

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Puller Memorial Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Address	High Cross Ware SG11 1AZ		
Date of inspection	1 July 2019	Status of school	VA primary
Diocese	St Albans	URN	117453

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	Requires Improvement
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Requires Improvement
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Requires Improvement

School context

Puller Memorial VA C of E Primary School is a primary school with 59 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 below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages. The school has been in a formal collaboration with another church primary school since 2017. The headteacher is the headteacher of both schools.

The school's Christian vision

Guided by God, aiming for excellence and learning for life

'Show me Your ways, O Lord: Teach me Your paths, Lead me in Your truth and teach me. For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day' Psalm 25;4-5

Key findings

- School leaders have established a clear school vision which is supported by a set of values. Whilst the vision is beginning to underpin school policy and practice, it is not yet shared and understood by the school community.
- The school curriculum has been revised in line with the school's vision of learning for life. Early impact suggests that the curriculum is encouraging resilience, aspiration and empathy amongst pupils.
- Behaviour is good because pupils know and demonstrate the school's values. Pupils know the biblical roots of some of the values which now influence pupils' attitudes towards each other.
- The partnership with the local church enables pupils to develop curiosity in and respect for the Christian faith.
- Development points for collective worship, religious education (RE) and the school's Christian character, identified in the previous inspection, have not been fully addressed. However, the impact of recent actions indicates progress is now being made in all three areas.
- Spiritual development is in its very early stages as school leaders do not yet have a shared understanding of spirituality.

Areas for development

- Governors and leaders to establish and disseminate the distinctive Christian vision so that the whole school community understands the vision and can articulate its impact on the school's provision and outcomes.
- Develop opportunities to extend pupils' understanding of spirituality to enable them to reflect more deeply.
- Develop a rigorous and effective monitoring and evaluation programme for collective worship, RE and the school's Christian character to inform future actions.
- Develop a rigorous approach to assessment in religious education so that the school is confident that pupils are making expected progress.

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

Puller Memorial is a very happy and inclusive school with a caring, family ethos. This is because relationships at all levels are supportive. Behaviour is good and pupils know how to resolve disagreements and support each other. Pupils know that to show the Christian value of love they must be watchful and helpful towards those with greater needs. Wellbeing and good mental health of pupils and adults are well-provided for. Many parents from out of the school catchment area choose to send their children to this school. They value the nurturing ethos of this school which they believe will meet the needs of their children.

Governors and school leaders have identified a new vision which is beginning to underpin policies, the school development plans and a new curriculum. However, this is in its early stages and it is not yet understood and articulated by the wider school community. Development points from the previous inspection for collective worship, RE and the school's Christian character, have not been fully addressed. Therefore, the overall grade is requires improvement as the impact of recent actions is still in its early stages. This small governing body has recognised the need to strengthen their capacity to support senior school leaders in maintaining and enhancing the effectiveness of this church school. Consequently, they are working closely with the diocese to develop governor capacity.

Since the appointment of the current headteacher school leaders have focused on raising previously low standards in English and mathematics. Current tracking of pupils' progress is beginning to reflect an improvement in standards. Pupils state that they are being challenged to achieve more highly and they are responding well to this greater challenge. They are keen to refer to the importance of resilience, which helps them strive for success through perseverance. Current school assessments show that pupils who are disadvantaged are also making increased progress. This is because frequent and accurate assessment enables teachers to provide effective intervention to support gaps in pupils' learning. The school provides pupils with opportunities to participate in activities and learning in other schools to support their interests, skills or specific needs. Despite strenuous efforts by the school, such as good communication and strong support for families, absence remains higher than national averages.

