

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Fishponds Church of England Academy

Address	Fishponds Road, Fishponds, Bristol BS16 3UH		
Date of inspection	08 October 2019	Status of school	Academy inspected as VA. Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust. (DBAT)
Diocese	Bristol	URN	138794

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

School context

Fishponds Academy is a primary school with 417 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage, with 40% having English as a second language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is above national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages. There have been significant changes in leadership and staffing since the last SIAMS inspection, but the situation is now stable.

The school's Christian vision

'Loving to Learn, Learning to Love'
1 Corinthians 13 v 4-7.

Love is not a fleeting feeling but a constant attitude that perseveres and hopes. Our vision is that, through love, we will make a positive difference to the lives of all who come through the doors of our school regardless of the challenges we face.

Key findings

- Inspired and committed Christian leadership from the principal, with wholehearted support from fellow leaders, the vicar, governors, staff pupils and parents, is fuelled and driven by the vision.
- Exemplary inclusion, inspired by unconditional love, nurtures every child and many families, enabling them to flourish.
- Pupils, staff, governors and churches live out the school's vision every day. The generosity of spirit and loving care shared between and beyond all members of the school family are exemplary.
- Worship is central to the fulfilment of the vision and to the life of the school. It is sincere, inclusive, inviting and inspiring. However, as yet pupils are not sufficiently involved in planning, leading and evaluating worship.
- Excellent religious education (RE) gives substance to and understanding of the theology behind the key Christian beliefs that inspire the vision.

Areas for development

- Extend and deepen the pupils' involvement in planning, leading and evaluating worship to broaden their spiritual development and give impetus to improvements in collective worship.
- Continue to develop the sharing of expertise in the innovative inclusion strategies to build confidence and benefit pupils and families in other schools.

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

Fishponds academy shines the love of God on the whole school family and beyond. The carefully devised vision, the development of which involved the whole school community, is strongly rooted in the Christian narrative. Its impact is remarkable, in that all pupils and staff live the vision of love. The policies and strategies developed over recent years with diligent oversight by the governors are all infused with it. Brave decisions were made in the light of Ofsted's 'requires improvement' verdict in 2018 to pursue an holistic and innovative curriculum with Christian love at the heart. This was pursued with a common sense of purpose and enthusiasm. The key, as the chair of governors explained, was to ascertain 'what are the barriers to learning?' and, with the inclusion group leading the way, to remove them as far as is possible. These decisions have been fully justified in that the progress measures from 2019 show dramatic improvements, with national expectations being met and in some cases exceeded.

A parent commented that 'the staff are all so approachable and they always go the extra mile for the children, and for us too!' Another said that within days of starting school an interpreter was brought in to help the induction process for her daughter. The efforts made by everyone to ensure that each child has the best possible welcome and every possible barrier to learning removed are remarkable. The work done by the inclusion team demonstrates love without limits. It gives the relatively high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) very special care and support, and their progress is good overall and in many respects outstanding. Indeed, lives are being transformed through this exemplary work, and this transforming love affects everyone.

The excellent work with pupils and families here is fully recognised by the DBAT, and the principal and inclusion group share their outstanding practice as well as learning from others. Wider sharing of this visionary work has yet to be fully developed. The Trust and the governors are rigorous and extremely effective in their monitoring and evaluation roles. They are a skilled and experienced group of dedicated people who embrace the vision and do their utmost to support staff and pupils at all times and will criticise constructively when that is appropriate. New staff are fulsome in praise of the leadership team when talking about their mental well-being. Support and advice is always on hand and the vision is seen as a key part of this caring welcome. One said 'it's inclusive love in action'. Team work, good delegation and coaching lead to professional development of the highest quality.

It is striking that the vision's impact has already led to cross-curricular openness to spiritual development at every opportunity. Staff are constantly aware of the need to ensure that 'big questions' can be tackled in any subject at any time when there is an appropriate opening. The pupils have a security and confidence born of loving care with well-developed self-discipline. This springs from Christian values and the overarching vision and enables them to question without inhibition. A pupil said that 'RE is great because there are no right or wrong answers!' A fascinating Year 6 project led to deeply thoughtful analysis of creation. Mature and sophisticated writing showed deep understanding of the debate among scientists as to the apparent disagreements and possible answers for religion and science. RE, in common with other areas of the curriculum, is well resourced and led. The 'Understanding Christianity' materials have increased theological depth in the teaching. World faiths are well represented in school and members of all faiths, pupils and parents, willingly share their beliefs in RE lessons. The excellent work on inclusion is integrated seamlessly into the approach to RE, and the school recently received the 'Widening Inclusivity in RE' (WIRE) award for the extremely high quality and innovation evident at Fishponds. The commitment to 'extreme botheredness' keeps the maximising of each pupil's holistic development at the forefront of every lesson every day.

The courageous approach to school life demonstrated by leaders, governors vicar and staff extends to the pupils in striking ways. Their concern for others, within and beyond school, is exemplified by money-raising for a school bus in a deprived community in the Dominican Republic. This is also a by-product of a church link, whereby there is direct communication between the school and the global partners who benefit from the bus. Pupils identify strongly with the project and regularly meet to share ideas on helping others and 'caring for the planet'.

Relationships at Fishponds are exceptionally loving, caring and supportive. Forgiveness and reconciliation are at the heart of the behaviour policy, and exclusions are extremely rare. Attendance is now above 95% and rising,

because, in spite of some extreme difficulties, all the pupils enjoy school immensely. The key is, as a parent governor put it, 'Everyone has the same mission – all for the children.' The parents certainly appreciate the efforts made to include everyone. One said, 'As a Muslim I am happy to have my children at a school with an Abrahamic faith. I can talk candidly with all the staff and the Christian values put my heart at ease.' Another described the school as 'a sanctuary'.

Collective worship is at the very heart of the vision, in the sense that the theological and moral origins of faith and the Christian values are explored and experienced through worship. Vibrant, sincere and inclusive worship times in various formats and with a variety of leaders makes a huge impact on the whole school family. One pupil suggested that worship should be extended to 55 minutes! The worship council and other pupils play an increasing role in leading and taking part, but they are not yet fully involved in planning and evaluation. Christian values and Bible stories are linked skilfully, with stories, drama, infectious singing and times of reflection and prayer adding to the power of these times together. The churches make invaluable contributions at key celebrations, with Easter and Harvest trails, the creation of 'prayer spaces', and sharing the lead both in school and church. The local Baptist church is involved too, with contributions from minister and youth worker to the worship council and links to the food bank. The vicar contributes pastorally and in training, and led part of the training day when the renewed vision was debated and formed. Her warmth, dedication, theological knowledge and support for pupils and staff are highly valued and significant. These links build pupils' spiritual lives through prayer and innovative exploration of Christianity.

The impact made by this outstanding school on its local community is remarkable. As one member of staff on the inclusion team said, with pardonable pride, 'Christian values are seeping out into the community!'



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

RE teaching and learning is consistently good with a high proportion that is better than good. Assessment is thorough and inventive. A recent RE monitoring visit by an advisor noted 'good to outstanding teaching and learning'. The commitment to the inclusion of vulnerable pupils is particularly prominent in RE. The loving and skillful encouragement of Nursery pupils during a lesson on creation by teacher, head and teaching assistant exemplified loving perseverance.

Principal	Debbie Coker
Inspector's name and number	Mike Graham 286