

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Aston and Cote Church of England VC Primary School	
Address	Cote Road, Aston, OX18 2DU
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	Good

School's vision
Aspiring to be the people God created us to be by growing the talents He gave us. (Matt 24:14-30)
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Christian vision secures the widespread flourishing of pupils and adults in their personal growth and learning. Systems to capture the impact of the vision are at an early stage of development. • Collective worship is a cherished time in which the school community unites to reflect and explore aspects of faith. Worship is broadly Christian in style and theme and explores examples from the Bible. • There is a clear outworking of a powerful vision in the way support is given to those in need. The many talents among staff and pupils ensure care is given with great compassion and sensitivity whenever required. • A culture of reflection provides spiritual nourishment. There is no shared definition of spirituality, and this limits spiritual growth across the curriculum and wider life of the school. • Pupils have a basic knowledge of the religions studied in religious education (RE). The curriculum as it is currently delivered, caps talents as pupils do not have opportunities to consolidate or deepen their learning.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed systems for monitoring the impact of the Christian vision so that leaders may more explicitly develop the school as a Church school. • Review the structure of the RE curriculum so pupils gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of the religions studies and retain this. • Extend the range of Christian examples in collective worship in order to give pupils a wider experience of the Bible, life and teachings of Jesus.

Inspection findings

Aston and Cote is a school overflowing with talents, personified by gifted staff and delightful pupils. The biblical example from Matthew's gospel inspires adults and pupils to pursue their interests and develop their unique, individual gifts. The vision is very well-embedded and is a constant reference point throughout each day and the life of the school. Pupils delight in describing who Matthew was and how he became a follower of Jesus who went on to serve and inspire others. Staff say that 'work is not work' because they are valued and encouraged in their roles. They harness their talents and strengths to enrich the lives of others. Adults and pupils are firmly committed to 'growing our talents'. This reciprocity of grace and love is what makes the school a special place.

Leaders know the school well and make strategic decisions based on the vision. They invest in specialist training, support and therapy for those who need additional help. In this way a culture of aspiration applies to all and is effective. The nursery class and school-wide provision for nurture are a clear outworking of the vision that all should be who they are created to be. Senior leaders are uncompromising in their determination that all should flourish as part of a community. Staff receive additional release time to pursue further studies and training. In this way adults work as a harmonious team and the strong family feel positively impacts on the pupils in their care. While leaders, including governors, reflect the vision in their work, robust systems to capture its impact are less well-developed. Advice and support from the Diocese have not been accessed so opportunities to develop the school as a Church school are missed.

The curriculum reinforces the messages inherent in the vision as pupils are guided to be 'ASTONishing learners'. Learning sparks and extends pupils' interests. Many pupils are thrilled to be in a leadership role, whether supporting environmental issues or worship, or indeed a curriculum area. 'Reading ambassadors' nominate others for their progress in this key skill. Outdoor provision supports spiritual development and the creative use of the space outside is of great benefit to pupils. As a result, pupils have stimulating, active and supportive experiences at play and lunchtimes. Within the curriculum there are regular times to pause and reflect. Pupils and adults regularly consider times where 'awe and wonder' occur. There is as yet no shared definition of what spirituality means at this school. Consequently, it is difficult for staff to plan for activities to promote wider spiritual development.

Relationships with parents, the local church and community are very positive. Parents hugely appreciate the way staff support them as well as their children. It is clear that the headteacher, in particular, is a much-loved leader whose dedication and value as a parent said 'cannot be overestimated'. The clergy team are also part of the extended family at school. Community events to mark for example Remembrance, bring families, school, neighbours and church together. As a result, a number of families now attend Sunday services as they feel welcome in church. Relationships with other local schools in Witney and through the Corinthian partnership enable pupils to aspire to be more than they think possible. For a relatively small school, this one makes a valuable contribution to others.

Behaviour is overwhelmingly positive. A positive atmosphere of good humour and fun pervades the school. A pupil explained why Aston is a good school, 'We are happy here, we feel involved, and our teachers are lovely'. Pupils support each other and actively seek to help their peers make good choices. In this way they are beginning to be agents of change, growing their own and others' talents.

Religious education (RE) contributes to pupils' sense of being global citizens. As it is taught in six separate days over the school year, there are few opportunities for pupils to reinforce

or extend their learning. Samples of written work are kept in large 'floor books'. These give a positive impression of the lovely activities which pupils enjoy on RE days. They do not, however, meet the expectations of RE as an academic subject. In discussion with pupils, their knowledge and understanding of the range of religious studies is superficial. Pupils enjoy RE and like the fact that it is taught differently from other subjects but also think it is less important. Assessment is in place. This reflects observations of responses on the RE days. There are, therefore, few opportunities for pupils to undertake more significant learning in RE beyond the days allocated. While these undoubtedly support pupils' cultural awareness their subject knowledge is underdeveloped. However, RE helps pupils understand that 'Not everyone is the same and we try to understand other people'.

Collective worship is joyous and a living expression of the vision. Welcome greetings, artefacts and customs feature in worship so that much is distinct from 'assembly'. Worship in school is enriched by times to celebrate in church. A 'prayer space' event held in church was well-supported by community and church members and enabled the pupils to engage with their personal spirituality. Local clergy from the parish and community churches provide insightful support for worship. Consequently, pupils have a good understanding of some Bible stories and characters. However, there are secular elements to the worship life of the school. While topics are linked to talents and aspiration, they are less clearly linked to Christian beliefs and traditions. For example, the reading worship on Thursdays does not link to inspirational stories from Christianity. The regular involvement of local clergy gives pupils a strong sense 'of God's presence' in worship. Those who are not active church goers, or who consider themselves Christian, are invited to take part and reflect rather than pray. Many pupils share in the prayer life of the school and contribute to leading aspects of worship. They particularly enjoy times when their own prayers are used to enhance the experience of worship in class, hall or church. Prayers and time for reflection take place in most classes before lunch and at the end of the day. This gives pupils a sense of belonging to the wider Anglican community.

Aston and Cote nurtures individuals as a living testament to its vision for each person to be who they are created to be. There are pressing areas for development as a Church school that present work for leaders, but this is a place where a deeply rooted Christian vision is effective.

Information			
School	Aston and Cote Church of England VC Primary School	Inspection date	9 February 2023
URN	123106	VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary controlled
Diocese/District	Oxford	Pupils on roll	180
Headteacher	Fiona Taylor		
Chair of Governors	Joe Cox and Kate Norton (co-chairs)		
Inspector	Allyson Taylor	No.	768