

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| Birchills Church of England Community Academy | |
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| Address | Farringdon Street, Walsall, WS2 8NF |
| School vision | |
| <p>With God all things are possible. We are all God's children.</p> <p>Our vision is to provide a safe haven of hope and possibility to all. Through a strong commitment to Christian Values and a nurturing ethos embedded in the delivery of a high quality education - all children can learn and make a positive contribution to the diverse society of which they belong - in a confident, creative and awe inspiring way.</p> | |
| School strengths | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Christian vision is genuinely embedded in the life of the school, running through all its work. Pupils and adults clearly articulate its impact on their lives and beyond. • The support for vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) means that no-one is seen as different. This enables all pupils to flourish. • Worship is inclusive, remaining relevant to pupils and adults regardless of their faith. Its positive impact reaches well beyond the school gates. • Successful partnerships with the trust have enabled the school to effect rapid and significant change. This enables the needs of all pupils to be met. • The religious education (RE) curriculum has been rigorously planned to reflect the context of the school. This makes it relevant and meaningful to all. | |
| Areas for development | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop staff understanding of the underpinnings of worship. This is to ensure that the Christian vision is clearly shared and valued. • Enhance parental engagement across the local community. This is so that all families feel further valued as contributors to the life of the school. | |
| Inspection findings | |
| <p>Using the words of Matthew's gospel, the school's Christian vision is lived by pupils and adults throughout their daily lives. The choice of this vision is a response to the diverse context of the school. Pupils and adults believe that there is no glass ceiling to what they can achieve. Pupils clearly articulate that the vision helps them in daily situations, from solving a maths problem to a rare playground quarrel. The vision is supported by a set of six values. These, though Christian in nature, remain relevant to those of all faiths and none. This creates an inclusive and unified community. Both the vision and the values have driven decision making by leaders at all levels. They are creative and tenacious in finding solutions to address even the most complex individual</p> | |

situations. The Local Academy Committee is actively engaged in the life of the school. They challenge leaders' decisions to ensure that the best interests of both adults and pupils are always upheld.

Birchills expertly caters for the wide range of needs of its school community. For example, pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) benefit from bespoke support plans. As a result, many who have recently arrived in the UK progress quickly to flourish alongside their peers. Pupils with SEND are fully integrated into mainstream lessons thanks to investment in specialist resources. Consequently, there is no perception of 'difference' – they are simply all God's children. Support for those with the greatest need exists in adapted learning environments known as 'Butterflies' and 'Dragonflies'. Where appropriate, partnerships exist with external agencies to secure specialist provision for these pupils. This enables them to receive the support which is best suited to their needs.

Worship is rooted in Birchills' Christian values, connected with stories from the Bible. It is a central part of the daily life of the school. Worship is calming and is highly valued by all. Pupils and staff from a wide variety of faiths, alongside those of none, appreciate the opportunity to reflect. The distinctively Christian nature of worship is therefore fully inclusive. Parents champion the positive impact that worship has on their children. The shared awareness and acceptance of all faiths breaks down barriers and builds respect. This creates a wider community cohesion, allowing all to appreciate the diversity of which they are a part. Adults benefit from the fresh perspectives of the pupils. Regardless of their own personal faith, they acknowledge that worship allows them to develop their own spirituality. They have a rich understanding of the relationship between spirituality and faith. Class worship takes place on two days a week. This is preferred by younger pupils. However, some staff leading this lack confidence in linking worship themes with Christian teachings.

The school provides an environment in which all pupils and adults are treated well. Staff feel part of a big community and are never isolated. They are given well-being days and granted leave of absence for important family events. This enhances both work-life balance and mental health. Leaders never turn down requests for professional development. This means that staff are continually evolving their own practice, benefiting themselves and the pupils in their care. The school's Christian vision is at its most evident through the provision of support for pupils and families in crisis. Staff go above and beyond to build relationships and liaise with external agencies. They provide a voice for those in need. It is recognised that some parents do everything for their children, but no-one does anything for them. The school addresses this through the care and support it provides, such as giving parents Christmas presents. The impact of these positive relationships is that pupils come into school more settled and ready to learn. This accelerates their progress not just academically, but socially and emotionally.

A wide range of partnerships have been fostered by the school. These are driven by the Christian vision, but also enable it to be realised. There are close, mutually beneficial links with the local church. Clergy are central figures in the life of the school. This strengthens ties between the church and the wider community. Families who would previously not have entered a church are now comfortable to do so. This includes those who are not Christian, further enhancing community cohesion. Links with the local mosque continue to develop, ensuring a shared understanding of the vision and work of the school. The local refugee centre works with the school to support families arriving in the area. This has given pupils stability by ensuring they remain a part of the Birchills community. Parents are supportive, but not many are actively engaged in sharing their views or contributing to decision making. The school's partnership with the trust has facilitated significant change in recent years. This has been through the provision of expertise, training and a wide range of collaborative initiatives. This has enabled the school to develop as a self-consciously Christian

haven that is open to all.

The provision of RE has been completely reformed within the last four years. Liaison with the trust and the diocese has informed this process to create a curriculum which is diverse and innovative. This has been introduced on a rolling basis and is now fully implemented. The teaching of RE is mapped against other subjects to enable the building of cross-curricular links. Staff, pupils and parents perceive it as having equal status to the core subjects of English and maths. RE lessons are prioritised over interventions, ensuring that all pupils receive their statutory entitlement. Pupils greatly value learning RE and believe that it impacts on how they treat and interact with other people. They understand the particular importance of this within their local community. The subject is enhanced by a wide range of enrichment. This gives pupils a grounding in the relevance and importance of RE in the world.

The inspection findings indicate that Birchills Church of England Community Academy is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

| Information | | | |
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| Inspection date | 24 January 2024 | URN | 139435 |
| VC/VA/Academy | Academy | Pupils on roll | 426 |
| Diocese | Lichfield | | |
| MAT/Federation | St Chad's Academies Trust | | |
| Executive Principal | James Dean | | |
| Chair | Brian Churm | | |
| Inspector | James Manship | No. | 2241 |