

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

West Ashton Church of England VA Primary School			
Address	Bratton Road, West Ashton, Trowbridge, Wiltshire. BA14 6AZ		
Date of inspection	30 September 2019	Status of school	VA
Diocese	Salisbury	URN	143957

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	Requires improvement
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Good

School context

West Ashton is a primary school with 88 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 in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national averages. West Ashton joined the Acorn Education Trust in March 2017 and the substantive headteacher joined the school in September 2017. Within the last two years there has been a complete change in teaching staff.

The school's Christian vision

We cherish our young minds and the diversity of this school. We provide space that enables every child to love learning and be curious. We develop respect, resilience and resourcefulness. These qualities will build them up to flourish academically, spiritually, socially and emotionally and thus become responsible young citizens.

'You will shine among them like stars in the sky.' Philippians 2:15

Key findings

- The school has made significant progress since the previous inspection and the drive for improvement continues strongly. The vision is central to its work. However, the theological underpinning of the vision is not well understood, and governors are not monitoring its impact rigorously enough.
- Relationships throughout the school community are of the highest quality.
- The school is highly inclusive. The exceptional support and alternative curriculum given to a group of vulnerable pupils allows them to feel valued and succeed in their learning.
- Worship promotes the school's values but does not always deepen pupils' spiritual thinking. Currently there are few opportunities for pupils to plan, lead or evaluate worship.
- The teaching of religious education (RE) is highly effective. It allows pupils to ask the 'big questions' and is developing their understanding of Christianity and other world religions very well.

Areas for development

- Review the planning of collective worship to ensure more depth in the themes, and greater opportunity for pupils to plan, deliver and evaluate acts of worship. This will make worship more central to the life of the school.
- Extend governors' skills in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the vision of the school so that they ensure it is fully embedded and has a strong theological underpinning.
- Develop an agreed definition of spirituality and identify opportunities for spiritual development in all subject areas so that pupils can deepen their understanding of their place in the world.

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 vision, which was devised after consultation with the school community, is a strong driver in the life of the school. It is highly appropriate for the context and encourages pupils to give of their best and have ambition for the future. The pictorial representation of the vision means that it is understood by even the youngest pupils in the nursery, who seek to gain 'stars' for good work and trying hard. However, the theological underpinning of the vision is currently not well developed. The headteacher has been the main force in improving the school, which has been through turbulent times. Through the vision she has stabilised the school and, with her relatively newly appointed staff, has revitalised its Christian distinctiveness. The future development plans for the school are guided by the vision but it is not always evident in all school policies. The partnership with the Acorn Education Trust is exceptionally strong and it has given the school very good support. The vision of the school is complemented by that of the Trust. The partnership with the local church is being redeveloped and, as one parent commented, the headteacher has brought the heart back to this church school. Links with the local village community are also being re-established and pupils are now attending an occasional local morning session in the village hall to talk to residents. The governors are beginning to develop an awareness of the importance of their role. However, they are currently not monitoring the impact of the vision sufficiently. They have only partially addressed the areas for development from the previous inspection. The school cares for its staff and develops them well. In line with the vision, a high priority is placed upon preparing staff as future leaders of church schools. As one commented, 'I have never worked in a school where I have felt so valued and cherished and been given the encouragement to develop professionally.'

Parents are highly appreciative of the support given to their children and the way that the staff model the values of the school. Respect and resilience are very evidently influenced by the vision. Pupils show the utmost respect to staff and know the importance of the vision in everyday life. The school is highly inclusive and the needs of vulnerable pupils are given special attention. The school made a bold decision in providing an alternative curriculum for a particular group of pupils. This has had a significantly positive effect upon their academic progress and how well they are prepared for future life. The majority of pupils make good progress at the school and experiences throughout the curriculum, such as Forest School and clubs, broaden their horizons in line with the vision. The spiritual development of pupils is not so well advanced. Although they are given opportunities in RE to discuss and debate ideas and there are times for reflection, there is no agreed definition of spirituality across the school and planned opportunities have not been woven into the curriculum.

Pupils know that they are expected to give of their best. They recognise how the values and vision influence their behaviour, attitudes and relationships. They know they are expected to try again if they do not succeed at their first attempt. As one pupil stated, 'we are expected to put our chins up and try again'. Their behaviour is generally good and they understand that forgiveness and saying sorry is part of living a Christian life. Relationships at all levels within the school are a real strength. Pupils take care of one another and all age groups play harmoniously together. As a result of their understanding of the vision and the value of respect, pupils recognise the importance of tolerance and appreciating the beliefs of others. Even in Reception, pupils are developing an understanding of the exploitation of the natural world and have been involved in recycling their own lunch box packaging. Pupils are aware that not all children are as fortunate as they are, but there is a lack of awareness of how to help independently and their understanding of injustice and inequality is not well developed. Although the pupils chose charities to support, there is currently little opportunity to engage with global and national partners. Pupils' awareness of the wider world and the role of the Anglican church is weak.

Collective worship is influenced by the values of the school rather than the vision. The concept of being part of a family is fostered by worship and pupils enjoy the music, singing and bible stories which they are told. They particularly like the Open the Book stories. The school visits the local church at festivals and for the leavers' service, when older pupils plan and lead the services. However, worship does not inspire all pupils. Not all make the links between the themes raised and how these influence their thinking in and out of school and few see it as central to the life of the school. Worship themes themselves do not allow pupils to deepen their understanding progressively. There is limited opportunity for pupils to plan or lead worship and little evaluation of its impact. The lighting of candles, responsive greetings and prayers mean that pupils are beginning to develop an understanding of Anglican liturgy, but they have no appreciation of the variety of traditions or the Eucharist. Some pupils have a partial understanding of the trinitarian nature of God. Pupils say prayers at lunch time and have opportunities to write prayers, but they do not fully understand the importance of prayer. The collective worship leader has completed a very thorough evaluation of the current situation and has an accurate view of its effectiveness. A very recently formed worship ambassador group is highly enthusiastic.

Pupils enjoy RE and the way it helps them to learn about Christianity and other world religions. The RE leader has a very high level of understanding of the subject and provides support to other teachers. The planning for RE is thorough, well sequenced and meets the Church of England Statement of Entitlement. Pupils are encouraged to question and to debate questions of meaning and they evidently enjoy being able to discuss a variety of issues and topics. RE is well resourced and teachers have had training in using the Understanding Christianity resource. Assessment is developing but at the moment there has been no inter-school moderation of work.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good in all lessons. They are well planned, interesting and cover a variety of topics. In Reception and the Nursery, floor books show that children are taught about festivals such as Easter and Chinese New Year. In other classes, pupils confidently give age-appropriate accounts of Christianity and other religions. The work in books shows high expectations and is well presented. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress.

Headteacher

Deborah Huxham

Inspector's name and number

Marcia Headon 761