

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England VC Primary School

Address Lansdown View, Timsbury, Bath, Somerset. BA2 0JR

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

Living Together
Learning Forever
Loving God's Creation.
This vision draws from Luke 2:19
Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Key findings

- A new leadership team have raised the importance of the school's inclusive Christian vision, using it to drive improvements. They have established a caring community where everyone is valued, working at the heart of village life.
- Collective worship is highly valued and central to the daily life of the school. Worship deepens pupils' and staff understanding of the importance of the vision and associated Christian values. Whilst pupils have some opportunities to plan and lead worship, this is not fully developed.
- Strong partnerships have been established enhancing improvements the school has made. Monitoring is rigorously completed across all areas. However, pupils' understanding of diversity and disadvantage through exploring other communities, either nationally or globally, is not fully developed.
- Significant improvements have been introduced in religious education (RE) through the expertise of the subject leader. This has raised the profile of the subject.
- Staff effectively met the needs of pupils and families during the pandemic. Whilst opportunities for reflection and spiritual development are valued, there are few experiences which extend pupils' thinking.

Areas for development

- Extend pupils' understanding of diversity and disadvantage by exploring different communities, either nationally or globally.
- Create high quality experiences which deepen pupils' understanding of spirituality, which they are confident to express in a variety of creative ways.
- Enable pupils to have greater opportunities to plan and lead collective worship, so they take responsibility for improvements.

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

The school community created a new inclusive Christian vision which has a significant impact on daily life. Leaders effectively use the vision to direct improvements, creating this caring community. Pupils enthusiastically talk about where they see the vision lived out. They describe the caring friendships which exist across the school and how, 'it encourages me, so I never give up'. The vision gives pupils the belief that they can flourish, raising their aspirations and expectations. 'Caring for God's world' resonates with pupils who are inspired to new challenges. For example, every pupil in Year Two won a Blue Peter badge for their campaign on recycling. Pupils asked to create an Eco committee to plan actions for themselves. Leaders have a growing understanding of the biblical roots of the Christian vision, the God given potential of each person to flourish. Older pupils make links to the biblical verse about Mary, Jesus' mother, who valued the experiences which shaped her life. Pupils understand the importance of the knowledge and skills they learn to shape their life choices. A coherent staff team live out the vision in daily interactions, they feel valued and flourish.

Pupils consistently articulate that collective worship is a valued part of each day. The vision shapes worship so it challenges pupils' and staff thinking and actions. Worship is inclusive and invitational enriching the understanding of the relevance of the Christian vision. Six core Christian values deepen pupils' appreciation of the vision and what it looks like in daily life. Each term a value linked to the vision is explored. Focus questions introduced in worship are explored at class level, so pupils see their relevance. The values are skillfully woven across all curriculum experiences. Each week current issues are considered which enrich pupils' moral and ethical thinking. Pupils appreciate that prayer can be a natural response to questions which some find helpful. Worship and prayer contribute positively to pupils' and staff spirituality. Pupils have some opportunities to plan and lead worship, but this is not fully developed. The introduction of weekly pupil worship champions allows them to record responses to class worship which they enjoy. Pupils' suggestions are monitored by local governors leading to improvements. Pupils generally have an age-appropriate level of understanding of Christian festivals and the Christian concept of the Trinity. The collective worship leader provides high quality support and extended the variety of experiences pupils have in worship.

Strong partnerships significantly enhance improvements across the school. The trust introduced high quality systems to support leaders with robust approaches to monitoring. Precise plans indicate what is to be evaluated, which consistently leads to ongoing improvements. Local governors develop their expertise working alongside other governors and trust members. The trust facilitates subject leaders' support and planning which is valued, thus enriching staff skills, leading to new approaches to learning. There is a distinct emphasis on growing new leaders, so they feel empowered. A trust church school leader brings resources and ideas, such as Understanding Christianity into religious education (RE) which pupils enjoy. The diocese supports with identified training, notably in collective worship. Relationships with the local church have been mutually beneficial, sharing the celebration of festivals. However, pupils' understanding of other communities, either globally or nationally is not fully developed. This has contributed to pupils' lack of knowledge of diversity and disadvantage.

The importance of each individual is emphasised by the vision. The nurture for vulnerable pupils is particularly good, so all feel valued. A safe space has been created where pupils are effectively supported. Staff and pupil wellbeing is carefully planned with strategies which help them to cope with challenges. These approaches are now being shared with other schools. Pupils' mental health is effectively supported, with new initiatives recently introduced. This enabled pupils to return to school smoothly. During the pandemic staff went beyond expectations. Pupils at home could join online lessons in school, with individual meetings also in place. Food parcels were delivered by leaders, who also helped families overcome communication difficulties. The school played a vital role in the centre of the community. Pupils show respect and care for others, generally attributing this to the vision and values. New approaches help pupils to understand their feelings and share these. Pupils are aware of strategies which help them to be calm and access learning, reducing the incidents of poor behaviour.

A new curriculum reflects the vision, developing life-long attitudes to learning. It effectively meets the needs of all learners and raises self-esteem. Pupils flourish in creative curriculum areas such as music. The selective use of reading books enables pupils to consider issues such as respect and stereotyping. The introduction of black history week shapes pupils' ideas about equality. Pupils' moral development is nurtured effectively. Opportunities for reflection are valued.

Staff have agreed an understanding of spirituality and where this can be developed. However, there are insufficient high-quality experiences offered across all subject areas. Further, pupils do not have the opportunities to express their ideas in a variety of ways. As a consequence of the vision and caring for God's creation more pupils respond and take action. Some pupils championed support for Afghan refugees and local people requiring cancer support becoming courageous advocates for change.

The subject leader's expertise has shaped significant improvements raising the profile and impact of RE. Implementing Understanding Christianity resources deepens pupils' and staff knowledge of Christianity. Using big questions of meaning and purpose allows pupils to clarify their thinking. They refine these with others and learn how to disagree well. The trust introduced concepts, such as belief and practice which enables pupils to see Christianity as a living faith. Pupils' understanding of these concepts and their relevance to daily life is growing well. Assessment strategies are impressive, tracking pupils' progress rigorously. Evaluations by the subject leader led to the creation of word mats. These explain key terms, enabling pupils to make better progress. Pupils enjoy the variety of approaches such as drama and debate and recording ideas in different ways. Pupils show an age-appropriate understanding of other world faiths.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	9 November 2021	URN	147890
Date of previous inspection	5 March 2015		
School status	Academy inspected as voluntary controlled primary	NOR	148
Name of MAT/Federation	Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership (Trust)		
Diocese	Bath and Wells		
Headteacher	Michelle Parsons		
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 (SEND) is above national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)			
Inspector's name	Revd David Hatrey	No.	844