

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Christ Church Academy			
Address	Old Road, Stone, Staffordshire, ST15 8JD		
Date of inspection	16 & 17 January 2020	Status of school	Middle deemed Secondary academy inspected as VA. Key Educational Trust (KET)
Diocese	Lichfield	URN	136961

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

School context

Christ Church Academy is an academy with 588 pupils on roll, aged 9-13. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is broadly in line national figures. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is around national averages. The principal is the CEO of the Key Educational Trust, comprised of this school and two Church of England First schools.

The school's Christian vision

To be a learning community that provides excellence in education for the whole person – a place where all can flourish. We believe that: 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.' *Philippians 4:13*

Key findings

- The Christian vision and associated values have a life-lasting and life-enhancing impact on the personal and intellectual growth of pupils and adults. This school is faithful to its Christian foundations and so is full of faith. As a result, barriers to learning are removed and what is possible, becomes reality.
- Exceptional nurture of all pupils, but particularly of those who are more vulnerable, is testament to the unswerving commitment for all ages, backgrounds and abilities to flourish.
- Governors know the school well and provide stalwart support and appropriate challenge. Systems for monitoring are in place but these lack consistent focus on noting the impact of the vision.
- Religious education (RE) is truly excellent. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Pupils express a level of religious literacy significantly beyond that seen in other schools.
- The curriculum and collective worship offer a varied menu of spiritual nourishment, although there are limited opportunities for pupils to plan worship more independently. Worship undoubtedly enriches lives and pupils are familiar with the main events in the Church's year and some Anglican traditions.

Areas for development

- Refine systems for leaders at all levels to more consistently evaluate and capture the impact of the vision and so direct the growth of the academy as a Church school.
- Extend opportunities in form, key stage and whole school worship for pupils to select themes and independently plan activities, so that pupil leadership develops further.
- Enhance the varied styles of worship by exploring and using a wider range of Anglican traditions and practices to more fully reflect the origins of the school.

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

One governor commented, 'If the Christian faith isn't practical, it's nothing.' This practical ethos is visible at every turn. The academy is built on Christian compassion and love. It is blessed in the insight and determination of the experienced principal. He is ably supported by skilled governors and a vibrant and committed staff team. Christ-like, ethical leadership at all levels ensures that adults and pupils grow together in the spirit of mutual trust. This extends to partner schools in the KET, so all parties share common goals and are united in serving their local communities. Staff are actively encouraged to be creative and proactive in their ongoing professional development. Consequently, many members of staff choose to remain long term at Christ Church. Others have progressed to senior posts at other schools, including the partner schools.

The vision, alongside well-established Christian values, reflects the needs of the community. It is woven seamlessly into all aspects of the life of the school. Living the vision has become as natural as breathing. It is so deeply engrained it has become implicit rather than explicit in expression. As a result, Governors provide strong support, but their systems for monitoring and noting the developments of the school lack direct focus on the vision.

At Christ Church aspirations become reality. An inclusive ethos means pupils make good academic progress, but their individual, personal development is nurtured as a priority. Such care begins well before pupils join the school. Transition arrangements are exemplary and enable pupils to make a smooth move into and out of the academy. As a parent said, 'Pupils here are not defined or limited by test scores.' Each pupil is known and cherished as a unique and precious child of God. Support for emotional and learning needs, mental health and wellbeing is very effective. The innovative 'HOPE' project, which supports good emotional health, is highly regarded. Consequently, Christ Church has supported other schools on the project and established a 'HOPE' parents' group in the town. This reflects the outward facing nature of the academy, where all is indeed possible.

The curriculum and extra-curricular offer is exceptionally rich and gives pupils extensive opportunities to develop individual talents and interests. The focus on holistic growth is seen in the integration of activities for spiritual growth, identified in curriculum plans and lessons. Pupils are excited by the big questions posed in many subjects. These enable them to reflect and consider their sense of themselves and their place in our diverse world. This is exemplified in science planning where pupils explored how science and religion may be complementary. Pupils are highly engaged in learning. They comment on favourite subjects and teachers who inspire them. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 benefit hugely from the specialist teaching and facilities at Christ Church.

Relationships between all ages are positive and shaped by the excellent role models of staff. Pupils are skilfully guided to make good choices and reflect on how wrongs may be put right. This enables pupils to become confident and mature as well as building their sense of belonging to the school community. Peer mentors provide invaluable help to pupils, under the skilled guidance of specialist staff. Pupil leadership is very well developed through creative means. For example, all pupils have a voice on the school council and offer their ideas, like the planned spiritual garden through a communications group. Pupils express great pride in themselves and their school. They delight in thinking beyond themselves. Support for a range of good causes locally and overseas is the result. Pupils take the lead in projects, like the links with the Gambia. As their own lives are enriched and transformed, so they seek ways to transform the lives of others. The vision of flourishing and of all being possible extends, therefore, beyond the school. Parents also comment on the way their children refer to the vision at home. One said, 'I learned about the Bible reference from my son.' Partnerships with the local church and Diocese are mutually beneficial and enrich the community aspect of the school.

RE is a beacon subject and a shining example of the Christian vision. It has a profound impact on pupils and adults. The subject 'changes minds and challenges discrimination,' said one pupil. It is rare to find RE of this standard, confirmed by the award of the Gold RE Quality Mark. Another pupil aptly commented, 'RE here is at another level'. Pupils have an extensive knowledge of Christianity and other world religions. As such, RE makes an excellent contribution to flourishing. Staff too are well-supported to deliver the challenging topics studied. Particularly impressive is how pupils who have a limited knowledge of RE on entry are rapidly given a secure

grounding. By Year 8 some pupils talk eloquently of advanced topics like 'liberation theology'. One pupil said of RE lessons, 'A right-thinking mindset produces incredible work.'

Daily collective worship focuses on prayer and so there are regular times for spiritual development. The school and Lord's Prayer are supplemented by some written by pupils. In worship pupils reflect on matters of faith and its relevance to today's world. Pupil worship leaders are confident to deliver acts of worship. These are often planned by the assistant principal. Pupils express a wish to extend their role by planning and leading themes more independently. Innovative times for personal reflection are offered over the year to all pupils. These have a deep impact on the lives of adults and pupils present. Many parents attend the school-led services in Church. Such events punctuate the school year and give pupils an awareness of the seasons of the Christian calendar. They also demonstrate the fruitful partnership with the parish and community. While there is much to commend in the creative and reflective elements of worship, there is also less use made of the range of Anglican traditions and practices possible in worship. Additional activities, for example the 'Pursuit' and 'Bible journaling' groups, give those exploring their faith time to deepen their thinking. With characteristic thoughtfulness, many extra-curricular clubs are at lunchtime, to allow access to those who cannot remain after school.

What sets Christ Church apart from other strong Church schools is the way each person is encouraged to aspire to be the best version of themselves. Most notable is the sensitive support for those with additional needs. As a direct result of the vision, a 'can-do' culture fortifies pupils and staff. They continue to grow in faith, faith in themselves and faith in the leaders who guide them and, for those who wish it, faith in God.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

Teaching and learning are exceptionally strong. Pupils make progress well beyond that expected of their ages. RE leads the way on innovation and aspiration across the school. Pupils develop confidence and skill to express their thoughts, using mature and sophisticated language. This means the level of religious literacy is impressive. Higher order reflective and thinking skills, promoted in RE, impact positively across the whole curriculum. Subject leadership is of the highest order.

Principal

Christopher Wright

Inspector's name and number

Allyson Taylor 768