

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Great Bowden Academy			
Address	Gunnsbrook Close, Great Bowden, Leicestershire, LE16 7H7		
Date of inspection	6 March 2020	Status of school	Primary academy, inspected as voluntary controlled within the Learn-at Multi-academy Trust
Diocese	Leicester	URN	138359

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 Judgement	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Excellent

School context

Great Bowden Academy is a primary school with 139 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 lower than national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is in line with national averages. Since the previous inspection the school has become part of Learn-at multi academy trust. There is a vacancy for a parish priest and the executive headteacher retires this year.

The school's Christian vision

At Great Bowden Church of England Academy, our vision is for each member of our school family to experience life in all its fullness both now and in the future. We are an inclusive welcoming community valuing everyone for who they are and enabling all to flourish. 'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.' (John 10.10) 'All humankind is made in the image of God' (Genesis 1: 26-27)

Key findings

- This is an excellent Church academy which lives and breathes its Christian vision, deeply rooted in biblical teaching. Each individual is affirmed as unique and cherished. The vision has a profound impact and enables pupils and adults to grow and learn together.
- Highly effective leaders, well-supported by dedicated staff and governors, means the school is outward facing, and serves the common good. With national 'teaching school' status, it is a beacon of good practice and works with other schools, with the trust and with the Diocese.
- Collective worship is exceptionally well-planned. It is focused on the Bible while made relevant and engaging to pupils and adults. Partnership with the local church enriches worship.
- Innovative approaches to a rich curriculum excite, enthral and motivate teachers and pupils.
- Religious education (RE) makes a significant contribution to the curriculum and to learning outcomes. Pupils have an extensive knowledge and understanding of the range of faiths and topics studied and a genuine thirst for learning.

Areas for development

- Within systems for monitoring, integrate opportunities for governors to communicate with pupils and so increase pupil voice in the strategic direction of the academy as a Church school.
- Extend the shared language and understanding of spirituality so that pupils and adults are more confident to articulate their individual spiritual journeys.

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

Great Bowden is characterised by the compassionate and determined example of the executive headteacher and head of school. Working together, leaders have created a tangible ethos where all are nurtured and so all are able to be the best version of themselves. This is a Christian community in action, yet one which is doing the work of God in an unassuming way. While there is plenty to celebrate, leaders continue their work without expecting awards or prizes. Nevertheless, the status as a 'teaching school' speaks volumes of the effectiveness of this excellent Church school. The executive headteacher has also shared her expertise with the Diocese over a number of years. Consequently, Great Bowden is highly regarded as a centre of excellence, particularly in being 'scandalously inclusive' as expressed in the diocesan vision.

Staff, parents and pupils trust leaders to support and challenge them to enable each individual to flourish. This is a highly effective learning community, built on the secure foundations of Bible teaching. The distinctive vision, expressed through Bible texts from John's gospel and Genesis, capture the spirit of the school. Consequently, behaviour is extremely good, and attendance is high. Those who experience difficulties with their behaviour are 'loved into submission' as a leader explained, so there have been no exclusions over many years.

The hallmark of this school is that it enables all members, regardless of age, family background or ability, to feel valued and grow as unique and wonderfully made. As a governor stated, 'We have a biblical imperative to care.' Support for those with learning or social needs is effective. High quality, practical support is offered, so that all play a full part in the learning and experiences offered. Academic progress is generally good. A significant number of pupils exceed the expected standard in national assessments. Members of staff are encouraged to pursue their own interests as professionals. Staff are recognised as holding an impressive degree of expertise in some subjects. In English, staff conduct action research into effective provision which is shared as best practice with other trust schools. The academy's curriculum is exceptionally creative and is used as a model by other schools, locally and further afield. A pupil said, 'lessons are built around us' and this is best seen in the local area study which inspired so much outstanding learning. Sports, music and the arts provide a depth of creative and spiritual nourishment. However, pupils and some staff do not have a shared language or understanding of spirituality in which to express their experiences.

Within the curriculum, pupils have many opportunities to explore other countries, faiths and cultures. Intrinsic to pupils' experience are opportunities to understand their role as global citizens. Rarely do primary age pupils learn Mandarin and about Japanese culture. Pupils are active agents for change and display a growing awareness of the power they have to be courageous advocates. One pupil presented such a convincing case for wildlife conservation to the trust board that all ten schools took part in a 'Wear it Wild' event and raised over £1700 for the WWF. As an older pupil said, 'We are more than cake sales! We can be the change.' RE plays an important part in this understanding of diversity and values, common to many faiths. Work in books confirms that the subject provides a safe space for pupils to ask 'big questions' and to explore their own views and those of others. A range of visitors from and visits to places of worship gives pupils first-hand knowledge of living faiths. RE, therefore, is an exciting and very popular subject which makes a significant contribution to flourishing. Governors and leaders have given RE a fresh impetus in ensuring coverage is now weekly. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the main concepts in Christianity and an extensive knowledge of the Bible. Staff too have benefited from the rigour of teaching the 'Understanding Christianity' resource.

Service to others is mirrored in the relationship with the parish church and local community. The academy is a collection point for the local food bank. The professional standard panto, performed in the school hall, is a highlight of the year. During this period with no incumbent, partnership with the parish church continues seamlessly, thanks to the team rector. Key to this, however, is the service of other members of the parish who remain stalwart supporters of collective worship. New 'listening lunches' in school, indicate the desire to extend the close ties between the school and church.

The school is truly blessed in its leadership, including skilled guidance from the trust. As the trust chief executive commented, 'With the executive head, the school is even better than at the time of the last SIAMS inspection.'

Leaders make bold, ethical decisions to ensure needs are met. Their commitment, despite financial implications, to fund Forest School activities, specialist music lessons and new maths resources is testament to the vision of all flourishing. Governors know the school well and harness the vision to direct their work. As a result, the vision is seen at every turn. Even the library has a section of books which relate to the vision. At this time, pupils and governors do not routinely meet and this limits the impact these delightful young people have on decision-making.

Collective worship powerfully unites the community and is a living expression of the vision. The academy prayer was created to make the vision readily understood by even the youngest pupils. Worship is exceptionally well-planned, and this inspires other schools. Collective worship is innovative in linking the vision, values and current events to Bible teaching in a coherent and bespoke manner. Time for worship is highly engaging and relevant to pupils and adults. It supports the outward facing dimension of life at Great Bowden. Specific acts of worship are recalled with great fondness. The way pupils created knitted poppies to mark Remembrance exemplifies this. One pupil knitted seventy such flowers. A range of Anglican traditions, coloured cloths and Christian artefacts enhance worship. Pupils confidently explain how much they value the services and festivals to mark the main events in the Church's year. The pupil worship team support daily worship and gather feedback. Prayer is a natural part of the school day. Whether in worship, before lunch or at the end of the day, pupils are invited to reflect and to pray, if they wish. What makes worship truly exceptional is the uplifting impact of inspirational singing. It is no surprise that Great Bowden won the area 'Choir of the Year' award.

The vision of inclusion and flourishing is woven deeply and securely into the life of the academy. Several people commented that the vision is the 'DNA' of the school. Pupils affirm this. One said, 'We flourish and grow into our future selves.' With new executive leadership imminent, Great Bowden is set to continue to thrive.

Executive Headteacher Head of School	Angela Dewes Rebecca Blagburn
Inspector's name and number	Allyson Taylor 768