

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

The Priory Church of England Secondary School, Dorking	
Address	West Bank, Dorking, RH4 3DG
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
The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Good

School's vision
Our community intentionally welcomes everyone. Every day we work together to have a transformational impact upon one another and on the world that we are part of. Being aspirational in all things, and for all people; so that together we flourish, allowing each individual to become everything they were created to be.
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is a community in transition. The recently appointed headteacher and chair of governors are giving fresh impetus and genuine authenticity to the school's Christian vision. • Students flourish at the school because leaders and staff work tirelessly to implement the school's Christian vision by welcoming and valuing all members of the school community. • Leaders and governors have taken the imaginative and principled decision to repurpose the former Sixth Form centre as a facility to promote student and staff wellbeing. This gives expression to the school's vision and contributes significantly to the wellbeing of the school community. • At their best, acts of collective worship are an inspirational expression of the school's Christian vision. However, opportunities for all students to take part in high quality collective worship are more limited than they might be. • Students flourish in religious education (RE) lessons and develop a secure understanding of major world religions. However insufficient time is currently given to RE for all students in key stage 4 and this limits students' opportunity to flourish in their learning.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the school's collective worship provision with a view to enabling all students to be exposed to its transformational impact more frequently. • As a matter of priority, work towards a situation where RE meets the Church of England statement of entitlement in relation to the proportion of curriculum time at KS4.



Inspection findings

The Priory School is a community in transition with new leadership in the governing body and the school. They have refreshed and invigorated the school's vision and its application in the life of the school community. As a result, both staff and students flourish. They are known and valued as individuals. This has occurred over a period when external circumstances have been particularly challenging for the school. Leaders and governors took the wise but painful decision to end post-16 provision with effect from July 2022.

The school's vision is rooted in Jesus's statement, 'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.'. All members of the school community understand and act on the vision's imperative of welcome. The vision informs the school's Christian values of wisdom, dignity, hope and community. These values are widely publicised and well understood. They provide the narrative for all members of the school community to live by. They are purposefully referenced in everyday conversation. This has a powerful impact in promoting the spiritual development of students and embedding the school's vision.

Leaders' decision to prioritise the Christian flourishing of all members of the community means that students, staff and parents all rightly see the school as a distinctively Christian institution. The chaplaincy team, which includes a paid chaplain and local clergy and youth workers, is central to the school's Christian mission. All Year 7 students are welcomed to the school at a Communion service. This both enacts and teaches the meaning of the school's vision. The chapel is set up as a prayer space for a week during Lent and all students are invited to immerse themselves in it at a level appropriate to them. Each July the chaplaincy runs 'OMG week', which invites all students to respond to the Christian story. In addition, there are frequent opportunities for those who wish to, to gather for Christian prayer, worship or enquiry. Adults and students express gratitude that the chaplaincy team are readily available to support them, promoting their spiritual development.

Overall the impact of collective worship is good. At its best it is excellent. For example, the dramatic telling of the story of Jesus healing a sick woman (Mark 5:24-34) was inspirational. This was recorded by the chaplain and a group of students and shown to the whole school in their classrooms. A Year 7 form then engaged in an animated discussion about the value of intentionally noticing people who are marginalised. It was evident that students saw the relevance of the Bible narrative to their own lives and, without compulsion, felt encouraged to respond. This call to action is a direct outworking of the school's vision. Some other assembly gatherings are more secular and do not offer this opportunity to respond to the school's vision.

Leaders' commitment to the flourishing of all members of the school community drove the establishment of The Shore Centre at the school. This was opened on the site of the former Sixth Form block in September 2022. Support here is provided by specially trained school staff and by outside agencies. Vulnerable students, including recent migrants and refugees, flourish through the language and pastoral support they receive.

Leaders have forged many valuable, mutually enriching links with the local Christian community. These include the school's open air Christmas carol service and the Year 7 community café. In addition, students who suffer from issues of anxiety and low self esteem are invited to follow imaginative therapeutic courses called 'BeMe' and BeLong' that are provided by local Christian organisations. These inclusive courses can be transformational for the young people who take part.

The priority that leaders and staff give to the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme means that students have a well-rounded understanding of flourishing. Students taking part in the




scheme provide support for local churches and community groups. They also volunteer in school as peer mentors, wellbeing champions and leaders of clubs. Additionally, students organise regular collections for charity. The student 'eco group' led the introduction of recycling bins and has resulted in a virtually litter free environment. Students live out a commitment to serving their community and to courageous advocacy. They flourish because they see this as an integral part of being a member of the school.

Relationships between all members of the school community are warm and respectful. Parents are particularly grateful that their children are known and treated as unique individuals. Leaders' vision-driven decision to adopt a behaviour policy based on supporting students to refocus has transformed relationships. Students know that they will be given opportunities to make a fresh start. Staff are committed to understanding and addressing the causes of students' actions, rather than simply applying sanctions. This affirms the dignity of all students, particularly those who most need this affirmation.

Students' dignity is also affirmed by the willingness of leaders to listen and respond to student concerns. Each half term, the headteacher assembles the school to address issues that the student council has raised. Students correctly see that their concerns are taken seriously and, in many cases policy changes as a result. This is a further significant outworking of the school's Christian vision and values.

Staff flourish at The Priory. They feel well supported by colleagues and valued by school leaders. They appreciate leaders' transparency and the open door policy that they operate. Leaders employ many other intentional policies to prioritise staff wellbeing. These include voluntary wellbeing classes, a buddy system and public recognition of people's contributions. Staff rightly see these as confirmation that they are valued.

Both members of the RE department are recent appointments. They are currently remodelling the curriculum. The department is leading the writing of the new Surrey agreed syllabus. Taken as a whole, RE is effective. The new Key Stage 3 curriculum is challenging and absorbing for students. It reflects a good balance between theology, philosophy and human science, enabling students to develop a deep understanding of major world faiths. Lessons are well structured and offer students opportunities to discuss difficult topics in a secure environment. Currently, at Key Stage 4, all students follow a GCSE short course in Year 10 with no allocated teaching time in Year 11. Students can also opt to follow a full GCSE course in religious studies within the school's options system. The school is mindful of the need to ensure that all students have sufficient curriculum time for RE in Key Stage 4. Leaders are formulating concrete plans to bring this about.

	The effectiveness of RE is		Good
	<p>Teaching and learning are strong in all years and students make excellent progress in lessons, growing in religious literacy and understanding. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 and in Year 10 is rich and engaging. The new Key Stage 3 curriculum has been carefully constructed. Students who follow the optional GCSE long course also flourish in their RE learning. All students are clear about how well they are doing and how they can improve.</p>		
Information			
School	The Priory Church of England Secondary School, Dorking	Inspection date	28 February 2023 - 29 February 2023
URN	125281	VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary aided
Diocese/District	Guildford	Pupils on roll	654
Headteacher	Jo Trimnell		
Chair of Governors	Peter Nevins		
Inspector	Andrew Wilcock	No.	2112