

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

The Kings of Wessex Academy			
Address	Station Road, Cheddar, Somerset, BS27 3AQ		
Date of inspection	03 March 2020	Status of school	Academy inspected as VC Wessex Learning Trust
Diocese	Bath and Wells	URN	136783

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	Good
Additional Judgement	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good

School context

The Kings of Wessex Academy is an upper school with 1056 students on roll. The majority of students are of White British heritage. Very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages. The headteacher is also the executive headteacher of the Wessex Learning Trust.

The school's Christian vision

Kings 'Believe and Succeed' vision (linked to Jesus' message, 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.' John 20:24.) is about having trust, self-belief and respect. The Kings' Principles of PRIDE, reflecting the core teachings and values of Jesus, are the means of achieving this.

Key findings

- Leaders of the academy have a sound, theological vision for the academy. Students respond well to the vision and consider it very appropriate for their lives.
- Pastoral care and active approaches to mental health and well-being result in students and staff having pride in their academy. Very positive relationships are a hallmark of the academy.
- Partnerships with local churches are strong and reciprocal. The academy benefits from an enriching programme of visitors that helps lift aspirations. Global partnerships are not a feature of the academy.
- The Head of Religious Education (RE) and the chaplain are very effective practitioners. They are determined to turn the vision into a lived reality. Spiritual development is a priority in RE but less prominent in other subjects.
- Collective worship is varied and well planned. Students appreciate that it helps to make issues of faith relevant to the modern day world. Students are not so aware of the role of the Eucharist in Christian worship.

Areas for development

- Adopt an academy-wide definition of spirituality so that progressively deeper opportunities for spiritual development exist across the curriculum.
- Consider the role of Eucharists in the academy to extend the students' awareness of its centrality to Christians and to extend their and staff appreciation of diversity in Christian worship.
- Establish companion links with other schools and/or Christian communities so that students develop their global awareness.

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

Kings of Wessex is an academy where students and staff thrive due to the impact of the vision. The 'PRIDE principles' are the values by which the academy is driven forward. Leaders have clear understanding of the theological and biblical underpinning of the vision. This has led them to accentuate pastoral care and positive mental health so that all may 'live life in all its fullness' (John 10:10) and meet the Church of England's vision for its schools. Students and staff feel very well nurtured as a result. Students are less certain of the biblical foundation of 'believe and succeed' but are able to apply three core parables to the PRIDE principles. As the lead school in the multi-academy trust, the academy applies its vision across the trust. It 'leads by example'.

The vision's stress on success results in strong academic performance in the academy. RE is a lead subject. Any student struggling with their work is quickly identified and imaginative methods are employed to remedy the situation. The widening of the sixth form curriculum has led to a more inclusive feel to the whole academy. The curriculum is enriched by a very large number of committed visitors who help to raise the horizons of the students. Many of the clubs are run in conjunction with the community and there is no doubt that the academy plays a prominent role in the local area. Partnerships with the local churches are strong and reciprocal. The academy underlines the significance of the Church's year by going to the local Anglican church four times a year. Christians from a wide variety of backgrounds enrich collective worship. Kings' students contribute to the partnership by sharing their time and talents willingly, with music and art being particularly well received. The chaplaincy is funded by both the academy and by local churches.

The academy has a wide understanding of success. Leaders have understood the vision to mean that they should prioritise activities that lead to a fullness of life. Days off normal timetable (focus days), sessions on mindfulness for both students and staff and extended tutor time are examples of these. The impact is that aspirations are raised and students and staff feel very well supported. As the Wessex Learning Trust has developed, academy staff are able to be involved in curriculum development 2-18. Academy leaders encourage this emphasis on fullness of life across all the Trust's schools, thus living out the vision.

The development of the PRIDE principles has empowered student leadership. Students were asked to identify the values which would turn the vision into everyday reality. They responded very well to this and talk very effectively about the chosen values and how the principles impact on their life at school. They are positive about how the principles improve their learning and behaviour in and out of the classroom. The Head of RE has built on the students' work and used student evaluation to revamp the weekly worship themes. Students respond well to this, saying that it both informs and inspires them. 'It's more real now'. One impact of the PRIDE principles is that there is a real sense of working together and valuing each other around the academy. Support staff feel inspired and included by training on the vision and its emphasis on applying to all in the academy.

The content and methods, for example thinking before speaking, used in Religious Education (RE) mean that students deepen their spiritual development appropriately in RE. Other subject leaders have effectively mapped moral, social and cultural themes across the existing curriculum. There is, however, no agreed definition of spirituality that staff use. Such a definition will allow planning for a progressive spiritual development across the whole academy.

Student leadership is also to the fore in House councils and in charity activities. The House system includes the sixth form and this adds to the sense of cohesion. The annual charities' week raises impressively large sums of money and awareness for both local and national charities. Students talk persuasively about the importance and effects of their charitable work. They are also aware of significant global issues and want to make a difference on these as well. Partnerships with schools or Christian groups in other parts of the world do not yet contribute to their courageous advocacy.

Academy leaders are committed to the development of the academy as a church school. They hold relevant individuals and groups to account and regularly seek the views of staff and students. They do not yet formally seek the views of parents on matters of Christian distinctiveness. Academy policies, including some across the

whole Trust, are informed by the vision. Content and methods of teaching for the new relationships curriculum are already in place.

The new chaplain in many ways embodies the vision. She is an extremely positive presence and students value her listening skills and her championing of Christian values. She is keen to use the Christian calendar to enrich the experiences of all students. 'She makes things fun yet profound,' (Year 10 student). Staff and students value the opportunity for private prayer and prayer with the chaplain in the sanctuary building. Academy leaders responded well to the recommendations of the previous SIAMs inspection and as a result established this building as an additional resource.

Students and staff regard collective worship highly as a means of reinforcing and deepening the impact of the vision. It is well planned and led by visitors, staff and students. It is invitational and the daily opportunity for prayer and reflection is appreciated as 'we can reflect on what is really important'. Students, staff and academy leaders evaluate collective worship effectively. Students and staff are less clear about the role of Eucharists in adding to their understanding of diversity in Christian worship.

All students study RE to GCSE and this makes their knowledge, understanding and critical debate about significant religious issues well developed. There is a good uptake of students for A level courses. Students speak highly of the effort of their teachers. Classrooms are safe spaces where discussion is deep and respectful. The annual visit to Auschwitz deepens student understanding of Judaism but also is recognised to have a lifelong impact on students. Assessment is regular and informs the next steps towards and beyond targets. The Head of RE accesses regular training which she uses well to keep her colleagues motivated and up to date. She also plays an important role in role modelling the vision being lived out daily in the school.

Headteacher	Gavin Ball
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