

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School | | | |
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| Address | Benslow Lane, Hitchin SG4 9RD | | |
| Date of inspection | 15 November 2019 | Status of school | Voluntary Aided Primary |
| Diocese / Methodist District | St Albans | URN | 117467 |

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| 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

St Andrew's is a primary school with 268 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 was judged to be outstanding by OFSTED in September 2018.

The school's Christian vision

St Andrew's C of E (VA) Primary School and Nursery builds on the life and teaching of Jesus Christ with Christian values rooted in the narratives of 1 John 3:18 thereby enabling all to flourish with a sense of responsibility and love towards others, respect for all cultures and faiths, openness, acceptance and empathy.

- The exceptional headteacher inspires leadership at all levels throughout the school. This has led to sustainable succession at all levels. The school has effective partnerships with other schools and organisations, including support for new headteachers.
- Pupils flourish academically, socially and emotionally because the school's Christian vision informs leaders' innovative and creative approach to meeting the needs of all pupils.
- Standards in religious education (RE) are high. This results from the emphasis on creative and engaging ways to develop and challenge pupils in their learning and critical analysis.
- The impact of collective worship on pupils' spiritual development, attitudes and behaviour is highly effective. This results from cohesive planning and the contribution of the pupil worship group known as the worship acolytes.
- Governors are rigorous in their monitoring of collective worship and RE. However, monitoring does not routinely take account of all aspects of Christian distinctiveness, including the developing spirituality of pupils and adults.

Areas for development

- Deepen governor understanding of how the school's Christian vision impacts on all aspects of pupil and staff development in order to fully evaluate and celebrate this school as a church school.

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

Ambitious, passionate and inspirational leadership ensures the Christian vision underpins all strategic and operational decisions. This enables all pupils to flourish academically, socially and emotionally. Consequently, pupils are clearly developing a sense of responsibility, service and love towards others, by respecting all backgrounds, cultures and faiths. The exceptional leadership of the headteacher and staff, who are well supported by governors, has led to excellent academic standards and progress of all pupils. Pupils' learning is of the highest quality. This is a direct result of effective induction for staff, an emphasis on continual professional development and a commitment to research. School leaders make bold decisions to ensure the curriculum is exciting, engaging and challenging. Leaders also take strenuous steps to ensure that those who have specific needs have excellent support and therefore excellent outcomes. School leaders are aspirational in their vision to reach out to those in the greatest needs. Consequently, innovative changes have been made to create greater accessibility to the school site with further ambitious plans in place.

The impact of this vision of love and responsibility goes well beyond the school. The headteacher works with new headteachers to support their practice. Other school leaders are proactive in working with and supporting cluster groups and individual schools. For example, the worship leader and a group of pupils, known as worship acolytes, have formed an effective partnership with another church school. This is enabling both schools to further develop innovative worship within their schools. Partnerships with local churches are mutually beneficial. Pupils have benefited from a broad church experience whilst giving support for projects in different churches.

Pupils develop high levels of self-confidence whilst developing deep respect for each other. Parents describe compassion as endemic within this school. Parents give many examples of how this self-confidence, compassion and resilience have impacted upon pupils as they move to their next schools. Pupils attribute their behaviour and relationships to the school values. Even the younger pupils have an admirable recall of the school values. They confidently, and without prompting, link these to the teachings of Jesus. For example, a younger pupil was able to explain how she used the value of justice to sort out a disagreement between her two friends. Relationships at all levels are excellent throughout the school. Policies for behaviour and wellbeing reflect the school vision. There is a spirit of enabling all to flourish within the school community. This is because the emphasis on professional development and leadership opportunities enables all staff to flourish. As a result, pupils flourish in all areas of their development. School staff articulate how school leaders and other members of staff have shown exceptional support towards them in difficult times. Likewise, there are many examples of the school supporting families in times of need.

