

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Debden Church of England Primary Academy

Vision

‘That they may have life in all its fullness’ John 10:10

At our school, we understand ‘living life in all its fullness’ as nurturing a life where everyone can flourish. It is not only about personal growth and achievement, but also about helping others to thrive.

Debden Church of England Primary Academy 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 clearly articulated Christian vision is understood and communicated well through the school values, which are integrated into numerous aspects of life at Debden. This enables pupils and staff to work together effectively, encouraging one another to thrive spiritually.
- A nurturing atmosphere pervades the school. Pupils are cared for sensitively with individual needs met through bespoke support, especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Collective worship is a priority for the school, with an emphasis on the values, using biblical teaching to exemplify everyday application. The vibrant relationship with the local parish enhances worship as clergy bring a variety of styles and approaches. This helps adults and pupils engage and reflect on what it means to live life to the full.
- The partnership with the Great Oak Multi Academy Trust (GOMAT) strengthens Debden’s Church school vision, enabling pupils to reach their potential academically and personally. As a result, Debden is a school of choice for the local community and further afield.
- Exciting and innovative extra-curricular opportunities widen pupils’ experiences for personal growth and exploration. Consequently, pupils flourish at the school.

Development Points

- Expand pupils’ experience of spirituality through the curriculum, by giving them opportunities to make links with their learning. This is so pupils broaden their understanding of the big questions of life.
- Promote a culture where pupils confidently explore issues of justice. This is to motivate pupils to identify opportunities to make their school and the world a better place.



Inspection Findings

Vision and Leadership

'Living life in all its fullness' inspires the community at Debden School to be aspirational in learning, relationships and personal growth. The vision is exemplified through the school's Christian values. There is a tangible vibrancy amongst leaders as they find creative ways to live out the vision. Changes to daily structures, the provision of breakout areas and an enriched curriculum help pupils reach their potential. Pupils know what 'fullness of life' looks like for them. They say it helps them 'make the most of their lives', 'try new things' and 'know right from wrong'. Staff show deep respect and compassion for pupils and their families by building life-giving relationships. Parents and carers comment on the kindness and care shown by staff and see this as the vision in action. The Trust and governors provide strategic support and direction for the school, as they shape the curriculum, allocate resources and deploy staff effectively. Collaboratively, they have a strong knowledge of the community and are passionate about pupils developing academically and personally. Consequently, the vision results in pupils building long-lasting, happy memories of their time at Debden School.

Worship and Spirituality

Worship is carefully planned by leaders and based on Christian teaching, encompassing the vision. Bible characters, such as Moses' and his leadership struggles, are used to illustrate values like endurance. Therefore, pupils and adults think about how they approach their own life challenges with confidence. Spirituality is articulated as 'thinking about myself, others, the world and beyond'. Through this approach, pupils and adults reflect on their lives in worship. The strong relationship with the local parish enriches the spiritual life of the school. Clergy regularly lead worship alongside staff, thus providing a variety of different styles. Staff feel empowered in their role. They see it as a chance to grow spiritually, providing a thought-provoking start to the day. As a staff member commented, 'Worship opens the heart before the head'. Bible stories are brought to life using drama and pupils are invited to participate through discussion. Thus, pupils are engaged in worship enthusiastically. Visits to the local parish church take place for key Christian festivals. A deep sense of pastoral care is provided by clergy, such as when pupils first start school, displaying compassion in a practical way. This reinforces the vision, showing the two-way benefit between the church and school. The school prayer echoes the vision, giving pupils and adults the opportunity to participate and reflect. Celebration Worship is a highlight of the week, where pupils are recognised for exemplifying the school's values. Parents and carers are invited to join and enjoy seeing the vision lived out by their children.

Vision and Curriculum

The extra-curricular offer is exciting and inclusive, with a variety of sports, musical and creative clubs provided. The outdoor play area and beautiful surrounding countryside inspires pupils to appreciate God's creation. Forest school and local environmental projects enhance this. Connections with the local communities are strong. For example, soldiers from the local military base organised a bootcamp in school and a pilot shared experiences with classes. Pupils enjoy a rich global sense of belonging. They appreciate the wide variety of family backgrounds represented within the school community. Their respect for each other is palpable. Activities include International European Languages Day and Global Christianity Day. Staff encourage pupils to 'seek to be part of something bigger than themselves' thus developing spiritual awareness. However, the overall curriculum does not integrate links to the spiritual language the school uses. Pupils, therefore, are not confident exploring the bigger questions of life in different subject areas. The active parent and family members' association brings the wider school community together through social events and supporting school trips. This contributes to pupils' experiences, thus enriching 'life in all its' fullness'.

Religious Education

The religious education (RE) curriculum is planned effectively, incorporating major religions and other worldviews. The newly appointed RE leader has worked with the local diocese and Trust to review the RE



curriculum. Decisions have been made to include religions and beliefs that reflect the school context, adapting units to widen pupils' experiences. Each religion and belief is studied in depth. Comparisons and open discussions about beliefs challenge pupils with an enquiry approach to learning. Enrichment days and visits to places of worship engage and inspire pupils, such as the Holi Festival celebrations for the whole school. The curriculum is well sequenced, building on previous knowledge. Ongoing training from the local diocese and Trust equips staff in their teaching of RE, providing access to quality resources. Governors and leaders regularly monitor the RE curriculum, ensuring it is a priority subject for a Church school.

Vision, Justice and Responsibility

Pupils have a deep sense of right and wrong and take responsibilities seriously in school. They look after each other with respect and joy. New pupils feel welcome and integrate happily as a result. School leaders work hard to provide a culture that fosters awareness of global issues. A focus day on sustainability helps pupils understand the importance of recycling clothes and reducing waste. Learning about the rainforest and Black History month causes pupils to think about justice and responsibility in the world. Pupil ambassadors play an important part in activating the vision. The school council impacts different areas of school life, including wellbeing, environmental preservation and fundraising opportunities. With adult support, pupils organise various events to raise money for charities, encouraging an outward-looking perspective. However, pupils are not confident in using their own initiative to take a stand on issues of justice.

Vision and School Culture

School leaders live out the vision by ensuring pupils and adults are treated with care and dignity. Staff appreciate that each child is unique and made in the image of God, deserving the best chance to flourish. Pupils who require extra support are looked after exceptionally well. Small adaptations to lessons together with carefully deployed teaching assistants make a huge difference for these children. The wisdom and professionalism of staff is evident, consequently pupils feel known and nurtured. Staff prioritise getting to know families quickly and the 'bond and trust the school gives is so important,' commented a parent. Teachers quickly assess new pupils and provide individualised catch-up learning where necessary. The behaviour of pupils is outstanding due to the clear expectations of adults and celebration of positive attitudes. Adults flourish because of professional development opportunities and mentoring. Leaders prioritise the wellbeing of staff by monitoring workload and responding empathetically to any challenging personal circumstances. Staff have progressed in their careers at Debden School as they have embraced opportunities for more responsibility in their roles. This is because of the aspirational approach of the leadership team, who are motivated by the vision.

Information

Address	High Street, Debden, Saffron Walden, Essex, CB11 3LE		
Date	19 March 2026	URN	143855
Type of school	Academy	No. of pupils	136
Diocese	Chelmsford		
MAT	Great Oak Multi Academy Trust		
MAT Executive Headteacher	Sarah Mitchell		
Headteacher	Sarah Bailey		
Chair of Governors	Tom Caster		
Inspector	Claire Coulson		