

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Milldown Church of England Primary Academy			
Address	The Milldown, Blandford, Dorset, ST11 7SN		
Date of inspection	12 March 2019	Status of school	Primary Academy
Diocese	Salisbury	URN	146153

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Good
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good

School context

Milldown Church of England Academy is a primary school with 251 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages. The school became part of the Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust (DSAT) in August 2018.

The school's Christian vision

The school's distinctive Christian vision is, 'Inspire, believe, achieve.'
This is based upon 'I am the way, the truth and the life.' John 14:6.
Leaders make strong links between this verse and the vision.

Key findings

- Leaders are passionate and dedicated to the work of this church school. They have created a strong, cohesive team who share the vision and work well together.
- Teacher research groups explore new initiatives which are effectively raising the quality of teaching and learning and engaging pupils.
- The vision is central to the school's work, helping to create a warm, caring community where pupils show care and consideration for one another.
- Standards are rising significantly across all core subjects. Pupils are taking greater responsibility for their learning, although there are insufficient opportunities to develop their understanding of global communities.

Areas for development

- Deepen pupils' awareness of global communities which extends their understanding of disadvantage and deprivation enabling them to become advocates for change.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate worship so they have greater ownership and develop their skills.
- Extend pupils' understanding of spirituality by providing progressive high-quality experiences where they can express their thinking in creative ways.

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 Christian vision is playing a fundamental role in raising the school's Christian distinctiveness and pupils' attainment. Leaders articulate a sound understanding of biblical principles underpinning the vision. They talk about each pupil being special to God, wonderfully made in his image. Staff show God's love in action by living out the vision and developing rich relationships with pupils and parents. Pupils explain how the vision helps them with their learning and supports them to be part of a caring community. Leaders are passionate and dedicated, bringing clear focus to the direction of this church school. They have established a strong cohesive team who work extremely well together and share the vision. Leaders have made astute evaluations and initiated actions enriching pupils' experiences. Governors' detailed monitoring plan evaluates all aspects of the school's work. The recently established ethos team specifically focuses on Christian distinctiveness, effectively working with pupils leading to significant improvements. A good example was extending the role of the faith team and their contribution to worship. All targets from the previous inspection have now been fully addressed.

There is a rich, tangible culture of aspiration across the school and becoming the best person God made you to be. Exploring the vision effectively develops pupils' self-confidence. Staff have high expectations for pupils, challenging them to consider more demanding questions through good support. A new initiative of teacher research groups enable staff to investigate teaching and learning. This has had a significant impact; as a result, standards in writing are rising. It has enriched the sense of the staff being a team and learning together from in-school research. These initiatives have already been shared with local schools. Pupils explain that the six Cs are learning skills which help them to make better progress. There is a strong focus on collaborative working which comes from the vision. Christian values are one of these approaches so the language of vision, values and learning are woven creatively together and used by pupils. Pupils give a range of thoughtful examples where this has been influential. Staff and pupils can be rewarded with a values disc when they show one of the values. Termly celebrations recognise where the values have changed pupils' actions in a variety of areas, raising their relevance for daily life. Growth mind-set approaches enable pupils to disagree well. These strategies facilitate discussions and sharing ideas which are valued. This leads to pupils frequently using higher order thinking skills. Pupils talk about being on a learning journey. Subject leaders have reviewed their curriculum in the light of the vision and introduced 'big' questions which engage pupils. Pupils explore disadvantage and deprivation in different subjects. There is an agreed progression for some of these experiences, such as exploring differences. However, for others, such as injustice, work is less focused and does not allow pupils to deepen their understanding. Pupils are taking increased responsibility for becoming advocates for change. They are confident to raise the profile of these and plan actions. A fine example was the support for The Dorset Bus Shelter which provides shelter for homeless people.

Standards have risen significantly in recent years with attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in line with national expectations. The progress of vulnerable pupils is rising rapidly. They are closely supported to make similar progress to their peers. Staff understanding of spirituality has grown and there are greater opportunities for reflections. Pupils find these times to be valuable. Opportunities for reflection cover a range of ideas and come from different subjects. At present there are insufficient high-quality experiences nor is there an agreed progression to deepen pupils' thinking.

Staff model the vision giving a high degree of respect and dignity to pupils. Pupils' behaviour has improved significantly. They show care and consideration for one another and attribute this to the vision. Older pupils readily accept responsibility for being ambassadors for the values. They act as peer mediators and resolve minor issues. Restorative justice approaches enable pupils to reflect upon the consequences of their actions and how they can make amends. Pupils often use biblical models of forgiveness which informs their thinking. Several case studies indicate how the school has enabled pupils from other settings to feel welcome and overcome behavioural issues. There is a real sense of being part of a warm community.

A number of improvements have raised the importance of collective worship. There are increased opportunities for pupils to contribute and time to enable them to reflect on new ideas. Pupils understand that prayer is a way of sharing ideas with God; some respond spontaneously in prayer to worship. Leaders are addressing the limited opportunities for prayer outside of worship by creating a reflection garden. Prayers are thought to be helpful by some pupils as a chance to be calm. A small pupils' faith team has begun to plan, lead and shape termly planning. At

present only a few have this chance as there are insufficient opportunities. The main Christian festivals are celebrated in church, enabling pupils to talk about these and their significance for Christians. However, their knowledge of others such as Pentecost is limited. The local church supports worship well with regular 'Open the Book' sessions recalled in detail. The vicar joins the school to lead, evaluate and identify improvements. Pupils feel that worship offers thoughtful messages for them to consider which extends their thinking.

In religious education (RE) pupils use the vision to deepen their understanding of the contribution Christianity can make to their lives. They reflect on a 'big' question or Bible story and how this has inspired them. Then they think how this has influenced their thinking and how they might respond. This follows the three steps of the vision. Pupils who claim to have no religious affiliation perceive the contribution RE can make to their thinking. They see this as a safe space to share their philosophical ideas knowing they will be valued. However, they are less confident to talk about key Christian concepts. A variety of major world faiths are explored with pupils making thoughtful comparisons. Assessment procedures are securely established and used by the subject leader to identify where teaching has been effective. The subject leader has made good use of additional training sharing new ideas and raising staff knowledge of faiths.

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