

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Leigh St John's Church of England Primary School

Address	Kirkhall Lane, Leigh, Greater Manchester, WN7 1RY		
Date of inspection	07 March 2019	Status of school	VA Primary
Diocese	Manchester	URN	106517

Overall Judgement	Grade	Excellent
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	Excellent
The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Excellent

School context

St John's is a primary school with 225 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly below national averages. In 2017 the school began to admit KS2 pupils and currently includes pupils from reception (EYFS2) to year 5. This process will be complete in September 2019 when the school population will include pupils from reception to year 6.

The school's Christian vision

Our church school, through its Christian values and nurturing approach aspires to be a community of grace and one that 'glows in the dark' through the overflow of God's love. We seek to empower our children and staff to do justice, love mercifully and achieve great things – hearts and minds connected.

Key findings

- The school's Christian vision threads across all aspects of school life. It is firmly rooted in biblical teaching and clearly known and understood by all staff and governors.
- Pupils and parents know and understand the words from Micah 6:8 that underpin the vision. They talk with confidence about ways in which the verses encourage them to be the best that they can be for God.
- The school's promise to pupils, known as the school charter, is additional to the academic curriculum. Through the charter experiences pupils develop skills and understanding that support the vision statement of empowering them to do justly, love mercifully and achieve great things.
- Religious education (RE) is very well taught. Pupils show maturity in the ways in which they relate Christian teaching to issues and events of importance to them.
- Worship is inspirational and transformational and reflects the school's Christian vision.

Areas for development

- Strengthen the involvement of governors in the strategic evaluation of the effectiveness of the school as a church school. This will enable governors to fulfil their role as critical friends more effectively.
- Develop pupils' understanding of the ways in which faith is reflected in the lives of believers.

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

Every aspect of this inclusive and accepting school links back to its purposeful Christian vision driven by words from Micah 6, 'The Lord has told you what is good. He has told you what he wants from you: Do what is right to other people. Love being kind to others. And live humbly, trusting your God.' The commitment of senior leaders to empowering pupils and staff to 'do justice, love mercifully and achieve great things' is impressive.

Consequently, pupils and parents know that to be successful and achieve well at St John's is about more than academic attainment. Strong partnerships with the local church community and Manchester diocese support senior leaders and governors in the continuing development of the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Through their commitment to demonstrating Christian values in their lives and discipleship, pupils fully reflect the vision of glowing in the dark through the overflow of God's love. Staff new to the school are supported in understanding the ways in which the Christian vision is expressed and developed. Governors know the school well. They are committed to ensuring that, as the school grows in numbers and its provision, its distinctiveness is secure and strong. Governors have successfully and thoroughly addressed the actions arising from the previous inspection. However, their involvement in regular self-assessment of the school as a church school sometimes lacks focus.

The school's vision is reflected in the innovative school charter. It embodies a commitment to providing a range of experiences for pupils during their primary school life from hunting bugs and to visiting a university. The charter supports pupils' wellbeing and makes a significant contribution to their excellent spiritual development. Consequently, pupils know that they are unique to God and through their lives, want to make a difference. The needs of individual pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs or disability, are well met. The vast majority of pupils flourish and make good and frequently very good progress. Where there are occasional concerns about the progress or attainment of a small number of pupils, targeted support is given and pupils quickly get back on track.

Pupils clearly express their understanding of the importance of mental and emotional fitness. They know that it is right to share concerns and worries and recognise that making the right choices helps them to be happy. One pupil commented that, 'It's important to treat people well even if that's not how they treat you'. Awards for pupils who show resilience in difficult circumstances or 'who serve humbly and for the love of God' are highly valued and are acknowledged as an aspirational goal.

Pupils' knowledge and understanding of biblical stories and verses is excellent. Older pupils are able to connect Jesus' teaching with their understanding of issues such as judgement, disadvantage and deprivation. Reflection points around the school encourage pupils to respond thoughtfully to different real life situations. For example, a display of bottles of clean and dirty water encourages pupils to reflect on which they would prefer to drink and bathe in. In response, a reception class pupil wrote of counting her blessings whilst other pupils committed themselves to raising funds for Water Aid. Pupils of all ages engage with opportunities to think beyond themselves about the lives and experiences of others, locally, nationally and globally.

Parents recognise the excellence of the school's pastoral team both in its work with pupils but also in their commitment to the whole family. Vulnerable pupils are carefully nurtured and supported so that they are ready to learn. Senior leaders provide clear guidance about issues such as attendance and punctuality and are firm but supportive of parents where attendance is an issue. Focused and individualised care for pupils on a social and pastoral level is mirrored in the kindness and support offered to staff and to parents. This care goes well beyond what might be expected, fulfilling the school's vision. Pupils are respectful and forgiving. They know that to be kind is to follow Jesus' teaching. Pupils recognise the many ways in which people can be different from one another but talk of knowing that 'everybody is equal and we are more alike than different'. Behaviour is excellent and behavioural choices are linked to a clear understanding of Christian values.

Relationships are a strength of the school. Personal, social and health education, including relationships and sex education, is founded on the vision of being a community of grace. Pupils know that they are all special to God and are accepted and loved. Consequently, prejudicial behaviour is very rare and the playground is a friendly place and incidents of bullying are almost non-existent.

Senior leaders rightly identify prayer and reflection as the beating heart of the school. Prayer is invitational and used at key points during the day. Pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of times of prayer or reflection and reflection points and biblical verses around the school are well used. Pupils show a mature understanding of core theological concepts and talk knowledgeably about their understanding of God's big plan, the central theme of all worship. Worship is carefully planned to reflect the school's vision of being a community of grace with hearts and minds connected. It routinely challenges pupils reflect on what it means to be a

Christian and the ways in which they can live out their faith. They learn to relate their understanding of local or global events to Jesus' teaching and focus points around the school reinforce worship themes. As a result, pupils confidently share their understanding of biblical teaching and the ways in which they are empowered to take action. Key Christian festivals are celebrated and a wide range of experiences are offered that support pupils' excellent knowledge and understanding of Jesus' ministry. Pupils, staff and the vicar are involved in planning, leading and evaluating worship. As a result, it is varied, stimulating and central to school life. Thoughtful evaluation influences future worship plans and provides insight for staff and the vicar on the response of pupils.

RE is a popular subject amongst pupils. They value the opportunity it gives for discussion about issues important to them such as including people and of saying thank you. Pupils learn to think deeply and to share insights respectfully. For example, older pupils investigating the story of Terry Waite, reflect on why people take hostages and whether violence is ever right. Pupils however, are not always confident when discussing the ways in which faith affects the way people live. RE is well taught and reflects Church of England expectations.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

Pupils are excited by RE and enthusiastically share their learning and times when their thinking has been challenged. As a result, progress and attainment are strong and at least in line with national expectations. The vision of pupils achieving great things is evidenced in the quality of their work and the maturity of their discussion. Monitoring is accurate and effective and teaching is never less than good and sometimes excellent. Assessment is accurate and provides teachers with a clear picture of pupils' knowledge and understanding. The well informed and committed RE subject leader works with other schools to ensure that the teaching and learning at St John's reflects the best of current practice.

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