

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| Christ Church Church of England Primary School |   |                  |                         |
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| Address  | Malvern Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL50 2NR |                  |                         |
| Date of inspection                             | 30 January 2020                                     | Status of school | Academy inspected as VA |
| Diocese  | Gloucester  | URN              | 138940                  |

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| <b>Overall Judgement</b>     | How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish? | <b>Grade</b> | <b>Good</b> |
| <b>Additional Judgements</b> | <b>The impact of collective worship</b>  | <b>Grade</b> | <b>Good</b> |
|                              | <b>The effectiveness of religious education (RE)</b>   | <b>Grade</b> | <b>Good</b> |

### School context

Christ Church is a primary school with 217 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Many pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages. The school has a Communication and Interaction Centre for ten children with autistic spectrum disorders. The current headteacher took up his position in 2017 following a period involving frequent changes in leadership. The school is a standalone academy.

### The school's Christian vision

A school family where all children and staff become the very best they can be in the context of Christian belief, practice and values.

*I am with you; I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10*

### Key findings

- The school has a distinctive Christian vision which has supported rapid improvement over recent years. However, the biblical roots of the vision are not understood by all members of the school community.
- The head and deputy headteacher have created a highly inclusive ethos where everyone is valued and well supported. As a result, all pupils flourish, including the most vulnerable.
- The school is characterised by a warm family feeling which is a key element of its vision. This ensures that there are excellent relationships and deep respect for difference and diversity.
- Highly effective links with the local church ensure that pupils have good biblical understanding and a secure knowledge of the Church's year. Prayer, in a variety of forms, is a strength of the school.
- Good teaching of religious education (RE), including high quality discussion and debate, enables pupils to gain a wide knowledge of a range of world faiths.

### Areas for development

- Review the school's existing Christian vision, so that all members of the school community understand the significance of its biblical roots.
- Sharpen governors' monitoring of the school's Christian distinctiveness, so that it contains clear development points which feed into future improvement planning.
- Empower pupils to take action as a result of their developing understanding of issues of global injustice.

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**

Leaders at Christ Church C of E Primary School have developed a clear Christian vision for their school based on creating a supportive school family, and on striving for each member of the school community to become 'the very best they can be'. This vision, together with five core Christian values, effectively inspires all aspects of the school's work and mission. The values are particularly powerful in guiding adults and pupils in their decision-making, because they were chosen by parents and children alongside school leaders. As a result, the Christian values are well known and form a moral compass for the school. Underpinning the vision is a verse from Isaiah. This was chosen in consultation with the former vicar during a period of considerable turbulence for the school, when there were numerous changes of staff and leadership. The hope for a brighter future contained in this verse 'held the school together' as it moved forward under the present leadership. Now, however, not all members of the school community are familiar with the biblical verse or understand its theological significance. Governors have offered good support and challenge in the school's rapid improvement over recent years, and they carry out monitoring of the school's Christian distinctiveness. However, some monitoring lacks a clear focus and corresponding development points, which means that monitoring does not always feed into school improvement.

Christ Church is an exceptionally inclusive school. This is a result of the vision's focus on creating a warm, family feeling. All pupils and families are made welcome at Christ Church and new children quickly feel part of the school family. This is nowhere more evident than in the Communication and Interaction Centre where children develop skills for life and grow in confidence in a supportive yet challenging environment. Those who attend the Centre are integrated into mainstream classes wherever possible. As a result, aspiration is high and pupils speak about their ambition, when older, to run a transport company or open a chain of supermarkets! Support for pupils' educational and social needs across the school is highly developed and carefully targeted. Staff are trained in support programmes such as 'Thrive' and 'Lego Therapy', and individual pupils' needs are identified quickly. The result is that all pupils flourish, including the most vulnerable. Staff also feel well supported and put this down to the compassionate leadership of the headteacher and deputy. This includes carefully managing staff workload and keeping everyone well informed about initiatives in the school as they develop. Measures such as this ensure good mental health. Wide-ranging professional development helps staff to 'become the very best they can be'.

The focus on creating a school family also ensures that relationships amongst all members of the school community are highly positive. This in turn leads to excellent behaviour, founded on forgiveness and reconciliation. Parents are delighted with the happy ethos of the school, describing how their children run into school in the morning and are reluctant to leave at the end of the day. A feature of lessons is the use of discussion and debate, particularly in RE. Teachers use this to help pupils to listen to one another's opinions and to respect those who may hold opinions which differ from their own. As a result, pupils develop strong respect for difference and diversity. In RE there is nothing they like more than to find out about people from a variety of faiths, saying that this knowledge 'brings people together'. They particularly enjoy hearing from pupils at Christ Church who belong to a faith other than their own. The school curriculum is rich in opportunities to think widely and deeply about big questions in life. These challenging, ethical questions help pupils to explore their own spirituality and to form their own opinions about what is fair and unfair in the world. Pupils take some action as a result of this growing sense of social justice. For example, they support the local foodbank and visit care homes where they spend time chatting to older members of the community. Pupils understand that giving time is just as important as giving money. Although the school council decides which charities to support, direct action initiated by pupils is more limited.

The partnership with the local church is a considerable strength of the school. This flourished under the former vicar and has been effectively maintained by members of the congregation during the current vacancy. The partnership has a significant impact on the school's collective worship. For example, pupils have a good knowledge of the Church's year and how this relates to the life of Jesus as a result of events such as 'Experience Easter' run by the church. Teaching about the Eucharist in church has helped Year 6 pupils to develop an understanding of the importance of Holy Communion to Christians. Pupils learn about stories from the Bible and can make links with the school's Christian values and explain how these pertain to their own lives. This is a result of school-led worship and the regular Open the Book worship led by members of the church. Prayer is also a strong feature of the school. Pupils make good use of a variety of places in school to reflect and pray, and parents run a prayer

group which asks the headteacher and pupils for issues which they would like them to focus on in their meetings. Pupils plan and lead worship both in class and for the whole school, effectively addressing one of the areas for development from the last inspection. The school evaluates the impact of worship and leaders have increased the amount of pupil participation as a result. They recognise, however, that evaluation carried out by pupils could be refined to make it more effective.

In RE, pupils develop good knowledge of a range of faiths including key Christian concepts such as creation, incarnation and salvation. This enables them to compare and discuss different faiths. One Year 6 child commented that, 'Hinduism is a polytheistic faith, whereas Christianity is monotheistic'. Pupils develop a mature attitude towards their personal faith because a feature of lessons is time to discuss what they themselves do or do not believe. Staff have created a secure environment in which pupils feel confident to talk openly and honestly, knowing that their views will be treated with respect. The RE leader has developed effective systems for assessment which help staff to plan for future coverage. She also leads regular staff meetings to support good practice across the school. Through the local RE hub, the school shares its own good practice and learns from that of other schools.



**The effectiveness of RE: Good**

Teaching is good due to well-planned, imaginative lessons. As a result, standards at Christ Church are good and are in line with standards in other core subjects. The RE leader carries out monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning and is joined by governors. She also moderates with teachers from other schools which confirms her judgements.

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| Headteacher                 | Duncan Cook      |
| Inspector's name and number | Duncan Jones 813 |