

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Countess Anne Church of England Voluntary Aided School

Address School Lane, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL10 8AX

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

Excellent

The impact of collective worship

Excellent

The effectiveness of religious education (RE)

Excellent

School's vision

We hope that as the pupils journey through the school they would begin to understand God's heart for them, to know that His love is both wide and deep, that he delights in their very being.

'I pray that you.....may have the power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ'. Ephesians 3:18

Key findings

- The inspiring and meaningful vision of the school permeates every aspect of its life and beyond into the wider community. Every person, adult or pupil, is made to feel special and they all appreciate the breadth of opportunities given. Pupils achieve highly. Those who are vulnerable are given exceptional support, which is often transformational and, as a result, their confidence grows rapidly.
- The exemplary and highly energetic Christian leadership of the headteacher means that there is a continuous striving for improvement in this excellent school. This, accompanied by the extremely conscientious monitoring by the governing body, means that the Christian distinctiveness of the school is unmistakable.
- The emphasis on spiritual development is particularly strong. Worship led by the clergy and staff significantly enhances spiritual growth. However, spiritual development is limited to planned opportunities for reflection within the curriculum.
- Collective worship is carefully planned and evaluated. It entirely encapsulates the school's ethos and vision. It is a joyous event which celebrates and has a huge impact upon pupils' development.
- Religious education (RE) is well-planned, led and taught. It provides a safe space for pupils to discuss and debate. The work produced is of a very high quality and pupils have developed an excellent command of religious literacy.

Areas for development

- Develop opportunities for pupils to explore and extend their spiritual awareness so that they can recognise more fully how this can enrich their lives.

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 leaders at Countess Anne school have built an inspiring and joyful community where pupils, staff and others from outside the school flourish exceptionally strongly. The incredibly powerful Christian vision shines like a beacon, is at the heart of the school and directs all that it does. Pupils and staff know that they are cherished and cared for as children of God and are given opportunities which enhance and, in many cases, transform their lives. The words 'higher, deeper, wider and broader, like God's love' are always considered when talking about the school's vision and provision. This provision has a huge impact. The school has high expectations for its pupils, and they achieve well. Vulnerable pupils are given additional support well beyond that which might be expected. Everyone is valued for their talents. Consequently, pupils who have struggled in other schools or have had exceptional challenges or traumas to overcome, flourish at Countess Anne.

The very broad curriculum is totally driven by the vision and gives pupils additional life skills such as cycling proficiency, film making or kite flying. The extra-curricular provision is exceptionally rich, including mountaineering, caving and even how to launch a rocket. Parents have attended a residential weekend led by the headteacher and found it life changing. An outreach provision, Eden House, run by the school and which is widely used, provides a safe space as well as therapies for the community. In everything links are made to Christian teachings. This extends from curriculum subjects, to how pupils are expected to behave and to the colourful displays of art around the school. Class rules are linked to parables such as the lost sheep or the prodigal son and help to form a common understanding of why the school community wishes to behave as it does. Pupils strongly appreciate the values the school teaches them. Staff are excellent role models in all they do. The impact of the vision and associated values is evident, as the school is a highly inclusive community where pupils get along well together and show extreme respect and kindness. Forgiveness is encapsulated in the phrase pupils use when things go wrong, 'Thank you for saying sorry, I forgive you but please don't do it again.' This builds pupils' self-esteem, develops their character and enables them to blossom and thrive. Pupils have a strong sense of compassion for those who experience deprivation. Through their 'Make Believers Group', they raise considerable sums for charities such as the local food bank or Water Aid. One pupil on her own volition has been selling books to raise funds for those who have no access to educational material. During lockdown and since they have taken hampers of 'goodies' to the local care home. Pupils show a growing awareness of global issues.

Every action that leaders take is determined by the vision. Its theological underpinning is fully understood. Governors use it when setting the budget and making any strategic decisions. They are fully involved in the life of the school and monitor its work tightly. Link governors evaluate the impact of each subject very thoroughly, not only visiting the school but listening to the voices of pupils and parents. The headteacher has a passionate desire to ensure that all within his school succeed. He is highly innovative in his approach and his own personal Christian belief drives him. The well-being of staff is a high priority for the leadership. Inventive staff team building days are highly appreciated by teachers, as are cards and thank yous from governors. The vision extends to staff development and teachers value the wide-ranging professional development opportunities which empower them as future leaders of church schools. The school has an incredibly rich range of partners. It works well with the Diocese and with all the churches in the Hatfield Team Ministry. The school is outward facing and the headteacher acts as a coach on courses.

Collective worship is seen by pupils as 'what the ethos of the school is built on'. It is vibrant and valued by pupils, who consider it a precious time to learn and reflect. Pupils and staff articulated how inspiring they found the Eucharist. Collective Worship continued during lockdown and the school singing of the Blessing was viewed worldwide online. The format of collective worship is determined by the church's calendar, however in a deliberate move to involve all in worship, it goes beyond the spoken word. Some signing is used, taught by a student teacher with a hearing impairment. Worship frequently includes dance and events such as making Easter gardens and devising Easter plays. It is totally invitational, but pupils of all faiths attend and gain spiritual development from it. In addition, visits by the Team Ministry in Hatfield mean that pupils experience a wide range of forms of Anglican worship and liturgy. Music is absolutely central to worship. Pupils play instruments, for example, drums through their Tribal Groove Group or sing joyously, supported

through their work with the Voices Foundation. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are involved fully in planning and leading. Evaluations of worship led by their peers are rigorous and lead to changes. Plans exist to extend the leading of worship to lower years, but this has been delayed because of the pandemic. The governors regularly evaluate the impact of worship through discussions with pupils. It encourages and deepens spiritual reflection and enhances spiritual growth. However, there is less opportunity for pupils to reflect outside of the planned curriculum.

RE is exceptionally well-planned and led and reflects the school's vision. It makes a huge contribution to pupils' flourishing. It provides a safe space in which to explore beliefs and big questions of meaning and contributes hugely to pupils' spiritual development. The approach to the curriculum is innovative. As well as considering biblical texts, it encompasses art, viewing films, listening to visitors, having discussions as well as writing responses. Pupils have gained enormously from visiting places of worship or even other classrooms when they were not able to pay visits outside of school. The RE leader provides very strong support for other members of staff. She is totally committed to ensuring staff know about their subject through professional development. She has undertaken an Inspired Leadership Course which has developed her practice and understanding even further.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

Teaching and learning in RE is Excellent. The pupils engage enthusiastically, are challenged well, and they have a very thorough understanding and knowledge of the topics which they are learning. The manner in which the curriculum is sequenced enhances pupils' progress. Pupils with special needs and/or disabilities are well supported. Assessment is exceptionally thorough, and pupils can understand the progress which they are making in RE and what they need to do to improve their work.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	26 May 2022	URN	140238
Date of previous inspection	26 February 2015		
School status	Academy VA	NOR	212
Name of MAT/Federation			
Diocese	St Albans		
Headteacher	David Lodge		
Pupil profile	The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is in line with national averages.		
	The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)			
Inspector's name	Marcia Headon	No.	761