

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St John's Church of England Primary School

Address	32 Clarendon Road, Watford, Hertfordshire		
Date of inspection	2 May 2019	Status of school	Primary free school inspected as Voluntary Aided
Diocese	St Albans	URN	142221

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

St John's C of E Primary is a new primary free school with 118 pupils on roll. As the first Church of England school in Watford this school has been set up by Parish and the Diocese of St Albans to cater for the diverse needs in the area. 31% pupils are of a White British heritage. The school has high levels of religious and cultural diversity and many 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 not been previously inspected by Ofsted or SIAMS.

The school's Christian vision

The school's mission statement, 'Growing together in love and respect' is underpinned by the key values, 'Loving your neighbour, respecting everyone and valuing diversity.' Four key areas make up the school's vision: Educating excellence, development of the whole child, Christian ethos and community spirit.

Key findings

- The school's Christian mission statement and its 'living values' are articulated passionately by all members of the school community; it influences relationships and is central to the development of the school and community.
- Social action, fundraising and local charity projects engage the pupils in acts of kindness that have fundamentally stemmed from the Christian vision.
- Whilst enrichment opportunities and experiences hook pupils into learning and help with the development of their oracy and confidence, work in books shows insufficient evidence of religious education (RE) as a core subject.
- Collective worship is the heartbeat of the school and community; it is fully invitational and inclusive.
- Whilst the collegiate approach to identifying developments between staff and governors constantly reflects the school vision, evaluations of school improvement priorities do not exemplify the impact.

Areas for development

- Continue to develop and formalise systems and processes for accurately monitoring the school's effectiveness.
- Develop the depth and consistency of teaching and learning in RE through effective feedback, innovative practice and developing partnerships.
- Encourage pupils to develop spiritually by enabling them to reflect using a range of creative opportunities to respond both in and out of the classroom.
- Continue to forge links with global partners to give pupils a wider view of 'Growing together in love and respect'.

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

St John's provides a unique Church of England educational experience for pupils in the heart of Watford. Pupils are welcomed from all faiths and from non-faith backgrounds. Based on core Christian values the school serves the whole community by making the most of 'its dynamic blend of ethnicities, languages cultures and religions'.

The school's Christian mission statement is known and practised by all members of the community; it is referred to in school policies alongside pertinent phrases from *More than Caring and Sharing* by John Cox. It is underpinned by biblical references such as 'To love God with all our heart and mind and to love our neighbour as ourselves' from Deuteronomy 6: 4-5, Mark 12: 29-31 and Luke 109: 27. This encapsulates the school's determination and vision to treat everyone equally and with respect.

The school is effective in identifying and supporting both parents and pupils who are more vulnerable. Displays of the mission statement and associated values serve as a visible and living illustration of its all-inclusive purpose. Parents refer to these when explaining how school leaders have enabled them to flourish through acts of kindness and compassion. Parents explain how a recently established Heart and Soul group enables them to discuss problems in a safe and supportive environment, where no one is judged, and all are valued. 'The good values that mould us as adults help us and the pupils to make wise decisions.'

These practical expressions of moral and social acts of kindness also feature in the school's continuous support for local charities and social action projects. They enhance pupils' understanding of local need as well as providing them with a wider view of dignity and respect. A vast number of community action schemes involve people from diverse communities and backgrounds. Electric Umbrella, which is a group of talented musicians with a variety of needs, 'entertained the pupils in a spirit of love and friendship that everyone remembers.'

The pupils are democratically elected into 'Eagle' roles of responsibility. Active Eagles explain how their help on the playground teaches other pupils how to play and respect one another. They learn about how to make positive choices, and to follow resolution processes to achieve the expected codes of conduct. Positive behaviour policies with references to Jesus' teaching based on forgiveness and reconciliation help pupils to understand how to behave well.

