

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Thomas Church of England Primary School			
Address	Astley Street, Leigh, Lancashire, WN7 2AS		
Date of inspection	22 November 2018	Status of school	Voluntary Aided Primary School
Diocese / Methodist District	Manchester	URN	106448

Overall Judgement	Grade	Good
How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?		
Additional Judgements		
The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good
The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Good

School context

St Thomas Church of England Primary School has 420 pupils on roll. The school has a very low levels of religious and cultural diversity and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is above national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below national averages. The current headteacher has been appointed since the last SIAMS and Ofsted inspections.

The school's Christian vision

With God's love, each member of our fellowship will flourish and succeed, growing into unique individuals well prepared for life's journey. Respect will be at the heart of our school, allowing us to value the strengths, the wisdom and the diversity of others. *Love one another as I have loved you. John 13:34*

Key findings

- The vision, being strongly rooted in Christian teaching, has a profound impact on the whole school community. This enables all members of the school to flourish personally and academically.
- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher and his deputy enthuses pupils and adults, making them feel included and valued.
- Collective worship is engaging, vibrant and relevant. It promotes personal reflection and a sense of belonging to a close-knit community.
- The deeply held values have a transformational impact on relationships, behaviour and the daily life of everyone in the school.
- Outstanding pastoral care is generously given by a dedicated team and all staff. This is highly valued by families and their children.
- RE has a high status. Teaching is good, particularly with regard to 'Learning from Religion'.

Areas for development

- In order to have the fullest possible understanding of this overarching element of the school's provision, governors should strengthen formal systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school's Christian vision and distinctiveness.
- Leaders and staff to work collaboratively to establish a shared understanding of spirituality within the context of the school. This will ensure that there is a unity of mind enabling this area of the school's mission to progress even further.
- Embed the implementation of 'Understanding Christianity' throughout the school. This will strengthen the RE curriculum and enable pupils to secure a fully coherent understanding of Christian belief and practice.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

The school's skilfully and collaboratively established Christian vision profoundly influences everything which happens at St Thomas'. Along with 12 Christian values, it is shared and embraced by all members of the school community with significant impact on the lives of pupils enabling them to flourish. This resulted in pupils expressing their motivation and commitment towards learning, relationships and the Christian life of the school. Leaders are aware of and embrace current thinking and developments in relation to church school education giving learners good opportunities to benefit from them. At present, governors do not have a structured and formal system in place to monitor and evaluate of the effectiveness of the school's Christian vision and distinctiveness.

Christian worship is central to the life of the school. It is welcoming, well-planned, thought provoking and engaging. Pupils readily and independently recall Bible stories and make links to school values as well as their own life and circumstances. Many opportunities are given for meaningful reflection and this creates a calmness allowing children to consider their learning and actions. Personal and shared prayer is thoroughly integrated into individuals' lives and it is spoken of as a natural and personal response. One pupil said, 'When we pray in school, we become more welcoming and closer to God'. Well resourced, vibrant and meaningful reflection areas promote personal prayer and spiritual development.

Staff have a good understanding of Church school distinctiveness as expressed by the school's Christian vision. Leaders give worthwhile opportunities, both locally and via Manchester and Blackburn dioceses, for professional development. This supports, underpins and further strengthens the outworking of the school vision. Staff speak of the outstanding support and encouragement given to them to enable them to be the best that they can. 'I couldn't ask for more supportive leaders,' reported one member of staff. Appointed since the last inspection, the headteacher and his deputy are inspirational in their leadership of the school and they have worked tirelessly to move the school forward. This has had a major impact in making all feel welcome, included and valued and enabling the school community to flourish and live well together.

Opportunities across the school curriculum supports pupils' spiritual development. However, staff have not yet collaborated to establish a shared understanding of spirituality and explored how this can be made more explicit. Vibrant and up to date displays in all areas of the school celebrate achievement and provide further opportunities to reflect on and deepen current learning.

