

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Great Chesterford Church of England Primary Academy

Address	School Street, Great Chesterford, Saffron Waldon, Essex CB10 INN		
Date of inspection	20 March 2019	Status of school	Primary academy inspected as Voluntary Aided. Great Oak Multi Academy Trust
Diocese	Chelmsford	URN	115190

Overall Judgement	Grade	Excellent
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	Excellent
The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Excellent

School context

Great Chesterford is a primary school with 208 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 headteacher was appointed head of Great Chesterford in January 2016. She is now executive headteacher with the added responsibility of also leading their partner school in the Great Oak Multi Academy Trust.

The school's Christian vision

At Great Chesterford Church of England Primary Academy we aim to provide the best possible education for each child within a caring Christian community. Our values promote inclusion, respect and empathy whilst our broad and balanced curriculum inspires aspirational, lifelong learners. 'Two are better than one, because together they can work more effectively.' Ecclesiastes 4:9

Key findings

- The school vision is the foundation for all aspects of school life. It positively drives all decision making and completely underpins all policy and practice.
- The headteacher and her staff are exemplary role models for pupils as they steadfastly live out the Christian vision.
- Excellent collective worship is inclusive, invitational and inspiring. Pupils' understanding and appreciation of prayer and reflection is a strength of the school
- The school's innovative approach to how learning partners contribute powerfully to pupils' progress illustrates the vision in practice.
- Pupils talk positively about how the school vision and its associated Christian values inspire and guide their behaviour and attitudes to work and play.

Areas for development

- Develop the recording of governor monitoring, so that every visit includes a focused evaluation of the impact of the vision and associated values on the school's Christian life.
- Create an outdoor prayer space to increase opportunities for prayer and reflection, for staff and pupils, and also for members of the community who use the school facilities.

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

The school vision is articulated with passion and practical illustration by all staff, pupils and governors. The vision has a theological foundation illustrated through the Bible verse 'Two are better than one, because together they can work more effectively'. This leads to excellent teamwork displayed by pupils and adults which is a great strength of the school. The five associated values of God's guidance, respect, excellent behaviour, aiming high and tremendous teamwork, chosen by the pupils, were drawn from the life of Jesus. They are referred to throughout the day and positively illustrate the outworking of the vision. All stakeholders have had a role in developing and embedding the vision and values. Governors are integral to the school family and are greatly valued for their time and expertise. They are deeply involved and contribute significantly to the excellent Christian leadership of the school. Their continued excellent practice with an emphasis on school improvement expresses the vision in exemplary ways. They actively engage in governor training to enhance their effectiveness and work in close partnership with the headteacher to maintain the high standards in the school. Governors' monitoring of the school's vision is in place informally, because of this it lacks enough rigour and focus to support continued developments. Governors ensure that statutory requirements for worship and RE are met. RE is given a high priority and commendably enables pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of other world religions. The headteacher is playing a valuable role in supporting their partner school in the academy trust. She and her staff proactively work with a group of six local schools. An example of the school's very good practice is its regular engagement in projects signposted through the diocese and the continued links from previous Comenius Projects to provide varied Christian experiences for pupils. The clergy from the local church are frequent visitors to the school and their contribution significantly supports the excellent spiritual development of all the pupils. Areas for development from the previous denominational inspection have been successfully addressed by involving all stakeholders in the collective worship programme.

The Christian vision shapes the way all decisions are made regarding the curriculum and extended learning. A wide range of extra-curricular activities and an extensive programme of trips and visitors into school allow pupils to shine academically and creatively. The vision makes sure that academic rigour and focused support is provided for all. The excellent teaching in all areas of the curriculum and pastorally sensitive staff supports the high attainment and excellent levels of progress made by pupils. The work of the assistant SENCO, learning mentors and art and play therapy support pupils with emotional barriers to learning. As a consequence, every child's needs are fully met. The decision for all pupils to work with a 'learning partner' is an illustration of the vision in practice. Partners are changed weekly and there is a positive culture of respect, teamwork and mutual support. The school's recent exemplary gold SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) quality mark award illustrates how the curriculum is used very effectively to support pupils' excellent development in these areas.

The supportive inclusive vision results in all members of the community having a deep-seated sense of belonging. Leaders successfully promote character development as integral to developing pupils' self-esteem and high aspirations. Pupils talk about how the vision and values help them positively in shaping their attitudes to work and behaviour. The school council lead discussion and decisions on which local and national charities to select for fund-raising. Pupils understand how supporting others is following the example of Jesus. 'Growth Mind-set' principles are commendably utilised to effectively develop pupils' resilience. In keeping with the high aspirations of the vision statement, as pupils work alongside their learning partners, they encourage each other to be the best they can be.

Behaviour is excellent. Awards are given when good behaviour illustrates one or more of the Christian values. A highly effective priority is given to the wellbeing of pupils, parents and staff. The great strength of the closely-knit staff team is that all staff always feel valued and supported. The school works closely with its families, keeping parents well informed and signposting support. Parents praise the school for its pastoral as well as excellent academic support for their children. Great Chesterford Academy has an excellent reputation, which is justly deserved and evident in the considerable waiting list for places. The school plays an important role in the village. For example, members of the church and the community regularly come into school to share collective worship, to take part in the prayer group and share in a range of events and celebrations.

Attendance is excellent as pupils enjoy coming to school. Pupils form and maintain worthwhile and satisfying

relationships. The vision and associated values highlight the respect and togetherness of being children of God. It is a fully inclusive school and celebrates difference and diversity positively. The curriculum is used very effectively to provide opportunities for pupils to develop greater understanding of different cultures and faiths. Both the contact with a school in India and a Catholic school in Ireland contribute significantly to this.

Collective worship is totally inclusive and engaging. It is the focal point of the day and celebrates fully the school's Christian ethos. The vision and values are referenced throughout. The way in which pupils are involved in planning, leading and evaluating worship and their subsequent high level of engagement is exemplary. Year 6 pupils undertake this on a weekly rota. Pupils are asked regularly to give their views on the effectiveness of worship and appropriate changes have been made to enrich and enhance daily worship. Each week a 'big question' is chosen by the staff or pupils and worship is planned to address the question using the Bible to support. For example the most recent question was 'Is becoming rich an important goal to have in life?' These well-chosen questions allow pupils to become fully engaged with spiritual and ethical issues in an exceptional way. They provide opportunities for discussion and time to reflect on the Christian responses to many big issues. Prayer and reflection are integral to school life. Pupils talk enthusiastically about designing an outdoor space they could use when they want to be close to God. Prayer space activities are regularly planned as are prayer meetings for adults. Parish clergy are regular contributors to the worship programme supporting pupils' developing understanding of some Anglican traditions. To enhance the community links members of the community as well as parents are included in the Eucharist services held in school each half term and the termly church services.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, planning and delivering exciting, creative lessons, resulting in pupils working hard and enjoying RE. High-quality practice is profitably shared across the Trust and with their local network, ensuring excellent progression in pupil knowledge and understanding. Innovative organisation ensures that all make good or better progress. An example is the recent 'World Religion Week', when pupils researched and shared learning between classes. Teachers plan very effectively to provide opportunities for deep questioning and thoughtful discussion. Pupils feel safe to express their views. They know that everyone is respected and valued. Pupils' biblical knowledge is very good. They are confidently able to compare and contrast their Christian understanding with their excellent understanding of other faiths. Regular termly assessments maintain attainment in line with other core subjects. The exemplary use of marking, feedback and reflection time ensures that pupils confidently know how to improve.

Executive Headteacher	Sarah Mitchell
Inspector's name and number	Gillian Holmes 849