

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Verwood Church of England First School

Address	Howe Lane, Verwood, Wimborne, Dorset. BH31 6JF		
Date of inspection	8 May 2019	Status of school	First school academy inspected as VA. Wimborne Academy Trust.
Diocese	Salisbury	URN	146720

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	Excellent
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Excellent
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Good

School context

Verwood is a Church of England voluntary aided first school with 265 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is in line with the national average. The school serves an area of predominantly private housing and most of its pupils live within this catchment area. The headteacher has been in post for 13 years. In January 2019 the school became an academy, joining the Wimborne Multi Academy Trust (MAT). There are 11 schools in the MAT, four of them being church schools.

The school's Christian vision

The fruit of the spirit is not a banana!

What we value is more than healthy eating, it is healthy being, just as God shows us how to 'be' in the bible.
Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Gentleness, Faithfulness, Self-Control.

Now that's well-being for all!

Key findings

- The Christian commitment of the headteacher, strongly supported by skilled governors, the MAT's leaders and a dedicated staff, has resulted in a vibrant Christian community where pupils flourish academically, socially and emotionally.
- Verwood's highly distinctive Christian vision permeates all aspects of school life where every person is loved, cared for and valued.
- Inspiring and purposeful collective worship encourages pupils to apply worship themes to their own lives.
- Religious education (RE) is well led and given high priority in the school. Lessons provide a safe place for pupils to discuss and explore challenging questions around faith.

Areas for development

- Enable further opportunities for challenge and support of Christian distinctiveness across the MAT's four church schools so as to continue extending learning.
- Develop church partnerships to include more curriculum opportunities for exploring Anglican practices and the meanings behind them.
- Leaders to support the embedding of the recently introduced Understanding Christianity teaching materials to develop pupils' deeper knowledge and understanding around the themes being studied.

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

Verwood's vision is one which young pupils connect with, and they are easily able to understand the link with a banana. It is very child-friendly. This vision perfectly describes life within Verwood First School where everybody matters! Verwood's vision is firmly rooted in Christian theology and clearly articulated by all stakeholders. Its impact within the school's community is regularly monitored and evaluated. Stakeholder interviews allow governors to gain a full perspective of the school's effectiveness.

The headteacher's Christian faith significantly influences his leadership style within a strong cohesive team. Committed governors rigorously monitor the school's work, accurately identifying future needs. A culture of open dialogue among school and MAT leaders supports Verwood's on-going development as a successful Church school. Leaders engage with the diocese for professional development and this partnership guides governors and staff in their roles. The headteacher's voluntary directorship for the diocese's Multi Academy Trust has supported other schools, living out Verwood's vision towards others.

Difficult decisions are made sensitively, with leaders allowing God to guide their work, however difficult the situation. An example being the closure of the on-site independent pre-school. The pre-school's Chairperson thanked Verwood's leaders for their compassion during this time. She recognised that actions were focused on the best possible interests for all parties, guided by Christian principles of hope and positivity. Verwood's newly established nursery has ensured continued provision for the youngest members of its community.

The decision to become an academy was explored by leaders in great depth. The preservation of Verwood's Christian character was at the forefront of considerations. The Wimborne Academy Trust was chosen because its leaders valued Verwood's Christian vision and its central role at the heart of the school.

There is an established school culture of learning from mistakes, forgiveness towards each other and a commitment to improve. Diversity is recognised and celebrated with pupils feeling comfortable within their own individuality. The school ensures pupils and their families are supported with complex situations. Parents have great trust in the school, including its care for pupils with medical needs. Some pupils have experienced great sadness in their lives and the school ensures supportive care follows them during their time at Verwood and beyond.

