



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Address Chanters Road, Bideford, EX39 2QN

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

'Together we journey to a future of opportunity.'

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" Psalm 119 v 105.

Our vision is to give every child the skills and experiences they need for their next step in life, and to provide a high-quality education that develops children within a Christian environment. We use the Bible as guidance, teaching and our compass. Values: Friendship, Acceptance, Perseverance, Compassion, Respect, Honesty.

Key findings

- Led by their Christian vision, the leadership team is rapidly improving the curriculum, behaviour and pastoral systems. This enables pupils to flourish spiritually, and in their learning. However, not everyone understands the Christian vision to the same extent.
- During the pandemic, leaders and staff provide very good pastoral and academic support for pupils. Staff workload is managed well. Parents of vulnerable pupils are particularly well supported.
- Most governors have a strong understanding of the school's Christian vision, and monitor this effectively. This is not yet fully understood by all governors.
- Religious education (RE) is well-led, resourced and taught. RE contributes well to pupils' understanding of difference and diversity within and between religions.
- Inspired by the Christian vision, collective worship is varied, valued by the school community and Bible-based. It encourages pupils to live out the Christian values in their daily lives.

Areas for development

- To further develop understanding of Christian teaching underpinning the school's vision across the whole school community.
- To train new members of the governing body so they are able to monitor the impact of the vision and further support the school on its improvement journey.
- To further embed a shared understanding of spirituality across the school, so that the whole curriculum can be enriched.

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

This school has embarked on a successful improvement journey as a Church school. The newly-appointed leadership team has put in place a broad and exciting curriculum that motivates the pupils. Their Christian vision, 'together we journey to a future of opportunity', is based on Jesus' parable of the talents. This inspires leaders to help every pupil to develop their talents to be the best they can be. However, some members of the school community have a less well-developed understanding of Christian teaching underpinning the vision. Leaders monitor and develop classroom practice, so that all pupils, including those that are vulnerable or who have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), thrive and develop spiritually and in their learning. They provide a range of opportunities outside of the planned curriculum, enabling pupils to flourish. Over the last three years, the leadership team have faced many challenges, including the pandemic and a large turnover in staff. Despite this, they have secured impressive improvements in standards of behaviour and attendance. Behaviour is now good, and forgiveness and reconciliation underpin policy and practice. This has effectively ensured pupils' wellbeing. Leaders have enriched and broadened the curriculum. All of this has benefitted the pupils, who now enjoy their learning in calm and focused lessons, enabling them to thrive.

Led by the Christian vision, relationships between all members of the school community are strong. Good communication is an essential part of this. Pupils and staff are listened to, and make valuable contributions to school decision-making. The school council is well-organised and active in arranging events, for example Comic Relief activities. Pupils are given opportunities to consider global events through the curriculum. They express their reaction to social injustice by writing letters and supporting two pupils in the developing world with fundraising events. Pupils are involved with local food and hygiene banks, and the pupil-led eco-group organises various recycling initiatives.

Leaders are very clear on how the Christian values are rooted in Bible stories. The Christian values are used by teachers and support staff to explicitly teach pupils strategies for managing their behaviour and emotions. Because of this, pupils develop very well emotionally. The well-established foundation governors are led by their sound understanding of the Christian teaching behind the vision. Because of this, they are able to provide effective monitoring and evaluation of the school's Christian ethos. However, more recently appointed members of the governing body have a less secure understanding.

The school's Christian vision inspires the very strong pastoral care that is offered to all its pupils. The dedicated pastoral team, which has been recently enlarged, has given pupils and vulnerable families excellent advice and support throughout the pandemic. Parents appreciate the clear communication and supportive contact that they have received, particularly those supporting children in care. Teachers and pastoral staff contacted families frequently during lockdown. This means that pupils were able to maintain their studies and have support for their mental health during difficult times. As a result, pupils are confident and feel safe at the school, enabling them to develop spiritually and in their learning. Pupils show respect for each other, and offer help to those with disabilities in the playground or classroom. Staff were very well supported during lockdown with workloads managed well, and compassion shown when they required support.

The school has strong partnerships with the Diocese, the local authority and the local church who have supported leaders with their improvement agenda. Staff take full advantage of training opportunities. This has secured improvements in staff understanding of spirituality. The school vision of offering a high-quality education and opportunities for all to be 'the best they can be' is being developed well. There are plenty of examples of lessons and extra-curricular activities where there are good opportunities for spiritual development. However, this is not fully embedded through the whole curriculum.

Collective worship is well planned and is inspired by the Christian vision of the school. It is varied and inspirational, giving pupils Bible teaching, times for prayer or reflection and opportunities to apply teachings to their own lives. There

is a clear focus on the school values and how they apply to pupils' behaviour, attitudes and decisions. As a result, pupils develop well spiritually and confidently explore philosophical and moral questions of meaning. Pupils value times of prayer and reflection. Collective worship has continued throughout lockdown with the strong support of the local church. The vicar and the 'Open the Book' team provide a weekly collective worship. Pupils say that they really enjoy these, and that they help them to understand Bible stories in greater depth. There are opportunities for pupils to plan and lead classroom worship to which parents are invited. There are some opportunities for pupils to evaluate and monitor worship, as part of school council meetings.

Religious Education is very well-led, planned and taught. Provision of RE reflects the Church of England Statement of Entitlement. The teacher leading RE regularly attends training, and meets with other schools to share ideas and resources. This results in a curriculum that is rich, engaging and well resourced. Pupils produce good quality work in their lessons and enjoy the opportunity to learn about other world religions and worldviews. RE lessons make a very good contribution to pupils' understanding of diversity and difference within and between faiths. Recently, pupils observed a debate between humanist and Christian visitors. This resulted in written work demonstrating very good skills of analysis. In RE lessons, pupils are confident about expressing their own views and justifying them with balanced argument. There are good systems to ensure that teachers and pupils know how well they are learning in RE, and how they can progress.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	18 March 2022	URN	113385
Date of previous inspection	28 April 2015		
School status	Voluntary controlled primary school	NOR	419
Name of MAT/Federation	n/a		
Diocese	Exeter		
Headteacher	Naomi Tottle		
Pupil profile	The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages.		
	The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages.		
Additional significant information	The school is a member of the Atlantic Coast Co-operative Trust. This is a co-operative of five local primary schools.		
Inspector's name	Judith Larrington	No.	948