



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Christ Church Church of England VA Junior School, Sowerby Bridge

Address Park Road, Sowerby Bridge, HX6 2BJ

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

Overall grade **Good**

The impact of collective worship **Good**

The effectiveness of religious education (RE) **Good**

School's vision

Growing in faith, learning and love

I alone know the plans I have for you; plans for the future you hope for. Jeremiah 29:11

We seek to transform the lives of our children within a Christian environment, nurturing the wellbeing of each child, promoting the highest academic achievement and instilling a lifelong love of learning.

Key findings

- The vision for giving pupils hope for transforming their lives radiates across the school. Leadership at all levels, including governance, is fully committed to the Christian vision.
- Staff and pupils see the school as an extended family. The vision for 'nurturing the wellbeing of each child' means that pupils have a very positive attitude towards learning. Pastoral support and inclusion are a significant strength of the school. This was particularly evident in enabling staff and students to be well-supported during lockdown and the subsequent return to school. This caring environment enables pupils to flourish.
- The Christian vision of the school drives the whole curriculum. However, there is no shared understanding of spirituality to inform the planning of spiritual development across the curriculum or in collective worship.
- Religious education (RE) has a positive impact on pupils' learning about Christianity and different faiths. This reflects the school's vision and contributes well to pupils' overall development. In recent years, there have been few opportunities to engage with people of diverse faiths and cultures.
- Collective worship is a significant moment in each day in which all pupils and adults take part. It is invitational and inclusive. Pupils enjoy leading and taking part in worship. However, evaluation and feedback of collective worship and other aspects of the vision require further development.

Areas for development

- Introduce a more rigorous and systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation of the outworking of the vision, including in collective worship. This is so that improvement planning is driven by self-evaluation from all stakeholders.
- Establish a shared approach to spirituality. This is so that staff are equipped to plan effectively for spiritual development within collective worship and the wider curriculum.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to engage with people from diverse faiths and cultures. This is to enable pupils to understand and celebrate respect, difference and diversity.

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

Christ Church is a nurturing and welcoming school. The school's Christian vision underpins a caring school community, where pupils and adults 'grow in faith, learning and love'. The dedicated staff team use the values of hope, friendship and respect, to get to know and nurture each pupil so that they flourish. The vision focuses leaders' choices. Supported by the governing body, the headteacher ensures that the pupils are always at centre of the decision-making process. The headteacher and governors speak confidently about how recent decisions around creating two smaller Year 6 classes were informed by the school's Christian vision. These choices make a significant impact on curriculum development plans and pupil outcomes.

Driven by her own faith, the headteacher's communication of the school's vision ensures the willing support of all staff and earns the respect of parents and pupils. The small staff team are eager to support each other and this begins with the headteacher. Staff speak of their delight in seeing their pupils and colleagues succeed. The school's vision is woven through the curriculum, which offers a wide range of learning opportunities, supporting pupils of all abilities. Individual pupil needs are identified early and, by liaising with parents, enable tailored support to be put in place. Parent and school communication is highly effective. This was particularly evident in enabling staff and students to be well-supported during lockdown and the subsequent return to school. On a recent survey completed by parents, outcomes were very positive. One stated, 'We are comforted in the knowledge that the pastoral care is there'.

There are strong partnerships with the Diocese and local authority who provide effective support for subject leaders and self-evaluation. As a result, the curriculum and the quality of teaching in RE has been invigorated. The curriculum effectively meets the learning needs of all pupils and enables them to flourish. Pupils describe how the adults help them to make positive choices about how they live and behave. One example of this was when, in the middle of winter, the school offered its families a hot meal after a weekend of no power.

Outdoor education plays an important role in working out the vision for 'nurturing the wellbeing of each child'. The extensive grounds that the school sits in are used well to help pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum. The recently installed orienteering trail supports pupils in developing teamwork skills. Pupils also look after raised beds, which were used to grow vegetables that were shared with the local community during the recent pandemic. Leaders felt there was a need to encourage pupils to become more active on their return to school. The Junior Leadership team described the half-termly 'Skip2bFit' as 'amazing and encouraging us to keep fit all of the time'. They also talked of this being used as a possible fund-raising occasion. The Junior Leadership team explained that they make decisions about charity fundraising events. The result is an awareness of the impact of these on those in need. Inspiring pupils to engage in social action and become courageous advocates for change is still in its infancy.

The governor's presence in school is well-established and they have a clear understanding of their role. They explain how the vision drives strategic decisions and the way they support the leadership team. The effectiveness of their leadership is evident in the way they drew together the Christian vision and underpinning theology whilst the headteacher was away from school. This focus on the vision continues to drive the school's commitment to embedding necessary developments. As a result, the school is well-prepared to serve its local community.

The school has a clear Christian distinctiveness. Displays around the school including 'The Big Frieze' complement this. They foster pupils' natural inquisitiveness about who they are and understanding of Christian beliefs about God's creation. Alongside this, staff model the vision daily leading to a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Consequently, behaviour across school is of a high standard and pupils are welcoming and polite. One pupil explained that 'the best thing about the school is all my friends and teachers'. Pupils have positive attitudes towards difference and diversity. The emphasis placed on 'nurturing the wellbeing of each child' means that pupils welcome and treat those who are different to themselves with dignity and respect. This has been particularly apparent with pupils who have recently arrived from the Ukraine.

In RE, pupils demonstrate respect for others as they explore big questions and dig deeper. As a result, RE provides a safe space to reflect and consider their own ideas and faith journey. Pupils particularly enjoy researching about diverse faiths and cultures. However, cultural diversity is not fully embedded within the curriculum. Pupils say they enjoy lessons because their teachers help them improve as they reflect on their learning. In RE lessons, pupils use big questions and

the use of knowledge organisers to enable reflection. This enhances the assessment process used by the school to gauge the progress of the pupils. However, a deep, shared language of spirituality is not well-developed. This limits the opportunities for the spiritual flourishing of pupils and adults.

Collective worship is a central part of the school. The vision and values are lived out and reflected in the chosen themes and illustrations. Each class enjoys planning and leading worship. There is a clear structure to collective worship, led by both pupils and adults, which includes a celebration each week. Collective worship aims to involve all pupils and staff. There is a strong feeling of togetherness when the children sing. Pupils recognise that they are inspired to change their behaviours or thinking in response to the worship themes. The pupils enjoy sharing their thoughts and ideas in this safe environment and are invited to take part in prayer. Comments and reflections about collective worship are gathered across the year. This is yet to feed back into the strategic or daily planning of worship.

Parents are equally enthusiastic about school worship. As the school begins to welcome parents back following the pandemic, every opportunity has been enthusiastically welcomed with very high levels of attendance. This was particularly evident at the school's celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Parents say this helps them feel part of the school family. Staff also value the worship as a time for the whole school to come together and share in the school's Christian vision and associated values.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

All pupils make good progress in RE as a result of a rich and engaging curriculum. RE is led well through work that is carefully planned and sequenced. This enables pupils to recall and make links between their prior and current learning. An effective enquiry approach is used to challenge pupils' thinking through 'Digging Deeper' and 'big questions'. This enriches the high quality of teaching. The creative curriculum enables all pupils to flourish, including those with special needs and/or disabilities.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	22 June 2022	URN	107554
Date of previous inspection	9 June 2015		
School status	Voluntary Aided Junior School	NOR	118
Name of MAT/Federation	N/A		
Diocese	Leeds		
Headteacher	Alison Embleton		
Pupil profile	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 is above national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)			
Inspector's name	Rob Dean	No.	C161705