Pupils clearly understand the school's Christian values linked to 'Fruit of the Spirit' (Galatians 5: 22-23). These provide a vehicle for everyday discussions linking pupil behaviour to what God asks of us. One child reported, 'At bedtime I wasn't being very kind and mum realised she wasn't being very patient, so we tried harder!' Another child described patience as, 'not only the ability to wait but to keep a good attitude while we are waiting'. Teachers describe how the school's vision and values support them in their roles. Teachers say the ethos of 'trying and failing is far better than not trying at all' has allowed them to develop professionally and personally. Three senior leaders gaining headships, two within church schools, illustrates the school's development of its teachers.

A rich curriculum combined with skilled teaching has led to pupils achieving well from their individual starting points. Academic results are consistently above national standards for pupils of similar ages. Pupils want to try their hardest in work and behaviour because kind encouragement and guidance is given by the adults working in the school. Classrooms are calm learning spaces with pupils listening patiently and respectfully, so their peers have sufficient time to explain their thoughts. Pupils hold debates where differing opinions may be held, one topic being, 'Should tarmac be put on to roads or should they be left for wildlife?' Despite differing viewpoints the pupils understand the importance of respect for each other's views.

Verwood's pupils have developed a sense of moral and social responsibility, reflected in their charity support for local and global charities. For example, pupils filled shoeboxes with gifts suitable for children of similar ages to themselves. These were then given as Christmas gifts to disadvantaged children in European countries. Regular worship time has allowed pupils to follow their progress. Some work is undertaken at the request of the pupils themselves, such as the Eco Group sharing their 'Action Plan' for recycling with the rest of the school. They stated in their presentation, 'We need to make a difference! Change has to start with us.' Another pupil asked if he could raise money for Cancer Research UK through a cake sale, this being a cause very important for him. He was fully supported with his request and encouraged when launching his idea through a worship time presentation.

The church and school have a very close working partnership. Pupils enjoy their visits to the church for services or curriculum activities. Clergy from the Anglican, Baptist and Methodist churches regularly lead worship giving pupils a rich variety of worship styles. There are long established partnerships with members of the church

congregation who regularly visit the school to work with pupils, some serving on the school's governing body. Daily worship is invitational, joyful and fun. Pupils often choose where they want to sit and this creates an atmosphere where they are participants rather than an audience. Time for reflection and prayer allows pupils to think deeply about worship themes and their impact on daily life. An additional daily worship is organised for pupils who find whole-school worship a challenge. Great efforts are made to ensure they have the same quality of experience as others. Pupils are asked for their thoughts regarding worship and this shapes future provision. An example being the pupils being supported when they want to raise concerns or issues to the rest of the school during worship time. This is showing worship's impact on developing pupils' awareness of the world around them. Pupils talk with confidence about Bible stories and how their messages apply to their own lives. Older pupils learn about the Eucharist within the context of their Easter work and the Trinity is understood in an age appropriate way. Prayer is important to the pupils. They say it helps them to say thank you for themselves and others. Pupils sometimes hold prayer shells while they reflect to help their focus with silent prayers. Written prayers have a special place in each class' individual reflection space. A shared adult understanding of spirituality allows planned and unplanned special moments to be fully appreciated. This is successfully developing pupils' awareness of themselves, others and the world around them. Numerous reflection spaces are found around the school and pupils use these areas to record special moments. A 'Spiritual Fortnight' where each class based their learning around the story of Jonah and The Whale was greatly enjoyed. Pupils say the school production where the whole school came together to perform the story made them feel very happy, just like Jonah in the story. Pupils enjoy learning about a variety of religions, understanding the importance of each faith to its believers.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

Teaching and learning in RE is good. The subject leader is supported in her role and this allows her to monitor the quality of RE across the school, offering guidance when needed. Pupils achieve well in the subject and there is a clear link with the school's Christian vision and values. Class RE books are carefully presented and learning statements from the children are captured, giving teachers important information regarding pupils' levels of understanding. Assessment systems are in place, accurately informing future learning needs. Teachers are increasing their confidence in the delivery of the relatively new Understanding Christianity materials.

Headteacher	Adam Parsons
Inspector's name and number	Lorraine Pugh 819