

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Almondsbury Church of England Primary School

Address	Sundays Hill, Almondsbury, South Gloucestershire, BS32 4DS			
Date of inspection	11 June 2019	Status of school	VC Primary	
Diocese	Bristol	URN	109157	

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	Excellent

School context

Almondsbury Church of England Primary School has 311 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages. The majority of children live outside the village of Almondsbury but within close proximity. Pupils go on to a wide variety of secondary schools. The headteacher is also executive headteacher of another school.

The school's Christian vision

At Almondsbury, we are 'Creating our Pathways' underpinned by the biblical verse "*Show me your ways, Lord teach me your paths*" (Psalm 25:4). We are creating pathways for each individual's future. Our values enable the whole school community to explore lifelong learning journeys.

Key findings

- The recently revised vision, rooted biblically and theologically, is highly appropriate to the context and aspirations of the school community and is driving the school forward.
- Inspirational leadership at all levels and dynamic partnerships result in a school that is continuously finding new pathways to explore and where individuals and groups flourish.
- Pupils readily embrace formal and informal leadership opportunities. There are fewer opportunities, however, for pupils to lead on global issues. They are proactive and are experienced leaders of worship and wise councillors.
- The very rich and varied curriculum, including religious education (RE), profoundly and positively supports the academic and personal development of pupils. Spirituality is well nurtured in RE and collective worship. There are fewer planned opportunities for spiritual development in other subjects.
- Prayer and reflection throughout the school play a crucial role in shaping the school's approach to wellbeing for pupils and staff. Collective worship is the unifying heartbeat of the school with a focus both on God and on living out the vision and values every day.

Areas for development

- Establish global partnership links with schools and Christian communities so that pupils can understand more of the joys and challenges facing Christians around the world today.
- Develop further the highly effective planning for spiritual development which takes place in RE so that opportunities are created in all subjects.

Almondsbury CE Primary School exudes confidence. This emanates from longstanding Christian purpose and practice. The recently revised vision is absolutely appropriate for the school's context. It imagines the local motorway interchange as a Celtic cross and emphasises the differing pathways available to all in the school. All know and are deeply inspired by the vision. The process of establishing it with major contributions from staff and pupils has rapidly made it central to school life. Pupils understand Psalm 25 verse 4 as aligning pathways in life with God's guidance. A Key Stage 1 pupil said 'We need to go the same ways as God goes'. The core values of love, respect and hope help everyone to make positive choices on life's journeys. RE and collective worship are stimulated by the vision and contribute to its highly effective outworking in daily life.

The inspirational and ethical leadership of the headteacher means that trust is a hallmark of the school. The school invests in staff and pupils as leaders. There is consequently an immense sense of pride in the school. The school leadership team (SLT) and governors are implementing the vision in a concerted way. The involvement of a foundation governor in the weekly SLT meeting is just one example of the school's innovative practice. It underlines that decision-making is always made through the lens of the school's Christian ethos. Pupils and leaders thoroughly monitor the impact of the vision.

One impact of the vision is that the intended pathways extend well beyond the school. Partnerships are exceptionally strong. The local authority regularly asks the headteacher to support other schools. He then ensures staff and pupils benefit from the leadership opportunities that arise. Pupil worship leaders demonstrated a class worship and then helped pupils in another school to plan their own. The diocese is increasingly using the school's strengths in its networking. The deputy headteacher is working with and promoting the Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership. He has used this to help shape the process for revising the vision and for enhancing his excellent leadership of collective worship and RE. St Mary's Church is also a key partner. The vicar leads collective worship weekly and explains Bible stories and concepts with wisdom. Pupils respond enthusiastically. The church hosts significant school services and provides memorable events such as 'Easter experience' and prayer spaces. Pupils have become more familiar with Anglican liturgy and deepened their understanding of the Eucharist since the previous SIAMS inspection. Consequently pupils participate in church services with greater confidence.

There is a very rich topic-based curriculum that promotes active learning with RE and PSHE foremost. The innovative focus on wellbeing at the start of the year signals the importance of personal development. Pupils speak appreciatively of learning and practising new techniques, such as meditation, which enable them to flourish. Pupil attainment and progress are impressive at the end of all key stages, especially in reading and writing. Data and assessments are analysed to give a true picture of all pupils' achievements. Progress is celebrated, underachievement questioned and tailored interventions put into place. Children with additional needs are given specialist support. Hope for the future is constantly reinforced by encouraging pupils to be proud of and resilient on their pathways. Sport and music are prominent amongst the many extra-curricular activities. Pupils thrive through these activities which are embraced as ways to develop God-given potential.

Relationships are exceptionally strong, leading to a hospitable and inclusive community. Parents trust and value the staff. Some speak movingly about the transformative, nurturing effect of the school on their children. Parents enthuse about how the vision recognises the diversity of pupil pathways and enables all to flourish. They relish being involved with their children's learning, including the termly 'values exploration' sheets. Staff describe the school as 'extended family'. They model the ethos of the school confidently and are supported in following their passions. Pupils appreciate how the teachers challenge them to explore the core values of love, hope and respect in topic work. Spirituality is well nurtured in RE and collective worship. Teachers are not yet as confident in planning spiritual development opportunities in all subjects.

Pupils relish the leadership opportunities open to them and this is a key outworking of the vision. New children are given buddies and Year 5 children are trained to be playground leaders. The school parliament has developed an anti-bullying policy and restorative techniques are used in the rare breakdowns in relationships. Pupils speak of how a 'worry box' is used in class to help with issues of everyday living. All Key Stage 2 pupils prepare and lead class worship. Department of Worship pupils lead worship confidently and engagingly, in school and in church. They meet regularly with Foundation Governors to evaluate and plan the impact of worship and RE.

Pupils take initiative. Several persuaded their peers to raise funds for a new sensory room. This was because they felt passionately that all pupils should commit to the school's diversity. Concern for the homeless in Bristol is

leading to advocacy and practical action. Pupils asked for a 'Jesus' Disciples' group to support Christian pupils and a visitor commented that he had never seen such able leadership from primary pupils. There are, however, insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop global partnership links so that they understand more of the joys and challenges facing Christians in the world today.

Pupils experience prayer and reflection as being at the core of the school. The school prayer, which begins 'God be in my head', helps pupils daily to affirm the centrality of God to their lives and to their pathways. The harmonious relationships are attributed to deep mutual care and the practice of reflection. Reflection areas are interactive and well-used to explore future pathways. Worship and RE place the Bible at the heart of teaching and action. Pupils and adults speak tellingly about applying parables and teachings of Jesus to the new vision.

The Christian vision infuses RE. Pupils are enthusiastic about RE and how it offers a safe space to explore significant spiritual issues. RE deepens their understanding of God, of key Christian concepts and practices and of the pathways of many faiths. Year 1 children sensitively discussed the implications for Muslims of not depicting humans in art. Affirmative answers from older pupils to whether animals have souls were, 'we are a type of animal and we have souls', and 'if they didn't, they would all be the same'. Year 6 pupils look forward to RE as 'it asks big questions of us and we reflect on the school's values'.

Headteacher	Paul Smith
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