The school now has in place a broad and balanced curriculum, shaped on its Christian vision of 'aiming for excellence learning for life'. This includes outdoor learning and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), These areas of learning have been chosen to reflect the pupils' own rural environment and its context within the wider world. Impact so far has shown that pupils are becoming more knowledgeable and aspirational in terms of their future careers. Using their own environment pupils are beginning to develop some sense of spirituality through their appreciation of the natural world. Pupils' artwork is an expression of this deepening connection. This is further enhanced by the opportunity to be part of the well-attended gardening club which is organised and led by a parent. Outdoor learning includes team-building activities which further develop their skills of working well together. The inclusion of global topics and the impact of human behaviour on the environment is encouraging pupils to think and reflect about challenges in the world environment. During the inspection pupils were using persuasive writing skills to form arguments for and against the use of zoos and animals in captivity. Pupils were highly motivated and very reflective in their reasoning. The school community has chosen to support the local hospice through fund-raising. This choice has been made because pupils are already very aware of the purpose, importance and needs of this local charity. The school has identified the need to increase provision for further developing pupils' spirituality and ability to be reflective. An outside area has been identified for this purpose, but this is not yet in use. Currently pupils have access to facilities within the school to be reflective and make use of prayer, but these opportunities are not yet taken.

Pupils clearly benefit from the partnership with the local church and two clergy. One vicar serves as a governor whilst both vicars support pupils' learning of Christian beliefs and practice. They lead collective worship several times a term. They also take part in the school's celebration of the major Christian festivals which take place in church. Pupils are involved in the preparation for these festivals which are well attended by parents. Pupils are inspired by the input of the clergy and have a thirst for more knowledge and understanding. Several pupils choose to attend the monthly lunchtime church art club. Pupils usually attend because they say they want to learn more about God and Jesus. However, the nurturing ethos of this club also attracts those pupils who are less confident

and enjoy participating in a small group situation. This has enabled some pupils to gain in confidence.

Pupils regard collective worship as an important part of their day. They particularly enjoy the stories. Some pupils state that worship helps them with their worries and makes them feel better. Planning for daily worship is based on a published programme which links Christian values to stories from the Bible and links to seasons in the Church year. Pupils can therefore link some stories to how Christians live out their faith in today's world. For example, they can explain that Christians demonstrate Christian love through helping all people, not just those who they like. They link this to the parable of the Good Samaritan. However, the biblical roots of the school's vision and associated values are not explicitly explored. Consequently, pupils have a limited understanding of the school's Christian vision and expectations. Pupils have some understanding of the main Christian festivals and associated Christian beliefs. However, their understanding of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is at an early stage. Monitoring of collective worship and its impact on pupils is informal. Monitoring has so far been limited to noting pupils' increasing engagement. Prayer, however, is also clearly valued by many pupils and they are confident in using a variety of prayers during the school day.

Training for the implementation of the locally agreed syllabus has enabled some improvements in the teaching of RE. A cohesive plan for teaching RE throughout the school is now in place. Pupils demonstrate enthusiastically their developing knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and worldviews. They talk confidently about what they believe because they know their beliefs and opinions will be respected by others. It was evident during the inspection that pupils enjoy discussion and use their knowledge to underpin their ideas. The current teaching of RE is increasing pupils' knowledge of Christianity as a worldwide and living faith. However, the school development plan indicates that further improvements to the teaching of Christianity are needed. Therefore, training in the use of 'Understanding Christianity' materials is planned for the next academic year. Assessment follows the school's policy of recording observations of pupils' discussions and verbal answers to capture their knowledge and understanding. However, this does not always give sufficient information for teachers to gauge effectively the progress of individual pupils.



The effectiveness of RE Requires Improvement

Pupils enjoy RE. Informal monitoring by the headteacher indicates that the standard of teaching has improved through the year. Although pupils are taught in classes covering three year groups, current school tracking indicates that pupils are achieving standards expected of their age. However, there is a limited amount of work in RE books or other evidence to confirm this judgement. Governors have not formally monitored the standard of teaching in RE teaching and have not ensured that RE reflects the Church of England 'Statement of Entitlement'. Therefore, at this stage RE 'requires improvement'.

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