

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Altwood Church of England School

Address	Altwood Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire. SL6 4PU		
Date of inspection	15 May 2019	Status of school	VC secondary academy
Diocese	Oxford	URN	138342

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

School context

Altwood School is a secondary with 526 students on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who receive support for special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is slightly below the national average. Since the last SIAMS inspection, the school has become an academy. In November 2017, Ofsted judged that this was a good school.

The school's Christian vision

We strive to offer an outstanding education for our students and prepare them for successful, independent lives in the 21st century. As part of our Christian ethos we believe everyone in our school should be 'safe, ready and respectful' through our school rules and values. The Gospel values guide our moral purpose and our central for all we do and aim to achieve.

'Nothing will be impossible with God.' Luke 1:37

Key findings

- Altwood is a pleasant, happy church school with a positive and supportive atmosphere and a clear focus on being the best one can be.
- The headteacher and his dedicated staff are keen for every student and pupil to experience the school's Christian ethos, achieve well and overcome barriers to their learning.
- Whilst Gospel values are clearly known by the school community, the school's distinctive Christian vision is not yet fully articulated, shared and understood by all. This impedes evaluation of the vision as it stands and affects the outcome of this inspection.
- Religious Education (RE) is skilfully and enthusiastically led, popular with pupils and enables a thorough understanding of Christianity and other faiths and the importance of belief in today's world. There are many worthwhile opportunities for pupils to safely explore and respond to big questions
- There is clear impact of collective worship which is inclusive and often encourages a personal response. It is viewed positively by the school community and is clearly focused on biblical themes and values.

Areas for development

- Governors and leaders to revisit, re-establish and disseminate the distinctive Christian vision so that the whole community understands and can articulate its impact on the school's life and work. Thereafter, implement a robust programme of monitoring and evaluation of the vision.
- Provide further opportunities for pupils to develop and engage with sense of courageous advocacy and challenge to injustice at local and global levels.
- Extend pupils' understanding of spirituality to enable them to fluently articulate its meaning and impact on themselves and others.

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

Altwood is a happy, inclusive school with a caring, family atmosphere. Everyone is known individually and nurtured with care and consideration. Relationships and behaviour are good, and any problems or disagreements are quickly and effectively resolved. The environment of improving academic outcomes for pupils and students is a tribute to the hard work and commitment of staff. Each of these things indicate a positive outworking of the three Gospel values, faith, hope and joy after which the school's houses are named and which are close to the hearts of members of the school community.

Governors and leaders at Altwood have developed and put in place ethos and mission statements which have broadly Christian content. They include references to Gospel values which help to guide the school's moral purpose. These are referenced in several policies and are supported in the school community. There is some monitoring and evaluation of elements of Church school designation in place. However, the school has not established and embraced a clear, and distinctive Christian vision. This hindered the school's evaluation and means that in this inspection the school requires improvement. The area to improve in the previous SIAMS inspection related to governor monitoring and evaluation of the school's Christian distinctiveness. This has been partly met.

Pupil wellbeing and the importance of good mental health are given a high profile in the school with opportunities in the curriculum offering teaching and guidance on preventing and dealing with problems. Dedicated pastoral and support staff have effective systems and interventions for those who need support. For example, one pupil spoke of the strong, caring support experienced following an accident and long absence. Along with workload management and the availability of counselling for staff, this illustrates the concern of the school to value and care for each person. In the lead up to examination seasons, pupils and students benefit from high quality and effective preparation. This includes valuable provision from a local schools' Christian youth worker in which he promotes wellbeing and looks at stress management and coping strategies.

Pupils and students are kind and respectful to peers and to the school's environment. They understand the importance of good relationships with one another and with every member of the school community and live this out. The atmosphere in the school is calm, purposeful and positive. There is a focus on trying to be the best that one can be, and all members of the school community are mutually supportive. Thus, the element of the school's Christian ethos to be 'safe, ready and respectful' is lived out. Pupils and students have a strong respect for difference and diversity highlighting that ridicule and intolerance is not acceptable in their school. Along with any inappropriate behaviours in the school, this is quickly and robustly challenged and effectively resolved. This gives a sense of safety and inclusion underscoring the school's stated ethos.

The school supports a number of charities. At present, there are no significant, active connections between Altwood and schools internationally and to the worldwide Church. This means that pupils and students do not have meaningful opportunities in school to develop a desire to challenge injustice and consider world problems.

The school's curriculum is well-planned and balanced offering adaptations where required and options which meet the needs of each pupil and motivates them. This means that pupils and students can, in the words of the school strapline, 'Aspire and Achieve'. At GCSE and A-level, progress is generally in line with national expectations for nearly all groups of pupils and students. A programme of promising and effective interventions is showing some impact for disadvantaged pupils and for those with special educational needs and disability (SEND). Pupils and students place a high value on their work and studies and are encouraged and challenged to achieve their potential. This shows the school's determination to be inclusive and for each individual to be successful.

At Altwood, collective worship has a high profile. It is mainly led by staff, clergy and adults from local churches and there are occasions when pupils do readings and take part in planning. As well as other prayers, The Lord's Prayer is used most days by pupils throughout the school. Pupils are attentive and openly speak of the impact which times of worship and reflection have on their lives. Worship and the Christian Union are well supported by the parish priest

who provides faithful support in the school. Pupils, staff and parents report that they relate well to him and can easily seek advice and support in matters of life and faith. Through their integration into the cycle of collective worship, pupils are familiar with Christian festivals. Those who participate in the Eucharist, which is offered each half-term, welcome fellowship and the opportunity to strengthen their spiritual life.

Leadership in RE is enthusiastic, planning is thorough, and learning makes an effective contribution to academic success and personal development. Thus, students and pupils enjoy the subject and are inspired in these lessons. Work provides a strong balance of focusing on major world religions, including Christianity, and on big questions encountered through ethical themes. This gives a real buzz in classes, stimulates and enthuses pupils and enables deep thinking and learning to take place. Pupils appreciate being able to do this in a context and environment which they find to be safe. Pupils understand and are respectful of a range of views and faith practices. Pupils and students have opportunities to engage with theological ideas and religious texts and they do so readily. This has given them the skills to reflect on, debate, analyse and explore beliefs in a mature, informed and respectful manner. On approaching his RE lesson, one pupil said, 'RE is really fun and interesting. I never knew that it would make me think so hard and be challenged about important things.' Provision for RE in the school reflects the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for RE.

Clearly, Altwood is pleasant school community which is showing improvements in the academic performance of students and pupils. Governors and leaders have the capacity to revisit and reinvigorate the school's Christian vision and so gauge how this enables all to flourish.

Headteacher	Neil Dimbleby
Inspector's name and number	Peter Coates 937