



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Dolphinholme Church of England Primary School

Abbeystead Road, Dolphinholme, Lancaster, Lancashire, LA2 9AN

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

With God at the heart of everything we do,
We educate by encouraging a sense of wonder, praise and mutual respect.
We offer every child opportunities for success,
Making them confidently equipped for life's journey.
'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.'
John 15:5

Key findings

- The servant leadership, compassion and determined drive of the headteacher is exemplary and is enhanced by a deeply personal faith. Leaders lead by example at every level. Dolpinholme is a school where everyone is truly equipped for life's journey and enabled to flourish.
- The life of the school is deeply rooted in a strong Christian vision which is fully understood by all members of the school community. This vision is tangible, permeates all aspects of school life and is transforming lives.
- Collective worship links closely to the vision; providing opportunities to reflect on the meaning of life, to ask big questions and to praise God. Class worship is generally well-planned, although a shared approach to planning would provide greater cohesion.
- The development of the whole child is paramount. The environment is used in thought provoking ways to allow adults and pupils to experience a sense of awe and wonder. Opportunities to develop spiritually are rich and support the spiritual flourishing of all.
- Religious education (RE) is innovative and exciting. High quality teaching and learning offers every pupil the opportunity to succeed. Thought provoking questions continually encourage pupils to take risks and 'go deeper'.

Areas for development

- Ensure that the ethical and charitable work that the school had begun to undertake before the pandemic with the local community and globally is resumed and refreshed. This will ensure that the strong Christian vision will benefit communities outside the school and will further strengthen opportunities for pupils to engage in social action.
- Develop a consistent approach to planning class worship. This will ensure that all pupils benefit from equally rich and varied experiences.

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

Dolphinholme is a school defined and driven by its deeply embedded gospel vision. Christian values have been carefully chosen to enhance the vision. The Bible quotation underpinning the vision 'I am the vine you are the branches' permeates every aspect of school life and beyond. It recognises that we are all children of God with unique gifts to offer. All members of the school community understand the vision and explain its meaning with passion. One pupil explained 'Jesus is the root. He is solid. We are the branches. We try to live like the root, like Jesus.'

Governors and senior leaders have established a robust system of self-evaluation to ensure continuous improvement as a Church school. Bold decisions have been taken to ensure that Dolphinholme is a centre of excellence for all. This includes the recent addition of a purpose-built pre-school. School leaders have created an environment where the importance of awe and wonder is given the highest priority, enabling pupils to flourish from a very young age.

Dolphinholme is a school that cares deeply and it is a place where difference is celebrated. Pupils and staff describe school as a place where they can be themselves because they know that they are loved. Pupils from a variety of cultures and faiths attend. Opportunities are planned to enable pupils to learn from one another, resulting in a climate of mutual respect.

The school has developed an exciting curriculum with RE at the heart of it. In addition to RE lessons, teachers skilfully weave RE into other subjects, meaning pupils have increased opportunities to deepen their knowledge and skills. High quality teaching, visits to places of worship and hands-on experiences ensure that knowledge 'sticks'. Pupils engage with big questions in great depth and can develop their ideas. For example, when learning about Mary and Joseph's flight from Egypt a pupil commented 'the star looks like a cross. I think this shows this was God's idea all along.' Through skilful questioning and debate, pupils are constantly challenged. They describe how teachers encourage and support them to 'go deeper'. A rigorous system of monitoring is in place, focused on improving teaching and learning. Leaders with high levels of expertise support less experienced staff by sharing knowledge and skills. This results in consistently high quality, dynamic RE teaching across the school.

Collective worship is deeply embedded and valued by all, making it the heartbeat of the school. A skilful combination of liturgy and modern elements, such as rap music, ensures worship is both traditional and relevant. A strong pupil voice exists through the worship committee. Pupils are highly involved in planning, delivering and evaluating worship. Consequently, worship is more interactive and pupils enjoy this level of engagement. Training and support from the local clergy further improves the range of experiences within worship. Examples of how worship has transformed lives are powerful. One member of staff decided to take confirmation classes to understand more about what it means to be a Christian. Pupils explain how worship helped them cope with the challenges of the Covid 19 pandemic. Opportunities for prayer and reflection are plentiful and pupils explain that they can pray anywhere and at any time. Pupils recognise the power of prayer in helping them to deal with challenging situations and describe God as their friend. All pupils enjoy worshipping together as a class. However, the approach to planning class worship can vary across school, meaning that experiences for pupils can differ.

The 'branches' of school and the Church community are deeply intertwined. One enriches the other and relationships are based on generosity and grace. Monthly shared worship opportunities involving different groups of children demonstrate a deep sense of working together. This has led to increasing numbers attending church services; a model which has been used by other churches in the diocese. The school is in the process of refreshing its community and global links.

Support for vulnerable pupils is exceptional and is driven by the school's vision to offer every child the opportunity to succeed. The special educational needs coordinator explained that the school's principle of viewing every child as vulnerable ensures that all pupils' needs are met. Use of additional funding means that no pupil misses out on extra-curricular opportunities. There is a genuine sense of caring for and watching over one another. Letters of thanks from parents demonstrate how the school lives out its vision and recognises that every child is a gift from God.

Pupils are leaders in every sense of the word. The buddy system, worship committee and subject ambassadors ensure pupils are actively involved in school improvement. Pupils talk about how their opinions matter and how they are listened to. Pupils clearly recognise what faith in action means and explain the concept of justice. They challenge

injustice, for example, following a study of the Good Samaritan, pupils considered the plight of refugees. Pupils independently responded by preparing posters to highlight this cause and creating gift boxes to help the refugees. One pupil described trying to help others as ‘there are bad grapes on every vine. We need to be the good grapes and make a difference’.

Behaviour is exemplary and attendance is high. Pupils understand the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation. Staff feel valued, well supported and know that leaders care about them. A teacher credits this approach as the reason why she remained in the profession.

The school places particular importance on the spiritual journey both for adults and pupils. Opportunities to reflect on the inherent meaning of life are rich and transformational. Staff describe opportunities such as watching the sun rise over the fells and the sense of togetherness this provides. Pupils have each adopted a tree in the village. They compare watching their tree through the changing seasons to the Easter story. One pupil explained ‘when the blossom appears it’s like when everyone thought Jesus was dead but he wasn’t.’ Pupils recognise moments of awe and wonder as important, describing how this helps them to appreciate the world God created.

When pupils leave Dolphinholme, they are encouraged to compare this experience to a plant being re-potted. It may take time for the plant to adjust to the new surroundings, however, when the plant has been equipped for life, then its roots will be strong and secure and it will continue to grow. It is clear that the work this school is doing is transforming lives of pupils and adults and enabling all to flourish, not only while they are part of the Dolphinholme community but in the years that follow.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

The RE curriculum uses high-quality resources, such as the diocesan syllabus and Understanding Christianity. Teaching is consistent, and learning is sequential and progressive. Pupils can recall prior learning and demonstrate consistently high levels of understanding. Staff access high quality training and the level of expertise amongst leaders means that less experienced staff are very well supported. A robust system of monitoring ensures that RE both supports and challenges pupils. This enables all pupils to flourish in their learning.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	6 December 2021	URN	119530
Date of previous inspection	13 December 2014		
School status	Voluntary aided	NOR	92
Diocese / Methodist District	Blackburn		
Headteacher	Dianne Cross		
Pupil profile	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.		
Additional significant information (if needed)	The school is in the lowest quintile for social deprivation. The majority of pupils are of White British ethnicity. A pre-school has recently been added to the site.		
Inspector’s name	Joanne Hyslop	No.	972