

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Malmesbury CofE Primary Academy

Tetbury Hill, Malmesbury, Wiltshire, SN16 9JR

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese

Bristol

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Date of academy conversion

1 June 2013

Type of academy: single academy trust

Malmesbury C of E Primary School

Date of inspection

27 February 2018

Date of last inspection

March 2013

Type of school and unique reference number

Academy 139753

Headteacher

Steve Heal

Inspector's name and number

Mike Graham 286

School context

Malmesbury CofE is an above average sized primary school in a small town that has one other school, which is of Roman Catholic foundation. The children come from a wide range of backgrounds, with the vast majority being White British. Those having English as a second language, or who receive extra support through the pupil premium grants are below national averages. The proportion having special needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and emotional health and care (EHC) plans are above the national averages. The headteacher and most of the senior leadership team have been appointed since the previous inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Malmesbury CofE as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Sensitive and committed Christian leadership from the headteacher and senior leadership team, with wholehearted backing from staff and governors, ensures that the school embraces all families with care and loving support.
- A clear Christian vision for the school, that is rooted in the teaching of the Bible, has been carefully introduced and is already shaping the ethos and has enhanced the distinctively Christian approach to the nurturing of all the children.
- Excellent and caring relationships throughout the school and Abbey church communities are based on Christian values that are lived by children and staff, and bring unity and mutual benefits.
- Inspiring and varied worship, supported by excellent religious education (RE) teaching and learning, leads to outstanding spiritual development within the whole school family.

Areas to improve

Enable children to explore their personal spiritual development in greater depth by:

- Developing the children's skills to ask questions of meaning and purpose that extend their appreciation of the nature of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit in particular.
- Equipping children with the skills that enable them to develop their ability to reflect particularly through the use of personal prayer.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners

Every aspect of Malmesbury CE school exemplifies a spirit of Christian love and care. Children and families, and indeed visitors, are welcomed and given respect and care. The recently renewed vision statement clarifies and builds on the previous one. It reads 'Growing together in wisdom and love; discovering life in all its fullness', and is rooted in Christian values and the words of Jesus as quoted in John's Gospel. This vision is already being lived out in the everyday life of the school, with children, families and staff all joining in the journey of learning and growing together. The creative and well-planned curriculum leads to outstanding achievement for all children, both academically and in their wider life skills. There is a refreshing and fearless enthusiasm in the way in which the children approach their work, born of the security created by the caring Christian ethos. Their excellent progress is demonstrated in both national and school assessment data.

The warmth and care extended to everyone ensures that the minority of families from other cultures or faiths feel welcomed and valued. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of all children is supported and enhanced, regardless of their faith background. For instance, children from two different world faiths were delighted and eager to share their beliefs and customs with their classes. In RE, Jewish and Christian celebrations of the Passover meal or Eucharist demonstrate the boldness and sensitivity of the school's approach. Children in Year 2 delight in sharing a Seder meal during RE, and clergy from the Abbey church teach on the Eucharist in RE lessons regularly. Outstanding teaching by example in Year 4 included the washing of a child's feet by his teacher. He said that 'It felt weird!', and another child commented that 'Jesus unexpectedly did it, showing that everyone is equal.' The depth of understanding achieved was shown by another Year 4 child's comment during a discussion about Peter's initial refusal to have his feet washed by Jesus. The significance of Jesus' action and explanation was said by the child to be that the disciples needed to be 'spiritually clean'.

The overall contribution of RE to the Christian character of the school is highly significant. Children see RE as an adventure and an opportunity to explore life's 'big questions'. The recent inclusion in the syllabus of the recently published 'Understanding Christianity' has already added greater depth and challenge to the teaching and learning. Staff are excited by the new approach, and there is scope for development in an already excellent programme. The subject is given a high priority in school and links well with the worship planning so that these two key areas of school life complement each other.

Relationships between all members of the school family show Christian values in action. Mutual respect and a natural kindness and sensitivity are constantly evident. This extends particularly to those who have special needs and disabilities. One parent said, 'The school staff have been amazing with my son. They have shown patience, love and understanding and he's in a good place now.'

