

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Ashton St Peter's VA Church of England Primary School			
Address	Leighton Court, Dunstable LU6 1EW		
Date of inspection	13/06/2019	Status of school	Voluntary aided primary
Diocese / Methodist District	St Albans	URN	109703

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

Ashton St Peter's VA Church of England School is a primary school with 208 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. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages. A majority of parents declare their religious affiliation as Christian. The school became a primary school from the previous lower school in September 2014. The headteacher has been in post since April 2019.

The school's Christian vision

Our children and adults will be grounded in God's word. We maintain a Christian family focus, aiming to support parents in raising their children as flourishing citizens, enabling them to handle life's challenges with courage and perseverance. We provide high-quality learning, preparing children to flourish academically and spiritually, fulfilling their God-given potential.

Key findings

- Strong leadership in a time of staffing change, focused by a distinctive and unique Christian vision, is addressing pupil progress issues effectively. The school is engaging well with support from the local authority and the diocese.
- Leaders include a global dimension to the curriculum and extra-curricular activities so that learners exhibit an exceptional and profound understanding of difference, diversity and social injustice.
- Monitoring and evaluation by governors and pupils has led to positive changes in collective worship, including a greater focus on the school's Christian vision.
- High quality teaching and learning in religious education (RE) in many classes ensures pupils' good knowledge and understanding of Christianity and a range of religions and world views.
- The school does not have a shared understanding of spiritual development and has not identified times for spirituality within different subjects.

Areas for development

- Develop a rigorous monitoring and evaluation schedule across the areas of RE, collective worship and spiritual development involving staff and governors, that leads to improved practice.
- As a school, develop a shared understanding of spirituality in order to plan progressively deeper experiences across the curriculum for spiritual development.
- Enhance teachers' leadership skills by ensuring opportunities to lead high quality training, that spreads and shares good practice in RE teaching and learning.

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 unique and distinctive Christian vision based on St Peter, Bible teaching from his life and the teachings of Jesus. The school has worked with local churches as well as the diocese to develop its Christian vision. It is clearly explained and known by staff and pupils in terms of St Peter's journey of life and their own lives as the 'Ashton St Peter's family'. Governors and staff monitor the impact of the vision and have recently updated it, strongly upholding the original foundation of the school. The long established values have links to biblical teaching and these are lived out in the daily life of the school. Pupils remember the vision by singing a song based on it. This imaginative song reinforces the importance of living 'a life of peace and love', 'to keep going when it's hard' and 'to live the best life' they can.

The school has been through a time of change with the previous headteacher and the priest from the parish church both leaving their posts in December 2018. Middle and interim leaders with governors' support, have maintained the priority on development as a church school including awareness of current thinking in church school education. The new headteacher has established a strong team to respond to current challenges and all have worked well with diocesan and local authority support. Recent developments have concentrated on working with other partners to address standards of teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics. In February 2018 Ofsted graded the school as Requires Improvement, citing pupil progress issues in Key Stage 2. Support for the school has since ensured that standards of teaching and learning and the quality of curricular experiences has improved. The school does not have a shared understanding of spiritual development and its impact on pupils developing curiosity and asking big questions.

The school supports a range of charities, like Christian Aid and Save the Children, that reflect its Christian vision and values, such as respect and positivity. Pupils are encouraged to engage in social action and be courageous advocates for change in local, national and global communities. Pupils have regular curriculum times when they look beyond themselves and think globally about life. They develop an understanding of disadvantage, deprivation and exploitation of natural world as each class studies a focus country. The 'Valuing All God's Children' guidance has been used to formulate school policy so catering for individuals and embracing difference are strong features of this school. It is a place where all are treated with dignity and respect. As their vision song says, 'we receive and give to others, the greatest care that we can'. Older pupils are very concerned to express their views on social action and challenging injustice. For example, one pupil was indignant that, 'Some people don't care about people who are different. It doesn't happen in our school because we respect everyone.' Another added, 'God made us to take care of this world' going on to describe writing letters to the council regarding plastic recycling.

Being a community and living well together are areas of strength at Ashton St Peter's. Behaviour is outstanding as a result of the shared Christian vision and associated values. It is successful in promoting social development that encourages good mental health, enabling all to flourish and live well together. The Christian vision and values underpin relationships, enabling pupils to disagree well and practice forgiveness and reconciliation. This is also reflected in the school's behaviour, exclusion and attendance policies. Rates of attendance, including for vulnerable pupils are high. Despite the many recent changes, good mental health for the adults in school has been well supported because of the strong Christian vision and long established values of the school.

Collective worship is a strong expression of the school's Christian vision. It often focuses on the life of St Peter or the school's Christian values, such as courage, and the teachings of Jesus in the Bible. It is also firmly based on the traditions and practices of the local church using phrases and prayers from Anglican tradition, reflection, hymns and modern worship songs. It is warmly inclusive and invitational to all. For example, one child described it as a 'time to get together and time to think'. Life at Ashton St Peter's is tightly bound to life at Priory Church, with its festivals and saints' days, and to a familiar pattern of worship. Opportunities for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate worship are developing through the leadership of the pupils' worship committee. They take their role very seriously. For example, one child said that 'worship group is a good thing because kids can spread the message to kids'. There are strong community partnerships with local churches, such as through visits involving the education team at the Priory, and special services. These help pupils to develop an appreciation that Christians worship in different ways. Some governor monitoring of worship has led to improved practice but it is not sufficiently systematic or rigorous. Pupils have an age appropriate understanding of the Christian belief in the trinitarian nature of God.

RE is an expression of the school's vision to teach about God and his world like Jesus taught Peter the way to live. It draws on the school's Christian values such as integrity and perseverance. Pupils are highly motivated towards RE. For example, a Year 2 child said that work on inspirational faith leaders, Mohammed, Moses and Jesus, had inspired them personally. A Year 6 pupil described how humanists 'follow values but they're not written down in a holy book'. The RE curriculum makes good use of the same plan as other schools locally as well as a national resource called 'Understanding Christianity'. The RE leader has led training for staff that has enhanced teaching and learning across the school but some pockets of inconsistent practice remain. Pupils have a firm understanding of the impact of Christianity and of different faiths on society, one saying, 'England is a multi-cultural country so there are lots of religions'. Visitors, including parents of different faiths, contribute to lessons. RE is also a safe space for learners to critically reflect on their own convictions, a Year 2 pupil commenting, 'I know Jesus and God is looking after us and every country is important.'



The effectiveness of RE is Good

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is usually good according to monitoring by the able RE lead, a view confirmed by inspection evidence. The school enables its vulnerable pupils to flourish academically in RE. Individual pupils' needs are well supported by providing different work including using computers to research and record their work. RE is rigorously assessed as a core subject and standards are similar to those in these subjects.

Headteacher

David Bower

Inspector's name and number

Liz Youngman 465