

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Cold Ash St Mark's Church of England Primary School			
Address	Cold Ash Hill, Cold Ash, Thatcham, Berkshire, RG18 9PT		
Date of inspection	8 October 2019	Status of school	VC
Diocese	Oxford	URN	109958

Overall Judgement	Grade	Good
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 Judgements		
The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good

School context

Cold Ash St Mark's Church of England Primary School is a primary school with 183 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. No pupils speak English as an additional language. 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. Since the school's previous SIAMS and Ofsted inspections a new headteacher is in post.

The school's Christian vision Our Words and Actions Change our World

"Put into practice what you learned and received from me, both from my words and from my actions. And the God who gives us peace will be with you." (Philippians 4:9 – Good News Bible)

Key findings

- The school's vision lends itself well to community life. Through its strong emphasis on 'turning words into actions' children and adults put into practice the core values of the school.
- Daily collective worship is a well-established and important part of school life. The school has created an inclusive and nurturing environment for collective worship and as a result, pupils enjoy celebrating together.
- The school's religious education (RE) scheme of work is pertinent to the school and reflects the locally agreed syllabus. RE is underpinned by the school's vision which supports its investigative approach.
- Through the implementation of its vision the school has created an inclusive, nurturing environment.
- Emotional wellbeing is a priority and this is reflected in the care offered to children and adults.

Areas for development

- Explore the use of prayer throughout the school to offer pupils wider opportunities to deepen their spiritual growth.
- Find apt ways to celebrate the school's vision and Christian distinctiveness in and around the school's buildings and grounds.
- Continue to pursue links with church partnerships to secure effective spiritual support for the school.

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

Cold Ash Saint Mark's school is a warm and inclusive community that is greatly appreciated by those it serves. Parents say that staff, through their words and actions, 'practise what they preach' by caring for their children. They attribute teachers' dedication to the school's vision, (built on Philippians 4:9), that positive 'words and actions' bring about peace.

The vision, and the way it is lived out, is a clear expression of the school as a Christian community. Governors have worked closely with school leaders to ensure strategic implementation of the vision. They bring a high level of commitment and expertise to their role. They have successfully built on previous inspections, ensuring that the school's Christian vision drives improvement.

Emotional wellbeing is a priority within the school. Staff's professional development reflects the importance this is given by leaders. For example, the school has trained two emotional literacy support assistants to support good mental health in vulnerable children. Outside agencies recognise the school as supportive of children who elsewhere might have been excluded from school. Pupils say that staff help resolve their problems because they are 'never too busy' and 'take concerns seriously'. Pupils see this as staff living out the school's vision. A consistent approach to the learning environment meets the needs of all pupils' irrespective of academic and emotional ability. The school's tracking of pupil's progress show that children make good progress from their individual starting points. This is because there is good quality intervention and provision delivered where it is needed. Therefore, the school helps all pupils to flourish, including those with special educational needs and those in vulnerable circumstances.

The school's commitment to emotional wellbeing extends to staff and parents. Staff spoke of the personal support they had received through periods of difficult home and school life. For example, a teacher explained 'the words and actions of the headteacher have supported me in and out of school'. Parent wellbeing is supported by workshops to help with anxiety. Parents said that these were 'really helpful' and 'offered insight'. Staff governors and parents agreed that behaviour of all children is very good throughout the school. They attribute this standard of behaviour to a focus on the school's vision and Christian values. Staff, parents and governors all voiced that the emphasis on emotional wellbeing was an expression of their 'vision in action'.

Dedicated staff, through the robust support they give pupils to achieve success academically, model the school's vision effectively. Pupils appreciate the care and encouragement they are given and say that teachers are always 'happy to help'. The senior leadership team ensure that the curriculum is underpinned by the school's vision. This is monitored by governors assigned to areas of 'curriculum responsibility' and is evaluated appropriately. Recently, to drive further improvement, the 'big questions' approach used in religious education has been expanded to other subjects. In addition, the geography scheme now takes a global approach. This allows pupils to consider similarities and differences between themselves and children in other parts of the world. They have a developing sense of social justice. They understand that what they say and do has global consequences. In response, the children take on age appropriate challenges to support change in today's wider global community. The eco team's decision to support plastic recycling is an expression of this. Such projects demonstrate how well the school's vision has driven pupil advocacy. They say 'we can change people's worlds through our actions'. Parents agreed their children's perception of world events is influenced by the school's vision.

Collective worship is a daily opportunity to better understand the school's vision. It embraces Christian values and is centred on the Bible and the teachings of Jesus. Older pupils care for younger children using a buddy system. Consequently, reception aged children's early experience of collective worship is not overwhelming. The opportunity this practice creates for older pupils to demonstrate the school's vision is commendable.

Currently the school does not have specific areas for pupils to develop their spirituality through prayer or reflection. In addition, there are limited Christian symbols and artefacts to reinforce the school's Christian distinctiveness.

St Mark's church team has been experiencing a period of transition. However, the school continues to benefit from support by clergy within the team. Clergy are involved with the planning and delivery of Christian festivals

that take place at the church. These services are well attended by parents. Parents say the links created between the school and church 'make it feel like it's our church'. This sense of belonging is developed through the use of a reflection room at the church, for adult contemplation. Clergy and governors recognise that developing a partnership between church and school will secure effective spiritual support for the school. The recent appointment of a new vicar is seen as a positive step to strengthen this relationship.

The RE programme has been produced by the school and reflects the locally agreed syllabus and the Church of England statement of entitlement. The committed and effective RE leader attended 'Understanding Christianity' training, and aspects of this have been successfully incorporated into RE. The RE leader works with the senior leadership team to ensure that the scheme remains current and effective. Pupil's progress and attainment in RE is in line with other curriculum subjects. Pupils from different key stages talked about stories they were learning. Their books showed a range of religions taught across year groups and children discussed these with enjoyment, and respect. They understand that RE teaches them valuable life lessons that adhere to the school's vision. For example, children recounted that to part the Red Sea, Moses used 'words and action' and that this changed lives. In this way RE successfully supports pupils' understanding of the school's vision.

Cold Ash St Mark's vision, that words and actions effect change, successfully creates a safe and supportive community for pupils. The underlying promise associated with the vision's biblical root is peace (Philippians 4:9). Through their effort to live together in peace, the school is successfully creating opportunities for pupils and adults to flourish.

Headteacher	Mitchell Warrender
Inspector's name and number	Delia Sheppard 942