Type of school	Academy	No. of pupils	88
Diocese	Durham		
MAT	Melrose Learning Trust		
MAT Chair	Paul Mackings		
Headteacher	Andrew Park		
Chair of Governors	Gareth Ayre		
Inspector	Alice Hassall		