Pupils demonstrate an ability to reflect on, to empathise and explore the spiritual dimensions of a range of subjects. This results from the school's rich curriculum, the use of creative projects, opportunities within collective worship and the staff commitment to respecting pupils' views. This is an environment in which pupils' reflections, knowledge and views become deeply embedded, allowing them to grow spiritually, morally and socially.

Pupils can explain the importance of their Christian values and responsibilities in enabling them to take on challenging projects. They are keen to take responsibility for addressing big issues. Pupils explore areas such as deprivation, climate change, plastics and the protection of endangered animals. This results from a rich curriculum, extra-curricular activities and leadership opportunities which inspire them to take action. They articulate confidently their opinions, aspirations and ideas because they know teachers consider their opinions valid. This empowers them to communicate to parents and the wider community, not only their concerns, but the actions which they will take and those they expect from others. The appointed eco-warriors are aspirational and relentless in their search for sustainable futures. They work together to make decisions on the issues to address and actions to take. The whole school community responds enthusiastically. Persuasive letter writing together with the organisation of projects have led to a range of actions. Projects have included creating a garden to encourage bees, reducing waste, recycling and publishing eco tips on the website. Pupils display a mature knowledge of global issues in relation to deprivation and disadvantage. The school therefore dedicates itself to

supporting the annual Christian Aid week in which worship acolytes plan and organise activities throughout that week. This has enhanced pupils' understanding of Christianity as a global and proactive faith.

Collective worship is clearly central and important to the whole school community. Pupils value worship. They state that it helps them improve their lives and those of others, to enjoy the calm and peaceful nature of this time and to share their worries. They state that it helps them to understand more about God and the teachings of Jesus. Pupils are confident to articulate their own beliefs and fully respect those of others. School leaders have significantly improved the quality of worship. Governor and pupil monitoring identified areas to develop and change. For example, pupils wanted all class teachers to be involved in leading worship to increase its centrality to school life. Consequently, teachers have now received training and lead worship confidently. Prayer and reflection are a natural and important part of pupils' daily lives. Many opportunities are provided to inspire pupils in their reflections. For example, the outdoor spiritual area displays pupils' thoughtful willow designs which all link to the cross. The inspection took place during the Children in Need Day. Collective worship was planned skilfully to relate the school's Christian vision to God's rainbow and the promise of hope through collective support. Pupils feel that collective worship belongs to them because they enjoy the many opportunities to actively participate and their suggestions for improvement are acted upon. The incumbent has been instrumental in developing pupils' excellent understanding of the elements of Christian belief and purpose of worship. Pupils display a deep respect for each other's views and beliefs, encouraged and developed by all staff. School leaders give excellent support to those pupils who wish to develop and practise their own faith. For example, school leaders ensured that a pupil wishing to take part in a first experience of fasting for Ramadan was well supported. This enabled the pupil to achieve this spiritual purpose.

Since the previous inspection all recommendations have been addressed including the quality of RE. A highly effective curriculum is now in place. Teachers demonstrate a strong subject knowledge as a result of good quality training and subject support from the local incumbent. This enables teachers to have confidence in planning and teaching the curriculum. Pupils and adults have an excellent understanding of key Christian concepts following the adoption of schemes such as *Understanding Christianity*. In line with other subjects the school uses an enquiry and challenge approach to learning. This approach both inspires and enables pupils to become critical thinkers. In lessons pupils demonstrate confidence, enthusiasm and the ability to use religious texts. They give informed viewpoints with reference to these texts. The quality of marking and feedback enables pupils to challenge themselves to think even more deeply.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

Pupils make rapid progress in RE. The quality of written work is at least comparable with other subjects and is of a high standard. Standards of teaching are excellent as a result of strong leadership and regular school monitoring. This has led to high expectations, excellent questioning skills and teachers' enjoyment of teaching RE.

Headteacher

Deborah Fenn

Inspector's name and number

Lindsay Fraser 107