The displays within school and in the grounds, many of which are interactive and include worship and RE themes, are of exceptional quality. The whole area speaks of care and pride, giving a visual demonstration of awe and wonder at God's creation and the creativity that abounds in the children.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The positive effect of worship at Malmesbury is summed up by a comment from a Year 6 child who said that children are 'blessed and encouraged' by worship here. The variety of approaches and the sincerity and commitment devoted to worship planning and delivery is significant. Staff from school and church combine to lead worship in school and at the Abbey, and children are frequently involved and often lead class worship. The sense of ownership and togetherness generated by this involvement lends vibrancy and sensitivity. The use of drama, joyful singing, humour, quiet reflection and prayer, Bible readings, stories from other cultures, and strong links to the school's Christian values all enhance worship times.

During worship that included an Indian story about generosity, a reception child was invited by the headteacher to contribute a prayer. His response was simple but striking. He said, 'Please help us to give other people more.' Prayer is a frequent feature of school life, particularly but not exclusively during worship. Spontaneous prayer is beginning to develop as part of class worship, and prayers written by children are used in whole school and church worship. However, the children do not feature very often as leaders of prayer and other aspects of worship.

The Christian concept of God as Trinity is taught well. Children have a sound understanding of God the Father as creator and Jesus as Son and Saviour, but are less sure about the role of the Holy Spirit. However, one Year 6 child said with great insight, 'The Holy Spirit connects us with God and Jesus.' Links with the Abbey church have been sustained and developed by clergy and church members. Parents gather with the school at special Abbey services at Christmas, Easter and at the end of each school year, and the Abbey toddler group forms an excellent link with and preparation for school life. Notably, in the current absence of clergy because of the vicar and curate's departure to other parishes, the Youth Worker has played a key role. A parent commented 'I love his enthusiasm!' He regularly leads worship and teaches in RE lessons both in school and at the Abbey. His teamwork with the headteacher and

their passion for worship is clearly making a significant impact on the spiritual lives of children and adults.

Formal and informal evaluation by children, staff and governors lead to informed and careful improvements in the programme of worship. Children are increasingly involved, and there is potential for even greater co-operation between church and school and for developments in worship as the headteacher and youth worker are joined by a new vicar in the near future.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding

The Christian distinctiveness of the school has undoubtedly been boosted by the sensitive yet wholly committed leadership of the headteacher to the school's Christian ethos. He has carefully re-examined the vision of the school, with contributions and involvement from all sections of the school community. Together they have come up with the new statement, summarising the Christian vision. The head has spoken to the Abbey congregation twice so as to keep the church family as fully in the picture as possible, and has carefully outlined the reasoning behind the statement in newsletters and in the school's self-evaluation document. Because of this careful and sensitive approach the adjustments are seen as positive by almost everyone involved in school. The boost to the school family's awareness of school's values and, significantly, the Christian source of them and of the vision statement, has made a striking difference. A parent commented, 'The Christian ethos is very important. My child talks often about love, kindness and respect.'

This vision is crucial in providing security and empowering the children to realise their full potential, in SMSC development as well as academic achievement. The governors are eager to support, be involved and, when appropriate, to challenge. They have ensured that the areas for development from the previous report have been dealt with successfully. They have ready access to the senior leaders' strategic plans for the school, and are clearly impressed by the openness of the headteacher's approach. The foundation governors have their own sub-committee, focusing on Christian distinctiveness. The wife of one of the school's trustees runs a termly prayer meeting, open to all staff and parents, to pray about all aspects of school life. This includes support for families in difficulty, an area in which the school excels. A parent said 'They're always willing to go the extra mile, staying as long as is necessary!'

Religious education and worship are given high priority, and arrangements for both meet statutory requirements. The RE leader is supported well by the whole senior leadership team, and all staff appreciate the help and excellent resources available to them. Preparation for future leadership in church schools is excellent. It includes high quality in-service training, links with other academy trusts in the Bristol and Salisbury dioceses and the schools' partnership programme. Outstanding teamwork, delegation and coaching within the school family all contribute to this process.

Partnerships with the local Abbey church community, the diocese and the parents and carers are strong and mutually beneficial. A governor commented of the Youth Worker who is the main link with the Abbey at present, 'He supports, encourages and befriends the school'. Parents and carers are immensely proud their school, and feel involved and included. Two typical comments: 'The children's behaviour shows the values' and, from a parent whose family was worried about potential teasing of her child, 'That won't happen. The children are so kind.'

The school is in an excellent position to build further on the excellent links with the Abbey community and the exceptional Christian character that has been established.

SIAMS report, February 2018, Malmesbury CofE (VC) Primary Academy, Malmesbury, SN16 9JR