Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

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| **The Pilgrim School (A Church of England Academy with Nursery)** |
| **Address**  | Warwick Crescent, Borstal, Rochester, Kent, ME1 3LF |
| **Date of inspection** | 05 February 2020 | **Status of school** | Academy – inspected as Voluntary ControlledThe Pilgrim Multi Academy Trust |
| **Diocese**  | Rochester | **URN** | 143832 |
| **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**Pilgrim is a primary school with 211 pupils on roll. There are 17 children in the Nursery, with another intake due after Easter. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is around the national average. Many families in the area served are in low wage employment. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is above national averages. Since the previous denominational inspection, it has become an academy and the lead school within its Multi-Academy Trust (MAT).  |
| **The school’s Christian vision**‘Proud to be… forever Pilgrim’Jesus said, ‘I have come in order that you might have life – life in all its fullness’ (John 10.10)We are committed to enabling each member of our community to flourish. Following the role model of Christ, we constantly strive to be His pilgrims. |
| **Key findings*** Excellent leadership across the school is based on a clear focus on the school’s Christian vision which is firmly grounded in biblical teaching. The vision permeates school life and decision making. Pupils and adults cite examples of what living life to the full and being on a journey means for them personally and for their school community.
* Continued improvement, including a rising trend in pupils’ attainment and progress since the previous denominational inspection, strongly reflects the school’s Christian, aspirational and inclusive vision in action.
* There are productive, mutually enriching links between the school, the parish and Baptist church in the village and with families, along with a positive working relationship with its MAT and with the Diocese of Rochester.
* Collective worship is central to school life. There is excellent engagement and a strong involvement of pupils in planning, leading and monitoring the programme.
* The importance and relevance awarded to religious education (RE) is celebrated. Pupils’ academic outcomes in the subject are high and many make accelerated progress from their various starting points. Recent changes to the assessment policy in RE are not embedded. RE is the subject that is leading the way in the refinement of assessment practice across the curriculum.
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| **Areas for development*** Embed the recently refined skills assessment approach in RE to sharpen practice and in keeping with school development plans, use as a model for enriching whole school approaches to assessing learning.
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| **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**Since the previous denominational inspection, the school has become an academy and the lead school within its MAT. The previous headteacher is now the MAT Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The school is effectively led by the current headteacher, strongly supported by her leadership team and all staff. This is testament to the focused succession planning evident through governance and senior leadership and reflects the continued strong progress being made. This includes five years of rising standards. Strengths have been maintained and built upon. The area for development about linking policy documents explicitly with its vision and values has been positively addressed, reinforced effectively through its MAT leadership role. The vision is biblically based and theologically underpinned with an emphasis on pilgrimage and following the example of Jesus. It is aspirational and based on being on a life-long educational and personal journey. Hence, the motto is Forever Pilgrim. The vision energises service to its pupils and their families excellently, enabling all to flourish within this compassionate and inclusive community. Leadership at all levels ensures that the vision’s distinctively Christian nature is celebrated. Self-evaluation is accurate and used effectively to promote ongoing improvement. This is because leaders at all levels share an ambition for the continuing success of their pupils and their school. Consequently, there are consistently high academic outcomes with pupils making accelerated progress from their various starting points. Whilst academic excellence is important, the crucial significance of personal development is also fundamental to the school’s success. The community which it serves is one with a high level of social and economic need. The centrality of treating all with dignity and respect is positively lived out by leaders at all levels. Excellent pastoral support, both formally and informally, has a deep impact on the wellbeing and personal development of pupils, encouraging them to always give of their best. Families with particular needs, short or longer term, are practically supported to excellent effect. Care extends outside of term time with holiday club provision for some of the summer break. The school’s holistic approach, based on its vision, underpins excellent behaviour and strong, mutually encouraging relationships. This enables all, including the most vulnerable, to flourish. The curriculum, referred to as Pilgrim Progress, is explicitly fashioned by the vision and meets pupils’ learning needs. It is aspirational, innovative and relevant. It is successfully designed and delivered, giving constructive support and challenge. The school effectively focuses on providing consistently high-quality teaching. Well-planned interventions are in place. A wide range of opportunities to enhance positive attitudes to learning are provided. These impact explicitly on academic outcomes which are now consistently above local and national averages. Based on the vision, there is a shared understanding of the importance of spiritual development in academic and personal flourishing. Hence, across the curriculum opportunities to promote, for example, deep thinking and reflection are well taken. MAT membership and a committed and well-focused local governing body strongly aid the work of senior leaders. Decisions are made taking account of whether possible consequences will help pupils and adults, ‘live life to the full and flourish’. Staff are excellently supported for working in this Church school, as is their wellbeing. Staff work closely together, ‘always with the children at the heart’. As lead school within the MAT there are a range of opportunities for personal and professional development. These are well taken. The headteacher leads across the MAT on the significance of Christian vision and values and spiritual development in school improvement. She is also a member of the Diocesan Board of Education. Both responsibilities excellently enhance understanding, focus priorities and improve outcomes within the school, including for RE. Links with the parish church and with the local Baptist church, along with Family Trust (a Christian organisation), enrich worship and the school’s wider life. Pupils’ character development draws deeply on its vision and associated values, which are excellently modelled by leaders at all levels. Pupils are effectively encouraged to live well together and to celebrate difference and diversity. They are polite and growing in confidence. They recognise that, through their pilgrimage in life, academic excellence is important, and so too is ‘being the right sort of person’. Pupils speak of making positive choices for themselves and trying to help others, ‘because Jesus is our role model’. This inspires them to actively engage in social action to address injustice and inequality. For example, this includes involvement with a foodbank, sponsoring a child through Compassion, a Christian organisation working world-wide, and The Friends of Chernobyl’s Children’s charity. Consequently, both pupils and staff are enabled to be ‘agents of change’ locally and further afield. Collective worship is a ‘precious time to our school community’. It is recognised as ‘a sacred time’ during which individually and as a community consideration of self, others and God is given priority. It is extremely well planned to explore biblical themes and Christian beliefs and festivals along with the school’s vision. This means that pupils have a growing appreciation of various Christian beliefs. For example, these include an understanding of the Trinity as showing Christian belief about, ‘God who is caring, Jesus who is God’s Son, and the Holy Spirit who helps us in our daily life’. Worship is thought provoking and provides relevant opportunities for pupils and staff to reflect on or pray about issues of spiritual, religious and ethical significance. Prayer permeates other aspects of the school’s life. For example, the well-used reflection areas lead to each class having its own prayer book. This indicates the relevance of prayer across the community and for many individuals within it. Effectively drawing on the Medway Agreed Syllabus, diocesan guidance and the Understanding Christianity resource, RE is highly valued across the school. The curriculum is clearly planned and excellently delivered. There is a commendable focus on academic rigour and personal growth, as pupils and staff, ‘learn, reflect and respond’ to the ‘big questions’ raised both personally and in relation to others.Staff teach RE confidently and are excellently supported by the knowledgeable subject leader, who is the headteacher. Deeply committed to the importance of RE, she shares up-to-date and relevant teaching and learning strategies with staff. These are implemented to positive effect, enhancing progress and attainment. Pupils engage deeply and enjoy RE which strongly supports their learning. The depth of responses and understanding is exemplary. Assessment provides pupils with the opportunity to reflect on their learning, providing some next steps. A recent refocusing of assessment practice to include skill development alongside knowledge is beginning to impact but is not embedded. RE is leading the rest of the curriculum in developing skills-based assessment.  |
| Headteacher | Alison Mepsted |
| Inspector’s name and number | Pamela Draycott (161) |