

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Meppershall Church of England Academy	
Address	High Street, Meppershall, Shefford, SG17 5LZ
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
The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Good

School's vision
<p>Our vision is for each child to thrive in an environment of faith, aspiration, creativity, challenge and celebration and to make their own unique contribution to the school, the community and the wider world.</p> <p>'God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God lives in them.' (1 John 4:16) 'Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.' (Proverbs 22:6)</p>
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders have developed a carefully considered Christian vision that is supported by twelve key values. They explain coherently how biblical teaching roots the vision. However, some members of the school cannot articulate the vision fully. • Support for positive mental health, wellbeing and for those with additional needs is exemplary. Pupils and adults thrive in this community, which is securely built on love. Understanding of spiritual flourishing is at an early stage of development. • The Christian vision drives a whole school culture of high hopes and expectations for all pupils across the aspirational curriculum. Opportunities for pupils to engage in social action beyond the school are less developed. • Collective worship unites the school community and is significantly enhanced by the strong, supportive partnership with St Mary's Church. • Religious education (RE) reflects the school vision coherently. It is led well and has a positive impact on pupils' learning of Christianity and different faiths.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that members of the school community have a clear understanding of the vision. This is in order to make the vision more relevant. • Develop a shared understanding of spirituality for the school community and use this to plan a range of rich and relevant opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum. • Extend opportunities for pupils to think deeply about injustice and global inequality, so they may act as agents for change beyond their community.



Inspection findings

The Christian vision at Meppershall is evident as unconditional love in action, reflecting the school's context and the community it serves. Expressed through 'Love of God, Love of Learning, Love of each Other', the vision is known and understood by pupils. Although leaders can articulate the theological roots of the vision, many pupils and adults find this hard to explain. Following a period of turbulence at the school, the executive headteacher and head of school have secured strong teaching and learning. This is leading to improving outcomes for all pupils, who flourish in this loving community. Poppy Hill Multi-Academy Trust, (MAT) of which the school is part, enriches provision through sharing expertise and growing future leaders. Governors and trustees are passionate and dedicated to the work of this Church school. They monitor the vision and have a well-developed knowledge of their role. As a result, a powerful synergy exists between the MAT's vision and strategy and that of the school. The admission arrangements are fully inclusive and pupil numbers are rising rapidly because of the school's growing reputation.

A love of learning is fostered within and beyond the classroom. Enthusiastic leaders take an active role in developing a broad, vibrant curriculum. A commitment to inclusion, particularly for the most vulnerable, provides an environment where pupils are individually known and nurtured. Some pupils are beginning to become agents for change regarding local concerns by litter picking or raising awareness of food banks. They show compassion through charitable giving to the Need Project in Stotfold, as well as a number of national charities. However, this does not fully extend to global issues. Older pupils are given leadership opportunities through the Archbishop's Young Leaders Award and enjoy being involved in decision-making in school. At present, there is not a common understanding of the concept of spirituality. Consequently, planning does not provide a progressive understanding of how spirituality can be built into all areas of the curriculum. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) projects such as 'Celebrating Difference' and Black History Month offer opportunities to appreciate diversity.

Leadership has a strong, inclusive approach to wellbeing and the importance placed on each individual. This embodies the school's motto of 'Love of each other', enabling everyone to flourish as the person they were created to be. Driven by the Christian vision, relationships at Meppershall are positive and supportive. Staff relate that they work as a 'tag team', constantly bolstering each other through good times and bad. Senior leaders treat them with kindness and dignity, enabling them to flourish professionally. The nurturing warmth that this creates is greatly valued by parents and carers. An outworking of the vision is the recently modified behaviour policy, based on restorative practice and a reward system. This followed staff training in positive behaviour techniques, such as the 'de-escalator script'. Consequently, pupils are better supported in their behaviour choices and there has been a noticeable improvement. Children enjoy receiving the 'Star Learner' awards in celebration assemblies for working hard and demonstrating the values. The school offers Pets As Therapy and horse therapy to pupils with specific needs. The impact of this is extremely positive and highly valued. One pupil recounted that she suffered from anxiety. Spending time with the horses helps her to feel calmer and more confident.

Collective worship is carefully planned around the vision and values, clearly reflecting Anglican traditions. It is considered by all to be an important part of the school day. The whole community is invited to come together to pray, sing, listen to inspiring Bible stories, or simply to reflect. Staff and pupils speak of the impact worship has on them. One member of staff felt that the children's hymn singing is so inspiring that it always uplifts her and helps to cheer her day. A pupil said that she always felt better after taking part in worship. Visits to the local

church take place regularly during the year to celebrate Christian festivals and the leavers' service. These visits are enjoyed and appreciated by parents, staff, governors and pupils alike. As one parent remarked, 'There is a real feeling of togetherness and love at St Mary's'. Prayer is a natural and valued part of the culture of the school. Classroom reflection areas offers pupils opportunities to write their own prayers or thoughts. Displays of thank you, sorry, please 'teaspoon prayers' inspire all who read them.

Effective RE curriculum planning includes the use of the Bedford Borough Agreed Syllabus and 'Understanding Christianity' resource. These allow pupils to develop good knowledge of major world religions and worldviews. Their understanding of Christianity as a living world faith is enhanced through the expertise of the local clergy. These valued visitors support the RE curriculum particularly well by providing interesting sessions exploring theological concepts. The curriculum is also enriched by termly RE days and bi-annual visits to the Queen's Park Faith Tour. Parents visit the school to share cultural aspects of religions such as Hinduism. The enthusiasm of the new RE subject leader is seen in the efficient monitoring of the subject. Regular observations of RE lessons, scrutiny of books and gathering pupils' views on their learning all take place systematically. This leads to new initiatives which raise the importance of RE. For instance, assessment strategies have been refined so teachers can take greater ownership of this important area of the curriculum.

Love is the heartbeat of Meppershall Academy, where adults and pupils flourish in a happy, caring environment.

	The effectiveness of RE is		Good	
	An engaging RE curriculum effectively challenges pupils' thinking and nurtures positive attitudes to learning. As a result of this, pupils progress well. The support for vulnerable pupils and those who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) enables them to make progress. The quality of teaching and learning is good.			
Information				
School	Meppershall Church of England Academy	Inspection date	19 June 2023	
URN	148640	VC/VA/Academy	Academy	
Diocese/District	St Albans	Pupils on roll	175	
MAT/Federation	Poppy Hill CofE Multi-Academy Trust			
Executive Headteacher / Head of School	Caren Earp / Margaret Newman			
Chair of Governors	Alison Allen			
Inspector	Jenny Earp	No.	288	