

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Oakhill Church School and Nursery

Address Bath Road, Oakhill, Radstock, United Kingdom, BA3 5AQ

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

Together we grow from acorns to oaks. 'They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour' (Isaiah 61:3). We know that every child is a unique gift and is precious to God. Together, we create the Oakhill family where we are given the space and opportunities to learn, grow and flourish.

Key findings

- School leaders have implemented an inclusive and distinctive Christian vision which is enabling everyone to experience 'life in all its fullness'. Pupils do not yet have a deep understanding of the biblical roots of the vision.
- The school's Christian values express the vision in practice and are key to the increasingly positive relationships in the school community. Collective worship intentionally and meaningfully stresses engagement with the values.
- Leaders encourage staff and pupils to lead aspects of school improvement. This is resulting in an increasingly cohesive community. Pupils lead and monitor collective worship and there is opportunity to develop this further.
- The principal partners of the school provide unstinting practical and strategic support to the growth of the school as a Church school. This support is helping pupils and adults to flourish.
- Inspired by the vision, leaders work tirelessly to remove barriers to learning for all pupils. Learners are inspired to respond creatively in religious education (RE) and across the curriculum. Pupil understanding of and experience of diversity is less well developed.

Areas for development

- Enable pupils to understand more fully the distinctive Christian nature of the vision by exploring appropriately its biblical roots, especially in RE, worship and across the curriculum.
- Deepen pupils' experience of leading and monitoring collective worship by giving them greater responsibility in the design of their acts of worship.
- Provide further opportunities to build understanding of and engagement with the diversity found in society and in religion and worldviews.

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

Oakhill Church School and Nursery has begun a new chapter in its history. Some of the new leaders' priorities, such as emphases on growth together, mutual respect and looking outwards, have led to a revision of the vision. 'Together we grow from acorns (in the nursery) to oaks (in Year 6)' is understood well by the whole community. Its impact is evident in the way pupils and adults apply it tellingly both to their learning and to their personal development. The Bible passage, from the book of Isaiah, has inspired leaders to a greater commitment to justice for all, especially for the disadvantaged. This is seen, for instance, in the way the community has embraced Ukrainian refugees. Leaders, however, do not yet provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to explore the imagery and the poetry of the passage.

Pupils and adults demonstrate kindness, respect, community, friendship, trust and determination daily. These six Christian values lie at the heart of the rapid progress of the school. Pupils and adults are flourishing due to the impact of both the vision and the associated values. Collective worship helps pupils to understand how the values are exemplified in the Bible. Certificates are awarded each week in recognition of the living out of the values. Pupils are inspired by the visible reminders of the awards on the tree in the entrance.

The Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust has put significant expertise, time and resources into its support of the school and its leaders. Both school and trust share a vision for personal and spiritual growth for all. Staff prosper through the networking of best practice, such as the sharing of practical ideas for subject leaders. Diocesan training for staff and governors on Church school leadership, RE and collective worship is invaluable. Pupils learn about being part of a larger community as they understand about the 'family of Church schools'. Partnership with the parish is mutually beneficial. This was meaningfully symbolised by the handing over of the key to the local church at the headteacher's commissioning service. Pupils lead confidently in church. Some pupils speak of how the building gives them a sense of awe and wonder.

The commitment to growth imagined by the vision is taking hold. Pupils respond well to the more creative tasks brought about by the new curriculum. Staff adapt the curriculum well for pupils with additional learning and personal needs. Pupils make good progress as staff recognise their uniqueness and find their individual paths of learning. The school has recently adopted new spiritual development guidelines which are providing opportunities for wondering about big questions, especially in RE and collective worship. Teachers have begun to plan for opportunities to develop spirituality across the curriculum.

The wellbeing of the whole community was at the heart of leaders' response to the pandemic. The impact was seen in greater resilience and hope across the community. The vision and the values mean that caring for others is as important as caring for oneself. Pupils talk movingly about subjects such as climate change, poverty and world peace. Pupils compellingly remember all affected by conflict, including in Ukraine, by the lighting of a candle at the start of worship. This then burns in the entrance to the school as a constant reminder to remember. Leaders effectively explore the meaning of courageous advocacy with the school council. The council uses the concept to inform school charity choices. Charity is supported readily and generously by the whole community. Other pupils are not so familiar with the idea of courageous advocacy.

The school's Christian vision, with its focus on 'unlocking the best version of ourselves', motivates adults and pupils alike. It is crucial to the respect that is at the heart of relationships in the school. When things go wrong, time is devoted to restoring relationships and to not holding grudges.

One impact of the vision is seen through prioritising teaching and learning about diversity. Pupils speak of differences between their lives and the lives of children elsewhere in Britain and the world. Planning has begun to extend pupil understanding and engagement with diversity through, for instance, visitors and visits.

Leaders ensure that collective worship is a key, daily element in furthering the school's vision. They invite pupils and adults to discover more about Jesus and the relevance of Christian teachings today. The parish priest supported the school by providing online worship during the pandemic. Pupils say how the online worship inspired them and helped them feel closer together. Pupils look forward to collective worship and

gain much from being invited to be still, to pray and to reflect, as appropriate. Pupils display good understanding of biblical stories, the role of liturgy and the church's year. Appropriately coloured cloth on classroom reflection tables reinforces the latter. Staff help pupils to reflect more deeply on the value of the term by encouraging discussion in classroom worship. Pupils lead worship confidently in accordance with the school's guidelines. They also assist leaders in their monitoring. Leaders are to allow pupils to take more responsibility in designing their acts of worship. Pupils are keen to be more creative in how they express their thoughts and to be freer in structuring their acts of worship.

The well planned and resourced RE curriculum ensures good coverage of a range of religions and world views. Pupils engage with the context of sacred text by the helpful big story of the Bible frieze. The vision inspires pupils to be respectful and curious in their learning and the safe space in RE discussion demonstrates this. Class teachers receive regular professional development and handle complex topics and questions sensitively. Expectations of learning outcomes are very clear. Assessment is well planned and indicates good progress across the school. Leaders monitor RE effectively and regularly.

National training from the Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership has prepared the new headteacher and other senior staff very effectively for their current roles. This training is highly valued for its relevance and is underpinning much of the rapid progress of Oakhill Church School. Adults and pupils are beginning to experience 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10).

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	15 July 2022	URN	141800
Date of previous inspection	11 February 2015		
School status	VC	NOR	158
Name of Multi Academy Trust or Federation	Bath & Wells Multi Academy Trust (South Somerset Hub)		
Diocese or Methodist Circuit	Bath & Wells		
Headteacher	Jude Clements		
Proportion of pupils deemed to be disadvantaged	Above National Average		
Proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	In Line with National Average		
Additional significant information (if needed)	The headteacher and most senior colleague started at the school in September 2021.		
Inspector's name	Simon Stevens	No.	0953