

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Christopher's Church of England Primary School	
Address	Temple Road, Cowley, Oxford OX4 2HB
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	Good
The impact of collective worship	Good

School's vision
<p>At St Christopher's Primary School our vision is to 'have the courage to live life in all its fullness, to belong within our community, respect and love those around us.' We do this through nurture, learning and growing together.</p> <p>'I have come in order that you might have life – life in all its fullness.' John 10:10.</p>
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Christopher's Christian vision is well understood by staff, pupils and governors. The principles of belonging, respect and love are visible throughout this diverse and inclusive school community. • Collective worship supports pupils and adults to flourish spiritually, providing an encounter with Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. Leaders, however, are not clear about the characteristics of spiritual development that they want pupils and adults to experience in worship. • The religious education (RE) curriculum helps pupils to develop a sense of belonging to their own faith, and respect for other faiths and worldviews. Sometimes, though, the curriculum lacks depth and limits the level of maturity with which pupils can respond to what they have learned. • Leaders ensure that they support and promote good mental health for pupils and adults. They know that they belong to a school community where they are loved and nurtured, and can be courageous in their learning. • The school's vision strongly promotes the aspiration for pupils to live life in all its fullness now and in the future. Leaders have yet fully to enable pupils to aspire to work courageously as agents of change for the common good.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a shared understanding of the key characteristics of good spiritual development to encourage a consistent approach that provides spiritual growth for all. • Deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding of the RE curriculum so they can articulate and respond to what they learn with more confidence. • Provide pupils with opportunities for courageous advocacy to enable them to be agents of change who challenge injustice for the common good.

Inspection findings

St Christopher's is a diverse and inclusive school where pupils, staff, governors and parents have a strong sense of belonging. Even though family backgrounds are religiously and ethnically diverse, the school's deeply rooted Christian vision acts as a thread of unity. Everyone is able to speak confidently about 'life in all its fullness' and explain what it means to them. Leaders explain why this vision is right for their context. Leaders, and in particular governors, can articulate their understanding of the underlying theological ideas that underpin the vision. Most notably, they can explain the theology of belonging to a community where all are valued and loved.

The executive headteacher oversees one other school in the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust (ODST) in addition to St Christopher's. She ensures that the two schools share expertise so that they can grow together. Leaders consider the vision when making decisions about all aspects of the life of the school. For example, they explain the way they manage pupil behaviour and deal with pupils at risk of exclusion in terms of life in all its fullness and the importance of nurture. The school is rightly proud of its support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and the provision it makes for them. Leaders and staff who work with these pupils are tenacious advocates for the children they care for, ensuring that they enjoy a strong sense of nurture and belonging in a loving community. When leaders make financial decisions, they explicitly take the Christian vision into account.

The place of community at the heart of the school's vision is exemplified in the provision of collective worship. Pupils and staff are from a range of faiths and Christian denominations, with nearly half of all pupils coming from a Muslim background. Because of this, worship is diligently planned and delivered to ensure that it is inclusive for all. Strong support from local Church of England parishes ensures that acts of worship provide inspirational encounters with the person and teachings of Jesus. They regularly lead 'Open the Book' Bible stories. School leaders are also undergoing training and will provide 'Godly play' from next term. In addition, the school has its own 'canon' of prayer whereby pupils are invited to learn a different prayer for each year they are in the school. Pupils also visit the local church for 'prayer space' activities laid on by church members and governors. Because of this, pupils and adults develop spiritually in different ways. However, leaders are unclear about the particular characteristics of spiritual development that they want to promote amongst adults and pupils. Pupils in the collective worship group sometimes plan and lead worship in ways that promote inclusive spiritual development. An example is their use of rocks to build a cairn to remind pupils about different ways they can develop spiritually. School leaders seek out the views of pupils about what they want from worship. For example, pupils have recently fed back that they would like more acknowledgment of Ramadan and Eid in worship. This reflects the commitment of the school's vision to mutual respect.

The RE subject leader oversees the school's use of the locally agreed syllabus to meet the expectations of RE in Church of England schools. This means that RE is planned and sequenced effectively. The RE curriculum enables pupils to learn more about a wide range of major world religions. It supports the school's Christian vision as it cements the school community together. Just as with collective worship, this enables pupils and adults to develop respect for many different faiths. Pupils, parents and staff are at pains to express their satisfaction with the respect their own faith receives, and how happy they are to show respect to the faith of others. This school is exemplary in the way it demonstrates how different groups can live well together, and RE plays a key role in achieving this. Pupils feel safe to discuss religion because they have deep respect for each other's beliefs. What they learn about those beliefs, however, sometimes lacks depth. Because of this, pupils cannot always reflect critically on their own convictions, and how those convictions might be challenged and refined over time.

Leaders are relentless in their commitment to inspire pupils to have high aspirations. They seek out opportunities for pupils to be courageous and build their resilience in preparation for secondary

school and beyond. Pupils speak with great enthusiasm about how ‘forest school’ helps to make them confident and courageous. Leaders have built on this by giving all pupils access to a nearby outdoor centre on a regular basis. A wide range of visits are arranged for pupils to inspire their curiosity and build their confidence to embrace life in its fullness. The school has developed relationships with some of the University of Oxford’s colleges to deepen and broaden the curriculum in subjects such as music, science and Latin. The school also provides families with links to local groups that support their child’s learning and offer English lessons to parents. Governors and local churches work closely with school leaders to develop effective social action to support school families. An example is a parish sponsored parenting programme led by one of the foundation governors and the home school link worker. Leaders and governors can explain how Christian theology underpins the school’s strong sense of community. Leaders have not yet, however, developed opportunities for pupils to be courageous advocates for change beyond the school community. As a consequence, they have yet fully to understand some key underlying issues of justice.

Leaders promote good mental health and wellbeing for pupils and staff. The sense of pride and belonging that arises from the Christian vision has created a calm and friendly environment. As a result, pupils say that they feel happy and respected and can learn well. Staff speak with enthusiasm about the close working relationships they have with their colleagues, and that the loving support they enjoy from each other.

Leaders and governors appreciate the support they receive from the ODST. The Trust provides professional development for staff and governors, and mutual support for school leaders. The Trust delegates most of the responsibility for governance to the local governing body whilst providing governors with support and holding them to account. In this way, the Trust supports the school’s vision to create a closely-knit school community with a strong sense of belonging.

The clear Christian vision at St Christopher’s unites the school community in a strong sense of purpose. Because of this, pupils, parents, staff and governors flourish and experience life in all its fullness.

Information			
School	St Christopher’s C of E Primary School	Inspection date	20 March 2023
URN	140556	VC/VA/Academy	Former VC academy
Diocese/District	Oxford	Pupils on roll	330
MAT/Federation	Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust		
Headteacher	Katie Scream – Executive Headteacher		
Chair of Governors/ Trust Board	Jean Holderness		
Inspector	Richard Hopkins	No.	