

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bristol Cathedral Choir School			
Address	College Square, Bristol BS1 5TS		
Date of inspection	05 February 2020		
Diocese	Bristol	URN	135575

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

School context

BCCS is a secondary academy with 1087 pupils on roll. The pupil population is diverse, with a high proportion coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. A significant number of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan, and those who are looked after (or previously looked after) is much higher than the national average. Since the last inspection the school has joined the Cathedral Schools Trust, appointed a new headteacher and grown significantly in size.

The school's Christian vision

Gathered together, that all may thrive

Key findings

- Pupils and adults alike show a deep appreciation for the way the school's Christian vision and associated values infuse every aspect of school life with a powerful sense of ambition and collective purpose.
- Strong partnerships with the Cathedral, the Trust and the Diocese create an environment which has a transformative effect on pupils' lives.
- The school is a centre of excellence for music, providing pupils with a springboard for profound spiritual engagement through their experience of inspiring collective worship.
- Pupils from diverse faith and belief communities value the rich experience of gathering together in Bristol Cathedral to participate in meaningful, inclusive Christian worship.
- Pupils are enthused and engaged by excellent teaching in Religious Education and recognise it as a challenging but safe space to explore their own beliefs and those of others.

Areas for development

- To develop closer links and partnerships with faith and belief communities across the City of Bristol, giving pupils greater opportunities to respect difference and celebrate diversity.
- To provide training for the pastoral team in order to develop their skills of chaplaincy and spiritual leadership.

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's inclusive Christian vision, *gathered together, that all may thrive*, is truly lived out at Bristol Cathedral Choir School. This powerfully inclusive vision, which grew out of a wide-ranging consultation between pupils and staff, provides a tangible source of motivation and purpose for the school community. Participation in this process has gifted pupils with a strong sense of belonging, as invested partners in the formation of the school ethos.

Pupils are keenly aware of the rich and varied religious, social and cultural diversity of their school community. They value the way the theological roots of the vision emphasise the importance of gathering together as one body, bringing hope to each individual through collective endeavour. The phrase, taken from the Book of Revelation, to gather 'from every nation, from all tribes and peoples' resonates powerfully in the inclusive context of Cathedral worship.

There is a deeply symbiotic relationship which connects members of the school community with the rhythms of cathedral life. Pupils and staff alike draw inspiration from the frequent acts of collective worship which take place in the cathedral. These assemblies exemplify the vision of gathering as one body in this remarkable reflective space. Sixth form pupils from diverse cultural contexts describe this expression of inclusive spiritual community as a powerfully symbolic feature of their school lives.

Governance is strong, with governors committed to overseeing the way the school lives out its vision, as an integral element of the Cathedral Schools Trust (CST). Governors are skilful in the way they provide both support and challenge to the school's leadership. Regular, focused school visits give them a full understanding of the school's effectiveness as a Church of England school.

Through its partnership with CST, the school makes an important contribution to the wider educational landscape in Bristol. The trust empowers teachers to develop their skills in leadership, with its teaching school providing an extensive range of packages for school improvement. The school has a strong partnership with the Diocese of Bristol, with recent representation on the Diocesan Board of Education and active collaboration in a wide range of educational initiatives.

One of the key ways in which the school lives out its vision for all to flourish is through its ministry of music. Music is the school's principal specialism, and engagement with high quality musical experiences generates a unique context for spiritual and aesthetic development. The cathedral choristers make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school and the city. The school is a regional centre of excellence and introduces all pupils to a rich and varied awareness of music, regardless of their background.

The school can rightly celebrate the excellent academic achievements of its pupils. However, it is equally proud of the way the vision is lived out through the invaluable support provided for vulnerable learners. The school is recognised across Bristol for the way it draws in, and offers an outstandingly supportive environment for, children with additional educational, health or social needs. They are particularly well cared for by the pastoral and special educational needs teams. Engagement with the HOPE virtual school and the developing Elevate mentoring programme make a substantial impact in enabling disadvantaged pupils to grow in confidence. Foster parents speak passionately about the excellent support provided by the school. As this focus continues to develop, leaders are aware of the need to increase the capacity and skills of chaplaincy and pastoral support teams.

Spiritual development is a thread which runs through all facets of school life, being found in both planned and spontaneous activities. Teachers are experts in enabling pupils to 'think beyond themselves', either through considering how others might feel in a particular situation, or through experiences that create 'wow' moments.

Leaders identify spirituality through the phrase 'being, beauty, beyond', but this understanding is yet to be fully embraced across the school.

Inspiring leadership from the head of teaching and learning has given a clear focus to the intention of the curriculum. This equips pupils to develop greater resilience as learners in an atmosphere where 'disagreeing well' is celebrated. Many staff, including those in English, Religion Ethics and Philosophy (REP) and PSHE, are highly skilled in the way they use oracy and opportunities for self-expression to drive critical thinking and cognitive development. Pupils value opportunities to ask searching questions and develop their own moral principles. Pupil voice plays a significant part in directing the school's strategic planning. Student voice exchange sessions with partner schools have proved very successful. Many pupils are strong advocates for climate justice, leading to the setting up of a school recycling project. The school is committed to developing its global connections through the Project Zulu music and geography collaboration and the Generation Global initiative in REP, linking to a school in India. Pupil visits to Uganda over many years have offered transformative learning experiences.

The school is proud of the lasting impact of pupils' courageous advocacy. Opportunities are open to join numerous clubs or engage in mentoring, volunteering and social action schemes. The equalities group makes a significant contribution to the way the school understands issues of diversity. The pupil-initiated iftar celebration will run for the fourth time this year, drawing hundreds of people to participate in this community interfaith event.

Development of character through reflection on responsible attitudes is given high status by staff. In the sixth form the phrase, 'You are not your grades' resonates powerfully with pupils, reminding all that self-esteem and wellbeing are vital elements of a healthy life.

The Cathedral acts as a focal point for collective worship, offering an awe-inspiring space to live out the vision of gathering together. Assemblies are planned around biblical teachings, embracing a variety of liturgical features. Pupils have a developed understanding of the person of Jesus and the nature of the Trinity. Through frequent and highly impactful whole school assemblies, staff introduce powerful topics, generating opportunities for engaged thinking, prayer and reflection. These themes are picked up in subsequent daily assemblies throughout the week. Detailed planning supports pastoral leaders and tutors in their delivery of these sessions. Input is sought from pupils on, for example, equalities issues, and pupils complete regular evaluations on aspects of the programme. However, input from local church communities is limited.

REP is an exceptionally popular subject, with talented staff making outstanding contributions to wider RE initiatives. More than half the pupils opt for Religious Studies at GCSE and surveys show that pupils value the stretch and challenge provided. However, insufficient opportunities are offered to pupils to gain a full understanding of local faith and belief communities.



ONLY

The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

The RE curriculum offers significant academic challenge to pupils. It places a high priority on exploring powerful new ideas. Robust assessment practices are in place. The effectiveness of the subject is evidenced through the excellent results achieved by all pupils. Outcomes and progress measures for RE at KS4 and KS5 are very strong. Analysis of exam results at GCSE for 2019 indicates that pupils gained higher grades in Religious Studies than in any other subject apart from History. At A level RS students gain grades which are comparably higher than in other subjects.

Headteacher

Paul Atkins

Inspector's name and number

Ed Pawson 904