

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Swithun's Church of England Primary School

Vision

Nurture - Grow - Flourish

'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.' Matthew 13:31-32

St Swithun's School is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. It has the following notable strengths.

Strengths

- St Swithun's Christian vision clearly guides the school's strategic direction and is intrinsic to each day's practices and interactions. Transformational leadership of this Church school enables pupils and adults to flourish personally, educationally and spiritually.
- The curriculum is enriched through deep understanding that every individual is a child of God, so deserves success. Pupils engage with wide-ranging experiences within and beyond school. As a result, they thrive in their creative, emotional and spiritual growth, as well as in their academic progress.
- Collective worship is the spiritual heartbeat of the school. Carefully designed, it takes pupils on a journey of reflection. This is enhanced through use of prayer / reflection spaces and a programme of spiritual development, that is carefully planned.
- Driven by the vision, this is a highly inclusive and happy community with a strong focus on adults' and pupils' wellbeing. Pupils behave very well, and relationships are harmonious.
- Highly effective leadership of religious education (RE) ensures that pupils experience a well-crafted curriculum. Pupils consequently have a good knowledge of Christianity, world religions and worldviews.

Development Points

- Further expand the place of Christianity as a global religion in the curriculum. This is in order to enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of its rich diversity and traditions.



Inspection Findings

St Swithun's Church of England school transforms the lives of adults and pupils. Leaders, including governors, show deep commitment to each person being respected and nurtured to grow. Pupils relate readily to the vision, understanding that their development compares with that of the mustard seed. Carefully considered, the Christian vision drives all decisions and actions. It infuses policies and guides self-evaluation and school improvement, including St Swithun's success as a Church school. Governors ensure that leaders have the resources necessary to be creative in meeting the long-term needs of the school. Following Jesus' pattern, leaders work alongside staff, ensuring each may enhance their knowledge and expertise for the benefit of pupils. They invest in developing staff in different roles, resulting in exceptional professional fulfilment. Serving a diverse neighbourhood, leaders care about and work hard to gain respect and commitment from families. Whatever their starting point, adults and pupils are nurtured to be successful in this aspirational school community.

Nurturing pupils' spiritual growth is deeply embedded in the curriculum. Staff training results in expert planning of specific opportunities for pupils to reflect on big questions. Teachers help pupils recognise the spiritual dimension and how this affects people individually. The curriculum supports pupils' personal, moral and social growth as well as their academic progress. Prioritising reading not only builds a vital skill, carefully chosen literature cultivates pupils' appreciation of others' life experiences. Such perspectives encourage empathy with people who are disadvantaged or simply different. This builds respect for diversity. Wide-ranging extra-curricular visits strengthen pupils' cultural understanding, and residential visits boost their confidence and independence. Home-school links ensure that pupils who may be disadvantaged can participate, also those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The outdoor play and learning (OPAL) programme transforms playtime. Pupils build dens, swings, slides and playthings from scrap and everyday objects. Drawn by common interests, pupils of different ages play imaginatively and creatively together. For example, pupils are absorbed in the fun of making mud cakes and fascinated by the patterns of breaking ice. Such outdoor play deepens pupils' sense of wonder about the natural world as well as their social skills and creativity.

Worship is greatly valued by St Swithun's diverse community for its inclusiveness and transformational impact. Collective worship follows the Church calendar, so pupils are well-versed in the Anglican seasons, rituals and routines. The rolling programme consistently addresses the school's vision, values and planned themes. Its weekly structure guides pupils through a process of inspiration and reflection. Their personal responses are recorded in beautiful books, located in a reflection space in each classroom. This extends pupils' individual opportunities to be quiet and reflective. Leaders, including clergy and pupils, offer a variety of worship styles. This inclusive approach enables pupils and adults to engage spiritually in a way that suits them. Occasionally, there are presentations about specific festivals or aspects of world religions, such as Diwali or Eid. These are included alongside Christian worship in keeping with the school's foundation. Partnership with the parish church offers 'Be Space' annually. Pupils across the school have time for deep spiritual engagement, coming together to focus on a big question. Its invitational style enables pupils to respond in ways that are appropriate for their age, interests and personalities. Evaluation over time shows how deeply meaningful these reflective practices are for pupils.

Reflecting the school's Christian vision, nurturing relationships are established from the early years. Few pupils leave the school, and many travel far to gain or keep a place. Pupils thrive because leaders target resources to meet their educational, emotional and social needs. Bespoke support is driven by leaders' commitment to each pupil as the person God made them to be. Pupils experiencing distress heal through individual and group provision to help



improve their mental health. The home-school link worker provides specific support for families experiencing challenges which may affect attendance, for example. Parenting courses are popular and well attended. This tireless work enables pupils with wide-ranging needs to engage with learning and so flourish. OPAL encourages pupils to play together well and make friends with anyone who wants to do the same thing. As a result, pupils behave exceptionally well at playtimes. They return to class refreshed, so relationships across the school are harmonious. When things go wrong or there are challenges, leaders embrace this and ensure that issues are resolved in a Christian manner through reconciliation, understanding and forgiveness. Adults are treated well and encouraged to develop professionally. This kindles great loyalty to the school, bringing stability, so pupils feel safe, calm and confident.

Leaders' commitment to the vision brings about a powerful culture of justice and responsibility. As pupils mature, they have many opportunities to take on leadership roles. These strengthen their appreciation of their potential for making a difference and having personal impact. They take pride in and show great determination in roles such as worship leaders, the eco crew and members of the school council. Pupil voice is very strong and leaders pay attention to pupils' views, both through the school council and as individuals. Comments in pupils' reflective journals show that many have a strong awareness of issues affecting the world. They are mindful of environmental issues, including considering the impact of sending everyone in their class Christmas cards. Members of the eco crew wrote letters to the Parish Council, convincing them to protect wildlife by reducing hedgerow cutting. St Swithun's outward looking perspective also leads to effective links with a school in Kenya. Pupils from both schools contribute to an anthology of poetry, and further engagement is underway. In line with the vision, leaders nurture this partnership thoughtfully to grow meaningful, respectful connections, so expanding pupils' horizons.

As a result of very effective subject leadership, teachers have transitioned successfully to the adoption of a new RE curriculum. Training by the diocesan board of education offers very good support. The high quality RE curriculum provides a strong framework for pupils' learning. It is broad and includes a good balance of world religions and worldviews. These are sequenced carefully to build knowledge over time. There is an appropriate focus on Christianity as expected in a Church school. However, the curriculum does not offer regular opportunities for pupils to consider Christianity as a global, living religion. Effective monitoring and evaluation secures the success of this curriculum. Pupils say that they enjoy RE, and they have good knowledge of several religions and worldviews. They value knowing about different religions as important in relating to other people with respect.

Information

Address	Grundy Crescent, Kennington, Oxford, OX1 5PS		
Date	28/11/2024	URN	123177
Type of school	Primary VC	No. of pupils	424
Diocese/District	Oxford		
Headteacher	Caroline Knighton		
Chair of Governors	Clare Nurton		
Inspector	Rachel A Jones		