

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St. John's CE Primary School, Reading

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| Address | Orts Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 3JN | | |
| Date of inspection | 14 March 2019 | Status of school | VA primary within the Berkshire School Trust |
| Diocese | Oxford | URN | 142735 |

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| 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? | | |

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| Additional Judgements | | |
| The impact of collective worship | Grade | Good |
| The effectiveness of religious education (RE) | Grade | Good |

School context

St. John's CE is a primary school with 469 pupils on roll. The majority are of non-British heritage and many speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is above average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school was judged by Ofsted to require improvement in December 2018. The leadership structure of the Trust changed in September 2018 when the interim headteacher was appointed.

The school's Christian vision

'The school aims to provide and an aspirational education within the context of Christian beliefs for all its pupils so that they 'have life and have it abundantly'. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith, and promotes the Christian values of respect, empathy, hope, trust and wonder.

Key findings

- The school's Christian vision has been maintained during a time of change and continues to underpin its work in providing the best opportunities for all its pupils and in its dealings with parents and the community. As a result, pupils are now making better progress.
- The school is diverse and inclusive, and everyone in the community shows profound respect for one another.
- Pupils' behaviour, attitudes to learning and personal development have improved significantly because of the high expectations of leaders and the nurturing and support every pupil receives.

Areas for development

- Governors to monitor more rigorously so that they fully understand the impact of RE, worship and the vision and the impact of the recent improvements.
- Broaden pupils' opportunities to learn about a range of Christian traditions, for example by inviting local faith leaders to lead worship or visiting places of worship.
- Pupils would welcome a quiet space where they could reflect privately.

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 school's vision and core values are clearly rooted in the Christian narrative. Pupils confidently explain Bible stories which exemplify the values because they have discussed them in worship and RE lessons. They say the school feels like one family to which they all belong, and they feel extremely well cared for and supported. The newly appointed interim headteacher rapidly identified the areas where the school needed to develop. She has put strategies in place to improve behaviour, teaching and learning so that all pupils can now achieve well and reach their potential. She is determined to nurture and meet the individual needs of every pupil. These measures are already having impact. She has strengthened the Christian vision which the entire community sees as the school's 'anchor'. Policies and procedures are based on the intention to ensure that every child 'has life abundantly' and is well prepared for the next stage of their education. Attendance is good and the behaviour policy, called 'Everyone matters', helps pupils to understand and deal with problems from the perspective of others and not just themselves. This aim for every pupil to flourish also shapes the school's development planning and leaders' action plans. These identify clearly the areas to work on and the steps towards achieving them. Pupils are at the heart of decision making. Staff and governors talk about the 'Christian heart' and the Christian ethos being a 'golden thread' running through the school. These explain how welcoming the school is and how aspirational the expectations are for every pupil. Worship is the focal point of the school day and pupils thoroughly enjoy it. RE is given very high priority and taught well so that pupils develop their understanding of the Christian faith and other world faiths.

There are strong and mutually beneficial partnerships with the other two schools in the Berkshire Schools Trust as well as other local schools, which are sustained by the outward looking aim to share and benefit from best practice. The school is working increasingly closely with the diocese, benefitting from support at all levels and professional development for staff. The school welcomes the close association with the parish church and makes exceptionally good use of the church building which adjoins the school. The church has been especially supportive of the school during the change of leadership. Governors are also closely involved with the school and they have ensured that the recommendation of the last inspection has been met. They have begun to monitor so that they can see for themselves the impact of recent improvements. They receive regular information from leaders and know that the Christian vision is driving improvements. However, they do not have a robust schedule of monitoring in place so that they can be sure they are checking all aspects of the school's work regularly.

The vision for every pupil to 'live abundantly' has led to the implementation of a rich and engaging multicultural curriculum. Pupils develop their skills through interesting and relevant lessons and an exciting range of trips and other activities. Pupils who need additional support say they are always included, encouraged to persevere and given the help they need to be successful. Consequently, all pupils are now starting to make better progress. The curriculum is rich in opportunities for spiritual development, with pupils being encouraged to ask deeper questions and to have a sense of awe and wonder in their world. Pupils learn about people less fortunate than themselves through the many fundraising activities they organise. For example, they chose to raise money for the victims of the Nepalese earthquake. They develop their social and moral responsibility by talking about the topical issues such as the environment and considering how they can make a difference to their world. Pupils enjoy responsibility and feel that adults respect them. They are beginning to understand Christianity as a world faith. RE complies with the Trust Deed. It prepares pupils well for living in our multicultural society. They can discuss the similarities and differences between faiths. The RE leader supports staff well in their

teaching and monitors teaching regularly.

Pupils' wellbeing and mental health are a high priority and pupils know how much they matter to all adults. They feel safe and say there is no bullying or discrimination. The community is made up of families of several faiths and cultures. This diversity is widely celebrated through international events and festivals. Pupils say how important it is that they learn about one another's beliefs and cultures so that they respect everyone equally. This dignity is extended towards all families including those of all faiths and cultures, and those with no faith. Families of faiths other than Christianity say they feel valued and completely involved in the school, and many have chosen to send their children here because they see the Christian values as ones they would like their children to live by. Parents are well informed about everything which is happening and speak very highly of the school and its leaders.

Worship is a focal part of each day. The school has met the recommendation of its last report and pupils of all ages are now involved in planning and leading worship. Pupils also evaluate worship regularly so that leaders know if it is relevant for them and having good impact. Pupils experience different styles of worship because a range of adults, including the curate, share the planning and take the lead. Pupils appreciate the opportunity to use the church most days, learning about the liturgical colours and Christian festivals. They also identify significant features such as Christian symbols and the stations of the cross. Pupils develop their spirituality when they are invited to reflect in prayer. Worship is engaging, visual and relevant. Pupils learn many stories from the Bible and can explain how these relate to their own lives. They can explain the Christian concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit because it has been explained to them in a way they can understand. They enjoy singing uplifting Christian songs and behave with great respect. They mark special events such as Remembrance and Harvest. The curate is well known to pupils and has a strong presence. He has maintained the close links between the parish church and the school during the absence of an incumbent. However, pupils have little understanding of the range of Christian worship traditions.

The curriculum includes many opportunities for discussion as well as practical activities which pupils enjoy and remember. They are encouraged to discuss different views with one another and the bigger questions in life. For example, in Year 6 pupils discussed why Christians call Good Friday 'good' and whether God planned Jesus' death or whether it was caused by the events of Holy Week. Younger pupils talked about the Easter story by looking at the cross on a hot cross bun and the symbolism of an Easter egg. Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning about different world faiths and feel this helps them understand and respect one another in school.



The effectiveness of RE is Good.

RE lessons are creative and inspiring and all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are now making good progress. Teaching is consistently good and teachers give pupils feedback on their work so that they can improve further. Lessons challenge pupils well and develop their confidence in sharing and discussing differing views. They say how important it is to learn about one another's beliefs in RE so that they respect one another. Training for staff is a high priority so that teachers are confident to teach RE well. The highly experienced RE leader supports staff well and monitors teaching and learning in RE regularly so that it is always of a high standard.

Interim Headteacher
MAT Chief Executive Officer

Martina Parsons
Angharad Brackstone

Inspector's name and number

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