

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled School, Thorncombe			
Address	Chard Street, Thorncombe, Dorset. TA20 4NE		
Date of inspection	3 December 2019	Status of school	Voluntary Controlled
Diocese	Bath and Wells	URN	113767

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Good
Additional Judgement	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good

School context

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled school is a primary school with 40 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. No pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is slightly above national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages. The current head of school has been in post since September 2018, and support is provided by an executive headteacher.

The school's Christian vision

'Living, Learning and Growing Together'

Through living, learning and growing together we nurture each individual's uniqueness and potential so that they may enjoy life in all its fullness. (John 10:10)

Key findings

- The Christian vision promotes a strong sense of community and has a significant impact on the flourishing of pupils and adults. However, the website detail needs further explanation for the benefit of all stakeholders.
- The vision promotes a particularly strong sense of dignity and respect with mutual concern for wellbeing evident throughout the school. It also drives a strong sense of justice and concern for global issues reflected in the school's support and engagement with relevant charities.
- Pupils have a deep understanding of prayer and spiritual development and reflect readily and with confidence.
- Collective worship is well planned and has clear impact on the spiritual development of the school and wider community.
- Religious Education (RE)E is well planned and taught with a generous amount of time given to considering the impact of religious thought on the lives of pupils and others. Pupils speak about this with ready confidence.

Areas for development

- Develop pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith so that they deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith in today's world.
- Embed the Christian vision fully in all the school's policies so that its impact on all areas of school life is seen to drive them strongly.
- Develop pupil involvement in collective worship to include planning activities to extend their sense of ownership and provide opportunities for creativity and innovation.
- Focus the development plan for the vision so that targets are time related and provide continuing impetus on the journey towards excellence.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

A clear Christian vision is thoroughly explained by pupils and adults in the school but is less clear on the website. It is rooted in biblical teaching and a set of values are derived from selected parable and miracle stories. Pupils understand and show how they apply the vision of learning, living and growing together. There is a strong sense of community driven by the vision and evident in supportive partnerships between school, church and village. The vision is shared and understood by all teaching and support staff, the incumbent and the governors. High quality displays in school remind pupils of the vision. The 'Open the Book' worship tree is a particularly good example. Although not formally part of the Acorn multi-academy trust, a management partnership provides support through an executive headteacher and assists in delivering the vision. Clear spiritual leadership from all adults helps pupils to reflect thoughtfully and behave very well. There is also clear evidence of good practice in implementing the vision seen in the belief that all should be the best they can be. This is shared by pupils and adults alike. Leaders have a strong plan for further development of the vision in the school although methods of implementation and the timescale are unclear.

The Christian vision is made explicit through high level care offered in educating all pupils. Parents appreciate assistance with the academic needs of children through highly approachable staff. They describe the support given to those who have special needs as 'transformational'. A well-developed system for using additional funding links with the vision and ensures disadvantaged pupils have access to all activities. There is a broad curriculum and an approach to spirituality carefully mapped and documented in all subjects. The vision of 'life in all its fullness' means a range of other opportunities are provided in and out of school from which pupils gain great joy. Pupils particularly thoroughly enjoy the outdoor spaces and the opportunities for appreciation of God's world offered through 'Forest School'. Visits to cities help the pupils to be aware of the wider world beyond their deeply rural setting.

Pupils are encouraged to explore their potential in various ways. In personal, social and health education opportunities are used to good effect and the school community has a clear understanding of the importance of mental health and wellbeing. Pupils are very well equipped to reflect on their lives, and they respond confidently to questioning about their hopes and aspirations. Pupils also understand that as Jesus came to bring life in all its fullness, so they have a duty to help others achieve the same. This is seen in involvement in charitable projects such as 'School in a Bag' assisting those struggling to gain an education. Support to a school in Nepal with a link to a particular pupil shows a very strong awareness of global concerns such as poverty and justice. Pupils also have a strong sense of Christian stewardship of creation shown in their understanding of current ecological issues. They take direct action on this through the activities of their Eco Committee and see this as an important part of the vision.

A wide range of curriculum opportunities are provided resulting in pupils having a strong appreciation and understanding of God's world. The Christian vision is particularly evident in the school council and pupils are aware of ways in which different views can be explored and resolved. The school has a particularly strong sense of dignity and respect and living well together. This was clearly evident in several unprompted acts of kindness observed throughout the inspection. Pupils understand that the Christian values of respect and friendship underpin the way they should behave towards each other. They know that as Jesus cared for all so they should do the same, and as a result their behaviour is exemplary. Persisting with the Christian ideal of love and forgiveness in the face of difficulty is readily understood by pupils. The vision inspires pupils to achieve and they seek to do their best.

Pupils participate enthusiastically in worship and prayer and this is clearly central to the life of the school. They are attentive and quick to reflect maturely on the material offered. Collective worship provision is good, and pupils and parents speak enthusiastically about worship. A significant percentage of parents attend Friday worship, and strongly support special services in church. As a result, worship has considerable impact both in and beyond school. Worship is invitational and has a visible effect on the life of the whole community in terms of spiritual growth. A variety of worship leaders visit the school and offer different approaches and styles.

In particular 'Open the Book' visits are readily mentioned by pupils and clearly have significant impact. As a result, pupils understand that God may be approached in many various ways, and their sense of personal spirituality is very well developed. Pupils readily write prayers which demonstrate high quality reflection. The vision is expressed in worship and shows that all are valued by God and can contribute unique gifts. Anglican and other practice is clearly evident, and pupils readily think about how the material applies to their lives. The timing of collective worship is deliberately placed at the end of the day so that pupils can be encouraged to reflect as they travel home. Current opportunities for pupils to plan worship are few, and this is an area for development. Foundation governors support worship strongly and are present regularly. They monitor and evaluate collective worship conscientiously and record their findings on a comprehensive proforma.

Religious education is a separate subject and is well planned and taught. Subject support is provided through visits by a diocesan adviser which are much appreciated. The religious education leader has a passion for the subject and pupils speak readily about their experience in RE lessons. The RE curriculum allows flourishing in line with the school's vision and promotes confidence in the pupils in discussion. Materials in use include the 'Understanding Christianity' resource which has significant impact in helping pupils understand the bible. Pupils have a thoughtful understanding of the significance of Christianity as a living faith with its effect on society. Pupils understand the importance of studying world faiths and speak confidently about their symbols and artefacts. Work is very well produced and regularly marked to assist progress.

Head of school	Emily Smith
Inspector's name and number	Rev Jeremy Hellier 899