

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Chirton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Address The Street, Chirton, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 3QS

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

Excellent

School's vision

We are 'the little school with a big heart' and with God by our side, we love, learn and flourish together as, 'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matthew 6:21)'.

Key findings

- The carefully crafted and inclusive vision is entirely appropriate for Chirton School. Pupils and adults flourish due to the impact of the vision and the extremely positive relationships that it engenders. The emphasis on heartfelt care for one another enabled the school to remain at its best during the pandemic.
- The headteacher provides exceptionally strong and nurturing leadership.
- Partnerships with Equa, the multi-academy trust and with the Diocese of Salisbury provide strong support for the school, particularly with professional development and opportunities for the school to share good practice.
- Strong collective worship acts as a focal point for the school and community. Older pupils lead confidently and thoughtfully. Younger pupils have fewer opportunities to lead and to plan.
- Deep spirituality is a hallmark of the school. It is woven through the curriculum, including religious education (RE), and clearly encouraged through collective worship.

Areas for development

- Leaders to reflect further on how school development plans and priorities are shaped by the theological roots of the vision in Matthew 6:21.
- Younger pupils to have more opportunities to plan and to lead collective worship so that they share their insights.
- Provide opportunities through RE for further meaningful and informed engagement with followers of world faiths and beliefs.

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

Chirton School certainly is 'the little school with a big heart'. Its size is used to good effect as no child, member of staff nor parent goes unnoticed, and all are cherished. Leaders truly value the pupils as individuals and there is a tangible sense of pupils supporting each other, of being 'big-hearted'. Leaders regularly and effectively monitor the impact of the vision. Development plans and priorities do not yet fully demonstrate the influence of the theological basis of the school vision (Matthew 6:21).

The vision derives its inspiration appropriately from the teachings of Jesus, 'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also' (Matthew 6:21). The effective vision has been developed collaboratively. The allied, related values are explained in short statements, whose initial letters spell out 'heart'. These values are widely known and motivate pupils and staff to keep moving forward as a school and to encourage one another. A pupil designed an illustrative picture of a tractor. This shows the important contributions of all members of the school and wider community in response to the vision. The image is fittingly displayed throughout the school. A measure of progress is the rising pupil numbers in the school but, more importantly, the real progress is in the rising self-confidence of the school. Chirton School would not be in the strong position it is now without the aspirational vision and values.

The school benefits from partners who understand the vision and significantly support the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Equa, the multi-academy trust of which Chirton is a part, provides opportunities for pupils and staff to share their good practice with others. Salisbury Diocese provides valuable training and support across a full range of church school issues. Its input on spirituality is deeply appreciated by staff and helps to shape the school's approach to spiritual development.

Particular credit for the school's progress is due to the headteacher and her unstinting effort. She embodies the vision, being especially big-hearted herself and looking for challenging opportunities for pupils of all abilities and the staff to develop. Inspection evidence suggests the whole village is benefitting from the growing confidence of the school.

The ambitious curriculum serves the pupils well. Each term's value informs the planning of topics and results in exciting and relevant programmes of study. Pupils enjoy asking questions that extend their learning. Spiritual development is key to the well-rounded progress of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities. Spirituality has a wide-ranging definition at the school. The approach to it is often stated by staff explaining it in the phrase 'seize the moment'. Outdoor learning, including forest school, deepens pupil and staff engagement with spirituality. This results in particular emphasis on awe and concern for what the school describes as 'God's wonderful world'. The school's 11 by 11 challenge list of positive experiences is a practical and helpful approach to raising pupil horizons beyond the immediate context. As often at Chirton, this involves families in learning creatively. The vision inspires pupils to have concern for the disadvantaged. The mixed age classes afford good opportunities for peer support and they encourage all to be the best they can be. Pupil togetherness is reinforced by a whole-school house system that also enables much praiseworthy fund-raising and practical charitable projects. Particularly notable is the responsibility given to pupils to choose house charities that focus on world development. This is raising awareness of global concerns and increasing engagement with charities. The school is not culturally diverse but every effort is made, including in RE and in the choice of class texts, to respect all people everywhere as children of God. Pupils respond well to this. Pupil behaviour towards one another and towards adults is very positive. A heart-chart in each classroom effectively links behaviour to the school's vision. Pupils understand that each day is a new start and any broken heartedness can be cured through forgiveness and reconciliation.

The school's vision inspires daily collective worship that is key to the flourishing of pupils and adults. It certainly provided unity to the school during the pandemic. There is an emphasis on participation, in both word and song. Learnt prayers reinforce the language and thought of the vision and bolster the sense of community. Words of wisdom are shared from

the Bible, often through dramatic techniques. The local church fittingly helps mark significant moments in the year. Pupils respond appropriately in well-held times of reflection and through invitational prayers. Pupils are not so confident in identifying and using liturgical words. Worship inspires action, a community lunch for example at Christmastime. Worship and spirituality are enhanced by everyone being in a circle in the new, outdoor ‘classroom of wonder’, as the school calls it. Pupils and staff appreciate this as a visible sign of unity, enabling them also to sense being part of a larger creation. Older pupils lead worship thoughtfully and creatively. They are inspired by the school’s values and by supportive staff. An innovative multi-academy trust blog by Year 5 and 6 pupils invites responses to their worship from both governors and a wider audience. Pupils appreciate that this dialogue makes their efforts more valued and they learn from the comments. Younger pupils have less opportunity to be involved in planning and leading worship.

RE is a key component in exploring the vision of the school. Regular training ensures that all staff are confident and competent in teaching major faiths and beliefs. Pupils respond well to the content and the open questioning style. Older pupils appreciate the rigour brought about by introducing the ‘Understanding Christianity’ resource. The work on God and science provoked serious thought and some deep reflection on Psalm 8. Younger pupils learn well through active participation in lessons, including drama. Effective assessment in RE uses the same structure as other subjects. This emphasises pupil self-assessment which is then agreed with or challenged by the class teacher. Moderation by school leaders, along with regular class observations, gives consistency to the process. The school has identified that, post pandemic, it wishes to take fresh opportunities, through RE and 11 by 11, to enrich pupil engagement with followers of world faiths and beliefs.

Contextual information about the school			
Date of inspection	7 March 2022	URN	146902
Date of previous inspection	6 May 2015		
School status	Voluntary controlled primary school	NOR	64
Name of MAT	Equa Multi Academy Trust		
Diocese	Salisbury		
Headteacher	Amy Bekker Wrench		
Pupil profile	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 in line with national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)	The school became an academy in 2019. The school has recently experienced growth in pupil numbers.		
Inspector’s name	Simon Stevens	No.	953