

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

The Cathedral Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School Chelmsford

Address	Victoria Road, Chelmsford, Essex CMI IPA		
Date of inspection	18 June 2019	Status of school	Voluntary Aided Primary
Diocese	Chelmsford	URN	115289

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

The Cathedral School is a primary school with 312 pupils on roll. The school has a very low level of religious and cultural diversity and 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 majority of pupils are admitted to this city centre school on Church criteria. The school has a very close working relationship with the Chelmsford Cathedral. The school has an Ofsted judgement of requires improvement.

The school's Christian vision

Our vision for our pupils and whole school community is that they are enabled to rejoice in life and the love of God, grow in prayer and faith, develop knowledge, skills and understanding of the world, themselves and others and seek God's purpose for themselves as confident, compassionate citizens of the world.

Key findings

- The Christian leadership of the headteacher and her senior team effectively models the Christian vision.
- The Christian vision and associated values impact positively on the wellbeing of the school community.
- The strong partnership between the school and the Cathedral provides a firm foundation for the success of the school and development of its Christian character.
- Collective worship is well led and effectively planned and used to embed the vision and values.
- Religious Education (RE) is accorded high status but assessment is not used effectively to drive up standards.

Areas for development

- Develop assessment in RE so that pupils have a clearer understanding of how to make sustained and greater progress.
- Secure staff confidence in using RE resources to build on the existing strengths of the RE curriculum.
- Establish greater involvement of pupils of all ages in the daily act of worship.

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

The school has a well-defined Christian vision that is theologically and biblically underpinned. It is expressed through the school's Christian values that acrostically spell 'Faith'; forgiveness, aspiration, integrity, trust and honesty. The vision closely shapes policy and practice and is integral to the changes being planned for the new curriculum and the training provided for staff. Leaders ensure that the supportive relationship between the school, the Cathedral and the Diocese enhances the learning experiences for both pupils and adults. Staff are encouraged to develop their expertise and to share their skills and experience with other schools. One teacher is a maths mastery specialist supporting the hub of local schools. One of the RE leaders has been the lead for Global learning and leads a Church school hub for the Kenyan partnership in the Diocese. The headteacher is on the steering committee of the Chelmsford Teaching Alliance. Parents praise the school for its care not just of its pupils but the whole family. Parent workshops and regular coffee mornings help parents to fully support their children and offers pastoral and emotional support for them. The school signposts parents to local support agencies and parent views are recognised through the parent forum.

The school has very effective systems for self-evaluation and has a clear plan for the way ahead. Following recent training and support, governors are now effectively carrying out their strategic roles. Pupils make good progress with some exceeding national expectations across both key stages. Pupils with specific needs are well supported in their learning journey by a highly trained team of support staff. Pupils feel safe and this enables them to flourish. Parents say that the school is a safe, caring Christian place which allows their children to develop a love of learning. The curriculum ensures that pupils' spiritual development and wellbeing are as important as academic outcomes. This, along with, the wide selection of extra-curricular activities, allow pupils to flourish and achieve in a variety of ways.

Parents praise the school in its ability to instil faith, confidence and kindness into their children. One commented that 'When the children leave the school they carry an invisible mark of faith on them'. All members of the school community have a deep-seated sense of belonging. The vision promotes character development as integral to pupils' self-esteem and high aspirations. Pupils are encouraged to share their views through both the school council and ECO councils. Charities are selected and supported because pupils understand the Christian concepts of giving and sharing and the need for justice for all. The school supports the large fund-raising events such as Children in Need and NSPPC and also CHESS, the local charity for the homeless. Pupils also shared how they actively raise money to support the charities set up and those supported by the families of two pupils who have sadly died during their time at the school.

Behaviour is excellent. The school has an ethos of celebration. Pupils are recognised for successes not only academically, for sport and music, but also for excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning. The experienced pastoral team and learning mentors, drawing on external counsellors when necessary, ensure pupils are very well supported emotionally. The strength of the closely-knit staff team is that all staff feel valued and supported.

Attendance is excellent as pupils enjoy coming to school. Pupils' response to the vision statement, to 'seek God's purpose for themselves as confident, compassionate citizens of the world', is illustrated by their care and respect for each other and the world around. The school is fully inclusive and positively celebrates difference and diversity. It has a strong link with a school in Kenya; pupils regularly write letters and teachers visit. This link has helped pupils' understanding of the Anglican church as a world-wide church. The curriculum, supported by regular faith days, increases pupils' appreciation of diversity.

Collective worship is inclusive and engaging and central to the life of the school. It is well planned by the headteacher and includes regular visits from the clergy and lay team at the Cathedral. Major festivals are celebrated by the school in the Cathedral and the school choir regularly sing at lunchtime concerts for the community in the Cathedral. Parents are always invited to Cathedral services and these are well supported. The Eucharist is an integral part of Cathedral worship and is meaningfully understood by all pupils. Pupils' have high levels of understanding of Anglican tradition. Their Bible knowledge is excellent as is their understanding of the Trinity. Prayer and reflection play important roles in the life of the school. Pupils spontaneously write a prayer request when they have a problem and know that these will be read. Prayers written by the pupils about

tragedies in the news and thankyou prayers are used in worship. The outdoor reflection garden, successfully established since the previous denominational inspection, is available for both pupils and staff for quiet prayer. There is a weekly well attended staff prayer meeting and all governors' meetings include prayer and Bible reading. The Year 6 worship group effectively, regularly plan, lead and monitor worship but there are very few opportunities for other pupils to be involved. Statutory obligations are met.

The strong leadership of the two RE leaders ensure that teachers plan and deliver exciting and innovative RE lessons. Pupils enjoy RE and know that their views are listened to and valued. 'Big' questions encourage a culture of enquiry and discussion. Pupils' biblical knowledge is very good. The Understanding Christianity resource is used across the school, but staff are not all confident in adapting the resource to match the needs of the pupils. There is a good balance between learning about Christianity and other faiths. Both the RE leaders are actively involved in the local RE hub supporting staff from other schools. Statutory requirements for RE are met.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

Teachers mark RE effectively and employ follow up questions to enable pupils' reflection on their learning. Pupils reach expected standards. The areas to improve on assessment from the previous denominational inspection have not been fully met. The present assessment system does not allow pupils to know how well they are doing, nor how they can make extended progress. An illustration of the priority afforded to RE is that RE lessons are taught in the mornings when support staff are available. This ensures that all groups of pupils have the opportunity to fully engage in the lessons.

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