

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Christ Church Church of England (VA) Primary and Nursery School			
Address	New Road, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 7BT		
Date of inspection	17 March 2020	Status of school	Voluntary aided primary
Diocese	St Albans	URN	117473

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 Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Good

School context

Christ Church is a primary school with 340 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages as is the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There have been few changes to staff and leadership since the last inspection.

The school's Christian vision

We believe Christ Church school should be a place where dedicated staff provide a stimulating Christian environment, where children of all abilities achieve their full academic, physical, spiritual and social potential. We believe in promoting a positive learning environment embracing Christian values, with an emphasis on tolerance and acceptance of diversity. This vision is underpinned by 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7, 13 and Hebrews 12: 1-2, and our motto of 'Aiming High in Faith, Love and Learning.'

Key findings

- Pupils, parents, staff and governors all truly embrace and hold the school's Christian vision at the centre of all they do including learning, care for one another and decision making.
- Religious education (RE) is carefully planned, well taught and enjoyed by pupils of all ages. They talk with enthusiasm about facts they have learnt, interesting discussions and time to reflect.
- Pupils are now enjoying planning and leading more acts of collective worship, but there is scope for this to be further embedded with greater involvement of the youngest children.
- The school and local church have a very strong and mutually supportive partnership that continues to develop and enriches the local community it serves.
- The school and diocese work very well together with regular participation by pupils in projects, training for staff and governors and a keenness to get involved. There is scope for the school's good practice to be shared more widely for the benefit of other professionals and pupils.

Areas for development

- To further extend and develop the worship group, enabling pupils of all ages to plan, lead and evaluate collective worship with confidence on a regular basis.
- To widen the use of prayer across the school, linked with peaceful spaces and as a tool to support mental health and well-being.
- For staff and pupils to share best practice so their good work can have greater impact beyond their own school and achievements can be recognised and celebrated.

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

Pupils, staff, parents and governors have developed a distinctively Christian vision embedded in policies, decision-making and all aspects of school life. There are strong links between the school's Christian vision and school improvement enabling all to flourish. Parents and governors give examples of strong support for staff wellbeing, individual pupils' needs being fully met, respect, kindness and admiration leading to high expectations for all. Christian distinctiveness is a key priority on the school development plan. Pupils talk with pride and knowledge about the school's values and were keen to explain how resources such as random acts of kindness and peaceful spaces remind us how we should behave towards one another. A Year 6 pupil states, '*Love is patient, love is kind and it doesn't show envy or boast*, is what it says in the Bible. Our school is filled with so much love and kindness making this verse a really great choice for our school.'

The school is well-resourced, providing rich learning opportunities that embed its Christian values and provoke thoughtful discussion in relation to local, national and worldwide issues. Pupil attainment is mostly in line with national expectations and in some cases better. All pupils, including lower ability and more able pupils, make good progress, including those who are vulnerable.

The school has links with a school in Gambia and pupils explain how money raised is used to provide essentials such as water, toys and books. Children celebrate differences and have good opportunities to develop their understanding of global communities, disadvantage and deprivation. When asked why it is important to help those who are less fortunate, one pupil replied, 'Some children don't grow up in the way that we do. We take lots for granted. Just to have running water means the world to them so we are here to help.' Staff and pupils choose charities to support as a means of developing pupil awareness of others' needs locally, nationally and globally. Pupils feel empowered to raise money, write letters and debate topics such as deforestation for the growing of palm oil, showing their desire to be advocates for change.

The school has strong links with its community and has a good reputation locally. Positive relationships and good behaviour are strengths of the school which are recognised by parents, staff, governors, pupils and visitors. There is a positive and inclusive atmosphere where pupils are taught how to solve problems and manage their behaviour well. The impact of this is seen in the low number of incidents that occur.

Pupils demonstrate their awareness of and respect for different faiths by talking about the Faith Trail they participate in, alongside pupils from other schools. It gives them the opportunity to visit three different places of worship and listen to Sikh, Muslim and Christian faith leaders. 'Grill the vicar', cultural days and spiritual days also provide opportunities in school for pupils to explore different beliefs and ideas.

Worship is inclusive and contributes well to pupils' spiritual development. It is planned and led by school leaders, teachers, clergy and sometimes pupils. However, there is opportunity to develop pupil involvement further especially with the youngest pupils. Worship is monitored by governors and pupils and Family Forum have examples of changes that have been made as a result of their suggestions. For example, they decided that the Christian values and Biblical verse should be cut up into words and meanings, worn on staff lanyards to help everyone's understanding and daily use of them. The school has worked hard to ensure that pupils understand the meaning of worship and can talk knowledgeably about it, linking it with the school's values. Acts of worship embed school values, raise awareness of the Bible and highlight world issues. Pupils worship at church and school regularly, learning about God and developing their understanding of the Christian faith. The close church school partnership has enabled the school to be used for church services for a significant period, as the church was undergoing restoration. Pupils say and write prayers and use Anglican liturgy in worship. School leaders and pupils, through the school development plan, would like to further develop peaceful spaces looking specifically at different sorts of prayer and also linked to the school's effective work on mental health and well-being. Training from the diocese has an impact by enabling staff and governors to develop their self-evaluation and knowledge of the SIAMS inspection process, evident in their informed response to questions and depth of knowledge. This has added further impact to school leadership.

The school's Christian vision is carefully interwoven into thoroughly planned religious education. The school makes good use of clergy, the church and the diocese to enhance the delivery of a high quality RE curriculum. Learning and achievement in RE is celebrated on the school's website and through exciting displays of pupils' work. Pupils enjoy learning about different faiths, and show respect, understanding why religion is important to people. Strong RE leadership, includes the sharing of training and resources and introduction of clear assessment procedures. Pupils' work is good and teachers make clear to them what they need to know to improve. Teachers provide pupils with challenges and opportunities to enquire, analyse, discuss and interpret, making comparisons between themselves and others. The school agrees that several aspects of its work, including its vision and Christian distinctiveness and close church partnership, are worthy of dissemination with others but this has yet to take place.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

Teaching and learning in RE is consistently good for all ages and groups of children, including the most able, the most vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders ensure that all pupils make at least good progress against the expectations of the RE syllabus.

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