



'ALL ARE WELCOME HERE'



In May, The Vine hosted a visit from Knox Grammar School which is a Uniting Church School in the upper north-shore of Sydney, Australia. The Uniting Church in Australia is a Christian denomination made up of the former Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches. The school has three campuses, two of which are primary-aged with one of those coeducational. Reverend Tim Robinson and Pastor Luisa Maxwell were visiting the United Kingdom to attend a number of training courses and to visit various church schools and observe how worship, faith-education and pastoral care are practiced.

Reverend Tim Robinson and Pastor Luisa Maxwell discovered The Vine Inter-Church Primary School on the Methodist Schools website and after looking at what the school offers, were very interested in visiting to see how Christian faith is integrated into the life of the school. The Knox Grammar School is a faith-based school and are constantly seeking to learn and grow in how they can continue to communicate the Good News of God's love to their school community and help develop the faith and spirituality of each student and staff-member. As School Chaplains, they were also seeking to grow in their ministry practice.

We were so pleased to be able to share with our visitors, The Vine Values and Vision and how our worship, faith and pastoral care is integrated into the daily life of the school. We look forward to continuing to develop our relationship and sharing good practice with Knox Grammar School in the future.

Please take a few moments to read their findings.

The Vine Inter-Church Primary School Report

Context

As chaplains at Knox Grammar School, Knox Preparatory School and Wahroonga Preparatory School, Australia, we came to the United Kingdom for training and professional development seeking to visit exemplary schools that are faith-based and learn from their values and practices. As a relatively new Anglican-Methodist School, The Vine Inter-Church Primary School appeared to be a school that lived out its Christian ethos in real and practical ways that valued and supported the whole student.

Some of our observations include the following:

1. Vision and Leadership

The effectiveness of the leadership in promoting the impact of the school's Christian vision. This section looks at: How well the school has developed, implemented and monitored an inclusive Christian vision. How well the school lives out that Christian vision in relationships and partnerships with their key stakeholders.

On our visit to the Vine, the first impression we had was the school's highly effective and creative visual displays that promote the Christian values of the school. From the painted sentences of the school prayer across different rooms and corridors, to the displays of the cross and the vine in the reception area and notice boards that display the school values of the fruit of the Spirit, it was very clear that the Christian vision of the school is integral to the life of the school and is desired to be communicated to all who come.

This vision was then reinforced at assembly time during which prayers were written and led by students and where students were recognized and celebrated for living the values and vision of the school. They are promoted in the classroom through prayer spaces and codes of behaviour.

There is also a clear partnership with the local church in the sharing of leading worship at the school as well as copies of school prayers being given to the church.

2. Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills

This section looks at: How well the school's leaders use the school's Christian vision and associated values to serve the academic needs of all pupils and to ensure curriculum opportunities for spiritual development.

The school clearly does an excellent job in creating a safe learning environment for its students. Our observation was of a happy, vibrant and inclusive school community that values the needs of every child.

Student feedback, which provided specific positive reinforcement as well as 'targets' enables an environment where students feel supported and encouraged to continue in their journey of learning. This was impressive feature of the schools culture.

The Religious Education Curriculum is comprehensive in teaching the core elements of Christian faith, the emphases of the Methodist Movement as well as understanding and respecting other faith traditions. This was shown by the teacher's willingness to allow students of other faiths to have input into her lesson content as well as delivery.

From observing student work, it was clear that students at the school engage deeply in religious education and seek ways in which it applies to everyday life.

3. Character development: hope, aspiration, and courageous advocacy

This section looks at: How well the school's Christian vision and associated values support the character and moral development of all pupils. How well this gives them aspiration for themselves and hope for the communities of which they are a part. How well the school's vision inspires the whole school community to engage in social action and to be

courageous advocates for change in their local, national and global communities.

4. Community and living well together

This section looks at: How well the school's Christian vision and associated values promote social and cultural development through the practice of forgiveness and reconciliation enabling all to live well together and embrace difference.

The Vine's school values are clearly and communicated and reinforced at the school. The school community reflects a culture that is embracing and growing in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. This was observed in the student's outstanding behaviour.

The empowerment of peer mediators is a wonderful way of encouraging students to take ownership of school values and apply them with one another. It gives older students opportunities to be role models and leaders in the social development of the school.

The respectful and encouraging nature of positive peer feedback also creates a strong community of trust and support.

The culture is also developed through the use of 'Vinified' language for staff and students, creating a common language of encouragement and the celebration of Super Citizens.

5. Dignity and respect

This section looks at: How well the school's Christian vision and associated values create an environment where all pupils, whatever their background, can flourish because all are treated with dignity and respect.

The valuing of peer feedback and the emphasis on positive reinforcement and encouragement sets the tone for this strongly.

The valuing of student ethnicity and openness to student input for lessons shows great respect for each individual.

6. The impact of collective worship

This section looks at: In what ways and to what extent is collective worship inclusive, invitational and inspiring? Is it central to the life of the school?

The singing as students enter and leave is a positive and uplifting way of including all students in engaging with the worship from start to end.

Including students in games, awards, performances, prayers and readings all help the feel of a community time of worship.

7. The effectiveness of Religious Education

In a Church of England school, Religious Education (RE) should be non-confessional and is considered an academic subject. Inspectors will consider the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus in VC schools and former VC schools.

This section looks at: How well the school ensures the provision of high quality religious education reflecting the Church of England Statement of Entitlement. How well does the religious education help develop religiously literate pupils?

The curriculum is very comprehensive including learning on theology and faith

foundations, church history and practices, social justice issues and application of the gospel. The lessons are very creatively taught and encourage student enquiry and critical thinking skills helping each student come to their own informed conclusions regarding their faith and values. Practical application is demonstrated throughout the school allowing students to practice their faith daily.

Conclusion

We really appreciated the hospitality and welcome we received at The Vine. The staff were very friendly and well prepared for our visit. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit of this dynamic, creative and faith-filled school. We came away with many tools and ideas to incorporate into our own school setting.

Many thanks and God bless!

Rev Tim Robinson and Pastor Luisa Maxwell
Knox Grammar School



'The world is my parish'
John Wesley

