

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell CE Primary School			
Address	Greenmere, Brightwell, Wallingford, OX10 0QH		
Date of inspection	5 March 2020	Status of school	Primary school inspected as Voluntary Controlled Merchant Taylors' Oxfordshire Academy Trust
Diocese	Oxford	URN	144568

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	Requires improvement
Additional Judgement	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Requires improvement

School context

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell is a primary school with 111 pupils on roll. In September 2017 it converted to become part of the Merchant Taylors' Oxfordshire Academy Trust, working with Wallingford School. 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 with national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages.

The school's Christian vision

Learners are 'Resilient as they aim for excellence, respectful in their behaviour towards others and reflective of their own actions'.

The school's ethos is underpinned by Christian values and everyone's determination to 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. Luke 6:3

Key findings

- The commitment of the headteacher has had a significant impact on the outcomes of all pupils. She has shown unstinting determination for every pupil to achieve their full potential.
- The school's ethos is underpinned by Christian values. Pupils understand how these values influence their behaviour and relationships. However, groups in the community don't articulate the Christian vision.
- Governors took bold steps to secure the school's future and are determined to preserve its Christian character. However, they have not developed a robust programme of monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the vision. They have not addressed the recommendations of the last inspection report.
- Worship is engaging and plays a part in uniting the school community, although children have a limited understanding of Anglican tradition and of Christianity as a world faith.
- New leadership in religious education (RE) is re-energising the subject. Pupils have an understanding of some concepts of Christianity and a range of faiths. Assessment systems, which enable teachers to be sure that they are challenging all pupils, are in the early stages of development.

Areas for development

- Embed the Christian vision so that all stakeholders, including the pupils, understand it and can articulate the difference it makes.
- Access training to ensure that governors develop their role in robust and regular monitoring of the vision and evaluating its impact.
- Continue to review the RE curriculum so that it gives pupils a deeper understanding of Christianity as a global faith.
- Develop worship so that pupils gain an age-appropriate understanding of Anglican traditions.

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

Governors have secured the future of the school by entering a Trust and benefitting from the resources, expertise and professional development this provides. The school has become highly valued in the community with very strong links with the parish church. Outcomes have improved considerably, so that most pupils reach or exceed expected levels. Pupils, including those for whom learning is challenging, make good progress because of improvements in teaching and learning, stability of staffing and high aspirations for all. The school's ethos is underpinned by twelve values which pupils, staff and parents understand. Pupils learn how to live by these values, although not all pupils know their theological roots and the Bible stories which illustrate them.

Limited progress towards some recommendations of the last inspection report has impacted on the outcome of this inspection. Governors and the Trust express their commitment to sustaining the school's Christian foundation. The school has improved considerably in many respects and governors know how much the community values this school as a Church school. However, they have not accessed diocesan support in developing rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the impact the vision. Consequently, they have not identified areas of the school's Christian distinctiveness which could be strengthened. They don't know current expectations for RE and worship in a good church school. The vision shapes policies and determines the allocation of resources but some stakeholders are unable to make this connection. Staff, parents and pupils often attribute the school's strengths to the values rather than the vision which underpins them. Leaders have updated policies although some don't fully reflect the vision. The partnership with the secondary school in the Trust and the links with the pre-school and some primary schools demonstrate the school's commitment to learning from other providers and sharing expertise to improve outcomes for all pupils.

New joint RE leaders are beginning to understand their roles in monitoring teaching and learning and supporting staff in their subject knowledge. They are developing an assessment system and are keen to work with the Diocese to access training on the RE curriculum. The current curriculum is under review so that this can be addressed, and pupils can gain a deeper understanding of the Christian faith and other world faiths appropriate to their age. The curriculum provides pupils with opportunities for personal reflection and they now have reflection areas in their classrooms. Pupils enjoy discussing beliefs and opinions with one another, such as the different theories about Creation. Spirituality is explored linked to social, moral and cultural development and this limits pupils' spiritual development.

Pupils understand the Bible quotation to 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. They care for one another, and older pupils take particular care of younger ones. They say that everyone is friendly and that adults prioritise their wellbeing and safety. Behaviour is consistently good. Pupils find lessons interesting and like the range of visits, visitors and special events such as World Book Day. Attendance is strong and pupils value the rewards and encouragement they receive. Pupils are becoming courageous advocates, hoping for a better world. They demonstrate the Christian values and show concern about polluting the environment. For example, they have made posters reminding motorists not to keep their engines idling. Pupils raise money for charities and support the local foodbank. They are concerned about people who are disadvantaged and help the parish church in supporting refugees. Through these and overseas links they begin to understand Christianity as a global faith although this is not well developed in their RE lessons. The curriculum provides opportunities to discuss 'big questions' and pupils respond with maturity and respect.

The school community is very harmonious, Parents are confident that their children are given the best opportunities to flourish. However, they attribute this to the Christian values rather than to the vision. They feel that adults really care about their children. The school is now popular, and numbers are increasing after a period when they declined. The school's improved standing in the community has enriched the school, the church and the locality. School leaders and governors have given thought to staff wellbeing and reduced their workload to improve their work-life balance. They have demonstrated a concern for staff personally as well as professionally. Staff feel well supported, highly valued in their roles and confident in promoting the Christian distinctiveness of the school.

There is a strong culture of acceptance and inclusion so that all pupils, whatever their barriers to learning, are completely involved and valued. There are many examples of the way in which adults ensure that all pupils benefit from the same opportunities. Pupils are tolerant and show profound respect for everyone. Parents also feel included, and families are valued equally whether they have a Christian faith or not. They find adults very approachable and they trust them to keep their children safe.

Worship is uplifting for everyone in the school community. Pupils develop their understanding of the Christian faith and have opportunities for spiritual growth through reflection and prayer. They learn some Bible stories and use Christian prayers, including the Lord's prayer and the prayer they chose as their school prayer. They learn about Christian festivals and often celebrate these, along with their parents, in the parish church. Everyone looks forward to weekly worship led by the incumbent or the Baptist minister and this helps pupils to understand different styles of worship. There are beliefs and traditions which pupils don't yet understand such as God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the sacrament of Eucharist. Worship is planned so that it reinforces pupils' understanding of the value, which is in focus each half term, but it does not explicitly explore the vision. Pupils are often involved in leading or contributing to worship although they do not have opportunities to evaluate it in a way that would enable leaders and governors to know that it is always relevant and inspiring for them.

RE lessons include some engaging and enjoyable activities to develop understanding about Christianity. For example, in Year 3 and 4 pupils considered how Jesus was tempted in the wilderness and why he resisted. Pupils also learn about different world faiths. However, monitoring is underdeveloped, and leaders cannot be certain that all pupils are being challenged or that the curriculum is broad enough. An assessment system is being introduced so that teachers have a more accurate knowledge of pupils' progress.

This school has some strengths and a growing awareness of the need to refocus on developing the school as a Church school with an effective Christian vision.

Headteacher	Fin Lewis
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