Pupils behave very well and enjoy positive, supportive relationships with one another and with adults and this gives a purposeful and calm atmosphere to the school. One very young pupil commented, 'We are working together at teamwork,' whilst others made supportive and upbuilding comments about the work and engagement of their peers. Pupils who would benefit from a range of personalised support and intervention are promptly identified and enabled to make positive changes. The dedicated pastoral team, along with all staff, generously invest time and energy into ensuring that any barriers to learning in school or at home are effectively addressed. The nurture of all pupils throughout the school is exceptional. This, along with the strong Christian ethos encourages good mental health, and enables all to thrive and to live out the school's biblical inspiration to, 'love one another as I have loved you'.

The school has an appropriate, broad, balanced and relevant curriculum which ensures the well-rounded development and academic success of each pupil. It is influenced by the school's Christian vision and values and recognises the uniqueness of everyone as a child of God. Pupils have increasing opportunities to explore big questions which encourage deep thinking. For example, a Year 4 class debated the question 'Can you ever escape from darkness?' Such opportunities enable pupils to develop curiosity and to make and explore links and issues. Pupils speak of their enjoyment and value of the challenges of learning and so they engage well. Parents reported their children's love of school and learning. This enabling environment means that children are fully engaged in their work and play.

Pupils are aware of global issues and they are knowledgeable about and actively pray for people who are in much less fortunate circumstances. Fundraising for several charities encourages compassion, generosity and an understanding of the need to act where there are inequalities in the world.

The school is active in its community with pupils engaging in high profile local events such as Remembrance, which focused upon the experiences of a local infantryman. This developed their understanding of World War I and the meaning of sacrificing a life for others as well as promoting hopes for a better future. The local vicar and church members are actively involved with the school and this is valued by pupils, staff and parents. Recent school services at the church included a harvest event and a service of Eucharist where elements of the service were clearly explained, promoting deeper understanding.

Information and data about the school shows that the progress of pupils, including those with special needs and disability (SEND), is above the national and local authority average in the majority of measures. Every member of the school community, whatever their background or circumstance, is treated with dignity and as an individual who is known and nurtured. Throughout the school there is a strong culture of embracing and respecting difference in its various forms and this is also promoted through the curriculum. Pupils articulate the importance of being able to express different views and opinions and valued opportunities to explore and discuss these sensitively. This meant that pupils feel safe in a culture of mutual respect. Pupils and parents said that bullying in any form was highly uncharacteristic of their experience of the school and describe how problems which arise are quickly and effectively resolved.

Dedicated curriculum time and some sharing of good practice within and beyond the school ensure that religious education is taught effectively. Pupils listen carefully and with open minds to the viewpoints of others enabling their understanding to grow. A focus on learning from religion supports opportunities for an understanding of similarity and difference. Whilst the majority of curriculum time for the subject focuses on Christianity, pupils' knowledge of other major world faiths promotes a breadth of understanding. The newly introduced syllabus brings opportunities for further learning about religion to become more embedded over time. The subject leader attends regular meetings of local RE teachers, some of which are provided by the diocese and lead to a shared understanding of standards and subject content. The teaching of RE meets statutory requirements.



The effectiveness of RE is Good.

RE has a high status as in the school. This results in learning activities being well planned to create lively, imaginative lessons which promote good pupil progress. Learning from religion is well established whilst learning about religion is as yet to be fully embedded. Teaching about the Bible, harvest and the Eucharist is enhanced through the work of the local vicar in a number of classes, helping pupils to make stronger links about Christian faith and practice. Teachers plan work for different needs well, helping pupils to be challenged in their learning and to enjoy the subject. Some assessment of pupil work is good and shows where they can further enhance their understanding of the subject. Pupils' progress and attainment in the subject is in line with other subjects.

Headteacher	James Marsh
Inspector's name and number	Peter Coates QA Assessor: Allyson Taylor 768