

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England VC Primary School, Bridgwater	
Address	Oakfield Road, Bridgwater, TA6 7LX
How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	
Overall grade	Excellent
The impact of collective worship	Good

School's vision
<p>You are the light of the world...let your light shine - Matthew 5: 14</p> <p>We work in partnership with home and church to serve and nurture all children and adults in our care. Our Christian ethos and values are at the heart of everything we do, so that everyone in our community can reach their full potential and is able to flourish for life in all its fullness.</p>
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this excellent school every member of the community, adult and child, knows the deeply held Christian vision and values and lives them. The vision underpins all the school's actions. • The school is highly inclusive of all pupils and adults. It supports every child to grow towards their potential. Support and care abounds and there is a tremendous community spirit. The vision transforms lives. • Religious education (RE) reflects the Christian vision enabling pupils to consider and reflect upon Christianity as a living world religion alongside other faiths. Pupils have developed the skill of reflecting, discussing and making decisions based on big questions. • Collective worship supports the school's Christian vision, encouraging pupils to become active advocates for change. Pupils benefit daily from a wide range of opportunities to develop their personal spirituality. However, pupil design and leadership of collective worship and global awareness is under developed. • In line with the Christian vision, the pupils do a lot to support their community. The church supports them with their ideas. As a result, the school community is effecting social change locally.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase opportunities for pupils to design, create and deliver their own collective worship to support their character development and personal spirituality. • Develop pupils' wider global perspective in order to support their international awareness and growth towards life in all its fullness.



Inspection findings

This excellent school lives out its deeply held, theologically based, Christian vision, in every way. The vision and values inspire all members of the community to aspire to being the best that they can be and to succeed. Leaders model the vision, leading by example. Governors are closely involved in school life and monitor the impact of the vision.

The mental health of pupils and staff is fundamentally important to leaders. Staff and pupils are supported and encouraged at all times to be aspirational and successful. Living by Christian values means that pupils' behaviour is particularly good. The behaviour policy is based upon Christian values of forgiveness and reconciliation. A pupil said, 'forgiveness is about being kind to others when they say sorry to you.' Pupils recognise and reward Christian values in each other. After a disagreement in the playground a child said, 'Come on, let's have a bit of compassion.' In line with their values, the school runs a group of mini police to look after their peers.

Pupils are confident that staff are always there for them. Pupils and staff are proud of their school and happy to be there. In the exceptionally safe learning environment created by living the school's Christian values, pupils thrive. All pupils are well known and cared for, by staff and each other. The fully inclusive and carefully planned, sequential curriculum is broad and balanced. It enables pupils to achieve academically, spiritually, morally, socially and culturally becoming extremely confident young people. They develop strength of character through a range of outstanding opportunities. These include innovative pupil leadership responsibilities as mini chaplains, mini police or membership of a school committee. Visitors add to the diversity of the curriculum offer. A pupil's grandfather volunteers and takes pupils fishing for newts in the school pond.

Pupils take ownership of their school as pupil voice is included in strategic decision making. Within the community, they participated in the appointment of both their local vicar and diocesan bishop. The school is highly inclusive and through innovative and creative use of learning programmes and interventions, pupils make better than expected progress. Outstanding use of specialist staff and staff training in areas such as emotional trauma, demonstrate the school's commitment to vulnerable pupils and their families. The school regularly goes the extra mile to support its extended community. During the pandemic food and gifts were delivered to pupils and families. The actions of this school ooze Christian love. Staff see every pupil's behaviour as communication and approach solutions in a Christian and holistic way.

Collective worship is central to daily life in school. This shared time together is special to pupils. It includes Anglican traditions, is open and accessible to everyone and is planned around a cycle of Christian values. The few pupils who do not attend collective worship because of their different faiths, work on such things as plans for developing the outdoor multi-faith reflection area. Thus they remain part of this time of togetherness. Collective worship inspires pupils to effect change particularly through local community action such as making Boxes of Wonder for people on their own at Christmas. Pupils confidently lead worship. However, insufficient opportunity is given to pupils to plan their own collective worship or regularly reflect upon global issues. Prayer and reflection are essential to school life and daily routines. Opportunities for the development of personal spirituality and self-awareness occur in well-used reflection areas, corridor wall art and with thoughtful inclusion in lessons. The extensive school grounds provide opportunities for learning about God's world and awe and wonder moments abound. Lighting fires and studying frost-covered cobwebs support pupils' passionate care for God's creation alongside their adoption of

endangered animals.

The school's RE provision is exceptionally effective in facilitating debate and personal reflection. Pupils are highly respectful of each other and of beliefs other than their own. RE is delivered in an environment where pupils of all faiths and none feel safe to express themselves demonstrating the deeply inclusive nature of the school. The family of a Muslim pupil led a trip for his class to visit their mosque. They explained their beliefs to the pupils, first hand. Pupils study a range of faiths alongside Christianity and are regularly challenged to reflect deeply on big questions. Asked, 'What is God like?' one pupil said, 'God is like a warm blanket all around us.' Another said, 'He is the one who shines,' making reference to the school's vision. Pupils routinely ask big questions of staff and themselves. Pupils have an outstanding and extensive knowledge of Bible stories and the life and teachings of Jesus. They reflect on big questions thanks to highly effective teaching in RE. Pupils record truly personal responses in reflection journals. Empathising with Bartimaeus a pupil wrote, 'I am happy for the blind man because he can now see the precious things that he loves.' Bible stories such as the Good Samaritan impact on pupils' lives as they try to emulate his goodness in their behaviour.

The extremely close partnership with the local church has engendered a sense of belonging in pupils who enjoy visits there for worship, curriculum learning and social activities. The vicar knows the pupils and supports the school in worship and RE lessons. The school makes a deep and meaningful contribution to its local community. Mini chaplains devise philanthropic plans to show kindness to local residents and are supported by church members to bring these to fruition. They support the foodbank and organise gifts for elderly people who are lonely. Together, church and school supported the Ukrainian appeal.

Living the school's Christian vision and values changes lives for the better. Pupils think independently and are avid agents for change when presented with issues such as the issues of local refugees. They discuss what they have learned in RE and collective worship with their families, and use the school's Christian values at home. Pupils now talk to God during the day and some say prayers at bedtime. Parents are confident that the school is supporting their children to become good people and are grateful. St Mary's School lives out an excellent, transformational, Christian education.

Information			
School	St Mary's Church of England VC Primary School, Bridgwater	Inspection date	7 February 2023
URN	123784	VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary controlled
Diocese/District	Bath & Wells	Pupils on roll	418
Headteacher	Morwenna Dunstan		
Chair of Governors	Nichola Bown		
Inspector	Alison Appleyard	No.	877