

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Christ Church First School, Frome	
Address	Feltham Lane, Frome, BA11 5AJ
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
<p>Let Your Light Shine'</p> <p>Matthew 5:16</p> <p>'At Christ Church we nurture and encourage one another to shine so we become the best version of ourselves'.</p>
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The multi-academy trust (MAT) has played a crucial role in Christ Church's recent improvement journey and in helping the school's light to shine again. Leaders recognise the need to continue to develop strategies to include the whole school community in this journey. • Joyful, high-quality collective worship offers pupils and adults the opportunity to engage in many different ways. This special time of meeting together provides moments of spiritual reflection and stillness in preparation for the day ahead. It supports pupils in being ready to learn. • Skilful and effective support for vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is rooted in the vision. The dedicated staff are united in their belief in every pupil and in wanting them to flourish. • Pupils speak knowledgeably and respectfully about a range of religions. The safe spaces provided in religious education (RE) lessons enable them to discuss their different religious and philosophical ideas. Emerging systems for recording pupils' written work do not reflect the quality of their discussions. • Adults manage a wide range of complex behaviours with increasing skill. Their work is motivated by the vision. With adults' support, pupils are learning to practise forgiveness.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop manageable and useful systems of recording in RE. Find creative ways of capturing pupils' learning which help them remember and talk accurately and confidently about their understanding of religions and worldviews. • Further develop pupils' ability to disagree well. Enable more pupils to take the initiative in practising forgiveness. • Review and adapt where necessary current systems of communication. This is to enable the whole school community to participate with understanding in evaluating Christ Church's effectiveness as a Church school.

Inspection findings

Christ Church First School is emerging from a very difficult season. Pupils have experienced considerable loss and a period of turmoil. Their opportunities to flourish have, until recently, been limited. However, through its incorporation into the Bath and Wells MAT, this small school is beginning to thrive once more. At the heart of this improvement is the Christian vision of the school and of the MAT.

Adults are united in their desire to see every pupil flourish. The appointment in January 2023 of an experienced Church school headteacher from within the MAT is proving key to the school's recovery. Inspired by the vision, she leads with hope and determination. Her love for the pupils and their families is evident. She handles difficult conversations with understanding and compassion.

Collective worship is highly inclusive. Adults nurture and encourage pupils to shine. This enables them to show the best version of themselves. Because adults know pupils well, their support is both extremely effective and respectfully unobtrusive. Consequently, there is a very high level of engagement in collective worship. Pupils listen well and respond thoughtfully in moments of stillness and silence. Leaders' sensitive use of simple liturgy provides familiar structure which pupils enjoy. Different year-groups look forward to 'their day' each week for leading the responses. Pupils engage enthusiastically in many ways. Their joyful singing is a striking feature with the whole school, from Reception to Year 4, confidently singing in parts. Pupils say that singing makes them happy. One commented that it 'gets me ready for the rest of the day'.

Pupils' level of involvement in leading worship is appropriate for this stage of the school's improvement journey. Those with specific responsibilities train younger pupils to succeed them and thereby encourage others to shine. One pupil co-led an act of worship with the headteacher. This enthused and inspired other pupils to raise money for a specific charity.

Prayer is important in this school. Pupils know the Lord's Prayer well. They are also keen to suggest subjects for more informal prayers. Adults comment on the special nature of these times of spontaneous prayer. Pupils speak naturally of praying sometimes at home, for their families or for their day at school.

Pupils enjoy opportunities in collective worship to reflect on a range of Bible stories. For example, one pupil wondered about the similarities between the roles of teachers looking after children, and Jesus, as a shepherd looking after his sheep.

The school's Christian vision is at the heart of its increasingly effective work with its many vulnerable pupils. Leaders work tirelessly to access appropriate support, motivated by the desire to see every pupil become the best version of themselves. Where external support is difficult to find, the headteacher takes bold decisions to enable pupils to flourish within the setting of Christ Church. As a result of this determinedly flexible approach, staff have been able to discover additional strengths in pupils. In this way, adults nurture and encourage pupils to let their light shine.

The school's Christian vision and its rigorous implementation by the headteacher and the staff is improving behaviour and relationships. A new behaviour policy, rooted in the vision, is enabling pupils to begin to take responsibility for their actions. Adults live out and explicitly teach values of kindness, courage, respect, responsibility, perseverance and forgiveness. With adult support, pupils are learning to practise forgiveness. Additional professionals, such as a psychotherapist and a behaviour consultant, are successfully improving pupils' resilience and developing staff skills. Pupils recognise that improvements are taking place.

They say that they are noticing increasing evidence of kindness in the school. Staff acknowledge that support from the MAT, from the headteacher and from one another is enabling them to make a positive difference for pupils. Several case studies demonstrate the school's transformative work for pupils. Pupils themselves speak proudly about personalised charts which are helping them moderate their behaviour and become better versions of themselves. Quiet corners and reflection areas throughout the school help pupils to be calm. Pupils appreciate teachers' efforts in making these quiet corners feel special or 'like a den'. Some pupils enjoy having the space to read and think about favourite Bible verses. Their prayers written in these spaces show a depth of spirituality.

Highly-qualified and experienced Church school governors ensure that the Christian vision remains central to the school. Their monitoring is focused and useful. For example, one governor evaluated the effectiveness of the new liturgy and routines within collective worship. Senior staff, the small interim governing body and the MAT central team work effectively together to enable pupils and adults to flourish.

The school enjoys a good relationship with the local church. Regular visits by the vicar, the Open the Book team and the church's director of music support pupils in letting their light shine. Relationships with the diocese are good. This ensures that the school is accessing relevant and up-to-date training.

RE lessons provide a safe space for pupils to explore differences and to reflect on their own spiritual and philosophical convictions. Pupils display a respectful curiosity about a range of religions. They talk readily about things which intrigue and challenge them. Their understanding of Christianity is particularly detailed. New systems for recording pupils' learning have recently been introduced. Curriculum planning is effective. The headteacher ensures that all staff access appropriate training and so can teach well and with confidence.

Information			
School	Christ Church First School, Frome	Inspection date	20 June 2023
URN	149487	VC/VA/ Academy	Academy
Diocese/District	Bath & Wells	Pupils on roll	107
MAT/Federation	Bath & Wells Multi Academy Trust		
Headteacher	Nicola Smith		
Chair of Governors	Louise Adams		
Inspector	Penny Burnside	No.	772