Reflection Eagles, who participate in collective worship refer to 'love and respect' as values that help them to live and learn well together. Teachers explain how these roles of responsibility enable pupils to flourish, 'They aspire to take on these roles and enjoy doing things that benefit others. They learn social skills and polite ways to be assertive.' Reflection Eagles enjoy special relationships with a wide range of local groups such as the Blind Centre. All pupils, organised in diverse groups, take part in singing carols at different venues and celebrations around town and all are invited to Messy Church at St. John's.

Collective worship is an important and valued part of the school day. It establishes the rhythm of the school. It follows Anglican traditions and is built around prayer and liturgy. Planning is organised systematically using a range of Bible stories linked to associated values and Christian messages. Pupils explain that, 'When Jesus was arrested, he showed courage because he was being very brave.' Pupils engage respectfully as the 'school family'. One child referred to collective worship as 'the most important and exciting' part of the school day 'because I learn new things about how God loves our world'.

The broad and balanced thematic curriculum is achieved through collegiate discussion which focuses on what is relevant and best for the pupils. Titles such as God's Grand Design inspire pupils to explore different subjects and enable them to flourish. Teachers strive for 'educating excellence' through an inclusive range of visits and experiences, which provide active, visual and inspiring hooks into learning. Pupils make connections with their own experiences and raise questions, which provoke discussion. 'Big questions' are also explored through Godly Play; these link to Bible stories and form a key focus for spiritual moments of reflection. Pupils from all faiths are invited to say prayers in response to the story but the extent of any further work to explore the deeper questions about the story is not always fully exploited. Spiritual spaces around school offer prayerful places for reflection but not all attract pupils to respond in engaging and inspiring ways.

The school actively celebrates different festivals in all religions; knowledge and understanding gleaned from these allows pupils to extend their theological literacy and embrace the communal spirit. Gospel teachings relate to the lives of the pupils and learning from different faith leaders enables them to make connections between collective worship and their own experiences. They applaud Father David who helps the stories come alive and whose regular presence in the school energises the community. In informal evaluations, governors refer to the impact of collective worship as 'embracing the rich diversity'. The relationship between church and school is very strong and a robust set of governance structures ensures that the school is well led and managed.

The excellent relationships in school community cement the vision and enable the school to make sound strategic decisions. Respect is mutual and adults flourish because of the emphasis that is placed on their learning and wellbeing. Training for mental health and wellbeing has been completed by the headteacher and 'protective behaviours' strategies support individual pupils in overcoming their difficulties. Data shows that pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. Most pupils reach age related expectations from low starting points; vulnerable pupils are nurtured through a range of interventions. Pupils with English as an additional language learn through individual programmes based on visual prompts and words from their own language and as a result make good progress.

RE planning supports the school's Christian vision in that it is fully inclusive and has a wide range of content mainly from the Understanding Christianity Scheme and Herts Agreed Syllabus. Pupils articulate Bible stories with some confidence and they are beginning to make connections between different religions and world faiths. Visits to places of worship further enhance their learning and provide opportunities for spiritual growth.

As the school moves into this new phase of its journey it is well-placed to make the necessary improvements to provide for the next generation. Pupils enjoy being ambassadors for the school whether they are endeavouring 'Eagles' or representing the wider community. They contribute selflessly in age-appropriate actions that exemplify living and learning together in 'love and respect'.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

Curriculum changes have stalled the assessment processes, which are still in the early stages of development. Subject leaders articulate the good progress that pupils make from their starting points and they identify next steps through accurate school improvement planning. This is achieved through a range of pupil voice opportunities, which demonstrate pupils' knowledge and understanding. Work in books does not exemplify the quality of pupils' learning because opportunities are missed to set written tasks that enable pupils to demonstrate their response to deeper questions of faith and belief. Monitoring of teaching and learning is completed by the headteacher and is becoming more robust. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they impart it sensitively but opportunities to find a wider range of classroom strategies are not fully exploited.

Headteacher	Helen Langeveld
Inspector's name and number	Shirley Whales (830)