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Small school wins big praise



Children and staff at Witchampton Church of England First School join Wimborne Academy Trust leaders to celebrate an excellent SIAMS inspection.

One of Dorset's smallest schools has received gigantic praise following an official inspection.

Witchampton CE First School, part of Wimborne Academy Trust, has received the top 'excellent' rating from a SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) inspector.

The inspector, Susan Bowen, said the school lives by its ethos of having a big heart, with a culture of love and care clearly articulated throughout.

Head of School, Jo Hancock, said: "We are absolutely delighted to receive such fantastic praise from an official inspection.

"I'm particularly pleased that the inspector singled out the caring and nurturing environment we provide all our pupils.

"We might be a small school but we have the biggest of hearts."

Parents, the inspector noted, said the school feels like an extended family and goes 'above and beyond' in supporting families.

And a member of staff described to the inspector that coming to work felt as if she had two arms wrapped around her.

The head of school, the report said, contributes to this culture of care and infuses the school's vision and values so that pupils and parents' lives are transformed.

And the school, which has just 62 pupils, is well supported by a committed Wimborne Academy Trust, which encourages its development as distinctively Christian.

The curriculum is well planned, the inspector said, and is continually adapted to allow individuals to flourish.

Academic progress and achievement also typically matches or exceeds national averages.

Witchampton CE First School and its pupils are at the heart of the village community, enjoying a close relationship with the neighbouring church.

It has also led the way in supporting children's mental health by launching the Heartsmart programme and funded a special room for when pupils need space.

CEO of Wimborne Academy Trust, Liz West, said: "This is a wonderful report and thoroughly well deserved.

"Witchampton is a very unique school and the children and staff are all made to feel very special there."

Witchampton CE First School is the fourth of Wimborne Academy's five Church of England schools to be inspected and achieve the top excellent rating this summer.

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Note to editors: For more information please contact Rachel Read, account director at Deep South Media, on 01202 534487.