



# Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

## Thatcham Park Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Address Park Avenue, Thatcham, Berkshire, RG18 4NP

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**

**Excellent**

### School’s vision

We provide an inclusive learning community built on our Christian faith and values. Together we aspire to nurture and develop the extraordinary potential in every member of our school family. Faith, respect and spirit of enquiry drive us forward in our journey together. ‘Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.’ 1 Thessalonians 5:11

### Key findings

- The school embodies a Christian vision which is based clearly on biblical teaching and the example of St Barnabas. This vision, embraced by everyone at the school, fosters a strong sense of community.
- The strategic leadership of the school is effective. However, monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the vision and Christian distinctiveness are not as focused or robust as they should be.
- Nurturing support for mental health and wellbeing meets the emotional needs of both pupils and adults well allowing all groups, particularly the vulnerable, to flourish. Opportunities to explore inequality and justice are currently developing.
- The impact of collective worship is exceptional. The skilled and dedicated leader ensures that it is a clear expression of the vision. The close partnership with the local churches is enriching the worshipping lives of all pupils and adults.
- Religious education (RE) has a positive impact on pupils’ learning of Christianity and different faiths. This coherently reflects the school’s vision and contributes well to pupils’ spiritual development. Occasions when speakers of diverse faiths have visited have been limited recently.

## Areas for development

- Introduce a more rigorous and systematic approach to evaluating the Christian vision and the school's distinctiveness as a Church school. This is in order to monitor impact more effectively and secure sustained improvement as a church school.
- Increase pupils' encounters with visitors of diverse faiths and beliefs or their places of worship in order to deepen their knowledge and further enhance their cultural and spiritual development.
- Ensure that curriculum provision enables pupils to explore big questions and global issues relating to inequality and injustice. This is to expand pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world so they may become advocates for change nationally and internationally.

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 distinctive vision, expressed through the teachings of St Barnabas, 'the encourager', captures the spirit of Thatcham Park School. Undoubtedly, it is owned by the whole school community, where adults are passionate about the wellbeing of pupils in their care. Providing for pupils with a range of needs is an indisputable strength of the school. This impacts positively on the learning and personal growth of pupils, especially those who are vulnerable, allowing all to flourish. The vision of building one another up can be seen in action throughout the school. Pupils understand the values of compassion, endurance, thankfulness, respect, wisdom and community. They relate how these values influence their thoughts and actions. One pupil said endurance helped him to finish his maths which he was finding difficult, because he told himself, 'Don't give up, you can do this'.

The school is a caring, nurturing community where love and kindness are woven into every aspect of school life. Consequently, pupils are happy to come to school and staff feel valued. Senior leaders made a determined effort to provide education throughout the pandemic. During Covid, the school remained opened to as many pupils as possible, including those from other schools. As a result, vulnerable pupils in particular, were able to access the curriculum with minimum disruption to their learning. Parents deeply appreciate this and several commented on how well the school met their needs during lockdown. Governors are very supportive and play an active part in school life through frequent visits. They encourage staff development and are mindful of nurturing future leaders. They make bold decisions, such as expanding to facilitate nursery provision, thus giving better continuity for families at the school. They are particularly effective at providing pastoral support for staff. However, formal monitoring of the school as a church school is not evaluative or robust enough. Therefore, the key impact of the vision is not captured in the school's self-evaluation. This means that opportunities to move the school forward as a church school are missed.

Leaders at all levels ensure that the vision threads organically through the whole curriculum so that the academic and spiritual needs of all pupils are met. Pupils benefit from special curriculum events such as science and arts week. They are also the proud holders of the Music Mark award. Extra-curricular activities such as choir, sports clubs and residential trips all enhance the provision for pupils, enabling them to flourish. Pupils wrote to the Prime Minister and the local MP to express their concerns about deforestation. Through engaging with such environmental activities, pupils are demonstrating that their vision of building one another up is applicable beyond the school environment. This enables them to be advocates for change within their local community. The school supports several charities, including local food banks and national charities such as Diabetes UK. Community links are very effective and the school organises or takes part in many events such as 'Flowers of Recovery', which greatly benefit the local area. Opportunities for pupils to understand and challenge inequality and injustice nationally or abroad are developing.

There is a consistency of approach to learning and managing behaviour through positive, therapeutic thinking and a calm approach to conflict resolution. This, together with the equally successful approach to attendance and inclusion are well rooted in the school's Christian vision. This empowers everyone to have hope and aspiration. As a result, pupils are able to overcome barriers to learning and are able to flourish. As one member of staff observed, 'Even when things are tough, there's always hope'. Both pupils and adults are supported well with their mental health. The work of the Pastoral Support Team is particularly effective in ensuring the wellbeing of vulnerable pupils. Staff give many examples of how the school is helping them to flourish professionally and personally. For instance, a new member of staff described how well she had been helped and supported by the close teamwork of everyone in order to settle into school life easily. Staff are watchful of each other, especially during times of need and difficulty.

Collective worship is excellent because it is exceptionally well led by the leader, who truly embodies the vision of encouraging and building everyone up. The vision is strongly linked to acts of worship. As a result, the impact of collective worship on pupils and adults is considerable. This is evident when talking to pupils who say that worship time has touched their hearts and offers a quiet, calm time to reflect. A varied programme for worship is enjoyed by pupils, allowing them to make connections to the challenges and changes in their own lives, as well as to Christians around the world. Pupils enjoy regular opportunities to plan and lead worship, enabling them to grow in confidence and take ownership of worship. Prayer is important within school and pupils show an impressive understanding of its purpose and power. This in turn results in a close, beneficial partnership with the local churches. St Barnabas Church meets in school and the Thatcham Team Vicar leads weekly worship. This means that church and school worship is integrally linked. As a result, clergy input significantly supports the spiritual development and wellbeing of pupils and adults.

RE has a high profile in the school and expresses the vision well. It is led by the enthusiastic RE subject leader, who monitors the subject effectively. By accessing diocesan support, she is able to provide effective guidance for colleagues. Curriculum planning is good and training supports non-specialists and new teachers in their subject knowledge and creative practice. This is an outworking of the vision to build one another up and has a positive impact on pupils' RE learning. Vulnerable pupils, in particular, are well supported to flourish in RE, further reflecting how the vision encourages everyone, whatever their needs. Visits from diverse speakers or opportunities for pupils to visit places of worship have not been possible in recent times.

Thatcham Park is a community where all are treated with dignity and respect. There are positive relationships at all levels because everyone is living out the vision to 'encourage one another and build each other up'. This is a good church school with much to commend. As one pupil eloquently summed up, 'We are like a big family. We always look after each other'.

### Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	12 May 2022	URN	135080
Date of previous inspection	18 March 2015		
School status	Voluntary controlled primary school	NOR	328
Name of MAT/Federation	n/a		
Diocese	Oxford		
Headteacher	Alison Webster		
Pupil profile	The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages.		
	The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages.		

Additional significant information (if needed)	Thatcham Park Church of England Primary is a larger than average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage, but there is also a range of ethnic groups within the school. A number of pupils have significant additional needs.		
Inspector's name	Jennifer Earp	No.	288