



## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

# Church Cowley St James Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Address Bartholomew Road, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 3QH

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

**Overall grade**

**Good**

**The impact of collective worship**

**Good**

### School's vision

Our vision, underpinned by the values of courage, tolerance, respect and compassion, is that everyone in the school community will have life in all its fullness. Our aspiration is that pupils will be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society.

**'I have come in order that you might have life, life in all its fullness'**  
John 10:10

### Key findings

- The strong partnership with the local church, especially the positive clergy input, is pivotal in reinforcing pupils' understanding of the school's Christian vision.
- The headteacher, supported by other leaders, drives school improvement effectively. As a result, pupils and adults have quality opportunities to experience 'life in all its fullness'.
- The creative curriculum, shaped by the Christian vision, provides rich learning experiences. Intentional opportunities for spiritual development and exploring diversity are well developed.
- Governors are committed to the school and the welfare of its pupils and staff. Their monitoring of the school as a Church school and religious education (RE), however, lacks rigour and effective planning.
- Invitational, varied opportunities for worship and prayer are well planned and evaluated. Opportunities for pupils to lead worship are embraced enthusiastically and reflects the Christian vision well.

### Areas for development

- Leaders to more effectively measure the impact of the Christian vision so that it explicitly drives the ongoing development of the school as a Church school.
- Make a clearer distinction between the vision and its associated values, referring more overtly to the biblical roots. This is in order for members of the school and wider community to articulate the vision more easily.
- Embed monitoring and evaluation in RE in order to inform pupils and teachers of ongoing progress in this key subject. Further develop governors' monitoring of the school as a Church school, so that all can articulate the effectiveness of RE in expressing the vision.

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

Church Cowley St James Primary is warm and welcoming, providing a positive learning environment for all members of the school community. The Christian vision, together with its associated values, has a positive influence on how pupils go about their life and work in the school. All are able to engage in 'life in all its fullness' under God's love, producing a deep sense of family and togetherness. The headteacher provides strong leadership and ensures that all pupils are treated as unique individuals. Pupils are therefore able to learn and flourish, whatever their abilities or backgrounds.

Care and nurture permeate relationships in school and partnerships with the wider community. For instance, during the pandemic, staff and leaders organised a school food bank. Hundreds of food parcels were delivered personally by staff to needy families in the area. Parents appreciate the school, especially the support they receive when they have difficulties. They describe the school as being 'amazing' during the Covid lockdown. Any pupil who did not have access to online learning during the school's closure was provided with an electronic device. The individual support provided by staff at this time exemplifies the positive outworking of the school's Christian vision.

The supportive governing body work hard to raise academic standards at the school. However, they have not engaged sufficiently with the diocese to access training. Consequently, leaders lack an adequate understanding of current thinking in Church school education. This means that the formal monitoring of Church Cowley St James as a Church school is not as focused or systematic as it should be. Currently, the website and policy documents do not readily proclaim the school's distinctively Christian vision. This lack of clarity means that some members of the school community are unable to make a clear enough distinction between the vision and its associated values.

The school's Christian vision drives curriculum development. Pupils thoroughly enjoy all that the school offers and as a result, attendance and standards are improving. Pupils are inspired by a broad curriculum enriched by educational visits and extra-curricular activities. These include sports, visits to the snow dome in Milton Keynes and an annual residential trip to Swanage for Year 6 pupils. The vision of life in all its fullness is expressed in the school's High Quality Responsive Teaching (HQRT) scheme. This is proving successful in improving learning outcomes and raising aspirations across the school.

Through leaders' passion that the curriculum inspires, there are numerous opportunities for pupils to learn about social justice and inequality around the world. They make clear links between the school's values of moral courage, tolerance, respect and compassion to a wide variety of topics. Examples include the plight of migrants and refugees, Windrush and Unicef's 'Rights of the Child'. Pupils' concern for social justice is shown in their advocacy for the local environment, evidenced by an anti-litter campaign undertaken by Year 1 pupils. Many charities are supported, both within the local community, as well as national campaigns such as Children in Need. As a result, pupils are developing an understanding of disadvantage and how to care for the natural world.

The school is proud of its rich, diverse community where many faiths, cultures and languages are represented. Parents are encouraged to lead cultural activities at the school, such as a recent Diwali event, enjoyed by all. A positive reinforcement system ensures that pupils are rewarded for good behaviour. Pupils particularly value being chosen as school ambassadors in celebration assemblies. Pupils' and adults' mental health needs are supported effectively through initiatives such as Clear Sky therapy and play therapy. These help to boost resilience during difficult times in order to live life in all its fullness.

The school's identity as a Church school is greatly enhanced by its close partnership with the nearby parish church and local organisations. For instance, church members present fortnightly open the book sessions, bringing Bible stories to life and making them meaningful. These are very much enjoyed by pupils of all ages, who relate the stories with enthusiasm. The vicar, who is also a foundation governor, is a much-loved member of the school community. He is readily available to support the spiritual needs of all members of the school community. As a consequence, pupils and adults have a good understanding and appreciation of Anglican worship.

Drawing on a very good, shared understanding of spirituality, leaders have developed a curriculum that promotes reflection and exploration of the spiritual dimension. For instance, the school grounds and local environment are used effectively to promote spiritual development and stewardship of the world through gardening and forest school. A daily

‘thinking time’ held in each classroom enables both adults and pupils to benefit from a tranquil interval of peaceful reflection. This further enhances spiritual growth.

Worship expresses the vision well, inspiring pupils to learn from the teachings of Jesus, regardless of their own faith background. It is carefully planned and often links Bible stories to actions and events in the modern world. Pupils benefit from creative approaches to prayer, such as the prayer spaces event in church. Consequently, prayer is meaningful and another way in which pupils and adults grow spiritually. Pupils attend church three times a year and relish opportunities to plan, lead and evaluate worship in their key stages.

RE makes a good contribution to flourishing and strengthens the school’s vision by promoting an understanding of Christianity and a range of faiths. Pupils learn to ask questions and engage in ethical debates. Younger pupils enjoy the practical activities RE offers, such as handling artefacts and taking part in role play sessions. Pupils attend Christchurch Cathedral for an annual Christingle service and make visits to places of worship such as the synagogue in Oxford. These visits enable pupils to further develop their knowledge and understanding of major world religions. The leading of RE is being developed by a new co-ordinator and effective curriculum planning is now in place. However, monitoring of the subject is limited and assessment procedures are not secure.

Everyone at Church Cowley St James Primary School is treated with dignity and respect. The Christian vision supports its community well, enabling both adults and pupils to flourish together and experience life in all its fullness.

### Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	29 November 2021	URN	123139
Date of previous inspection	9 October 2014		
School status	Voluntary controlled primary	NOR	449
Diocese	Oxford		
Headteacher	Steve Dew		
Pupil profile	The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is above national averages.		
	The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)	Church Cowley St James Church of England Primary is a large school serving the city of Oxford. Limited job opportunities, leading to high rates of unemployment, result in relatively high levels of deprivation locally. Approximately 40% of pupils speak English as an additional language.		
Inspector’s name	Jenny Earp	No.	288