

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Giles' Church of England Primary School

Address Blanche Lane, South Mimms, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire, EN6 3PE

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

Requires Improvement

The impact of collective worship

Requires Improvement

The effectiveness of religious education (RE)

Requires Improvement

School's vision

Our vision is to 'Learn, Grow and Flourish'. We take strength and guidance from Jeremiah 17:8. 'They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.'

Key findings

- The recently appointed headteacher is beginning to have an impact on identifying and developing the school. Parents and staff speak very positively about her leadership, approachability and concern for wellbeing. While school leaders and governors have a vision, underpinned with a biblical narrative, there is a lack of understanding about how these fit together to form a holistic distinctive Christian vision.
- The school proudly knows every individual and places great value on identifying their needs. They provide timely, effective support. Staff work well with families and children to create a safe and secure space conducive to flourishing.
- The school engages in a range of fundraising opportunities and charity partnerships. These develop pupils' understanding of deprivation, but they do not enable pupils to actively become advocates for change.
- The religious education (RE) curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn about different religions but does not ensure sufficient coverage or balance to enable pupils to flourish in their learning.
- Collective worship is invitational and provides a daily opportunity for the whole school community to come together. However, there are limited opportunities for the spiritual flourishing of pupils and adults.

Areas for development

- Improve the clarity and understanding of the school's distinctive Christian vision in order to drive strategic school improvement, raise aspiration and enable greater flourishing of pupils and adults.
- Define spiritual development and plan opportunities, through the curriculum and collective worship, to support this in order to ensure clear understanding and breadth of opportunities for pupils and adults.
- Review planning for RE, ensuring a balance of theology, philosophy and human science, in order to provide pupils with a richer, more engaging curriculum.

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

St Giles' Church of England Primary School is a warm and caring school. Everyone is welcomed regardless of their faith or background. Pupils describe their school as 'lovely,' 'helpful,' 'safe,' and 'caring.' Leaders describe enthusiastically the actions they take to ensure pupils 'Learn, Grow and Flourish.' Although this is underpinned with a verse from scripture, there is variable clarity about how these fit together to form a holistic vision. Consequently, monitoring the impact of the distinctive Christian vision, by leaders including governors, and the extent to which it is enabling pupils and adults to flourish is limited.

The recently appointed headteacher is beginning to have an impact on identifying and prioritising actions to develop the school. There has been much on which to focus during her first term. Ensuring a consistent shared vision is an area she has already identified in the school's development plan and is acting upon. The impact of the governing body is limited, due to having several vacancies. This restricts the level of effective support and challenge that the governing body is able to provide. St Giles' is an active member of a local small schools' network. This partnership provides a supportive space in which to discuss and develop provision both as a small school and as a Church school. On taking up post, the headteacher swiftly began developing closer links with the diocese.

The school's curriculum is bespoke and considers its context. It recognises the uniqueness of every pupil and aims to provide rounded development of the whole child. The school supports vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or difficulties (SEND) to make progress in their learning. The SEND co-ordinator is active in supporting children and their families, and in securing additional external funding where possible. During periods of home learning related to COVID, provision to support individuals included delivering food parcels, providing devices to access remote learning and having regular check-ins with identified individuals. Beyond the national curriculum, the school prioritises the moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. The school's monthly focus value supports this. A range of extra-curricular opportunities are available to meet the needs of learners and to enrich the curriculum. These enable pupils to have experiences in which they might not otherwise partake. St Giles' doesn't have an agreed definition of what spirituality is. There is not, therefore, a clear and secure understanding and approach. This limits the possibilities for planning, identifying, celebrating and monitoring the impact of the spiritual flourishing of pupils and adults. There are reflection areas in classrooms for pupils to think, question and explore. The extent to which these are used by pupils is variable.

The RE curriculum ensures coverage of Christianity and a range of major world religions. Planning is built around the Understanding Christianity resource and the locally agreed syllabus. However, learning activities show an imbalance of focus on theology, philosophy and human science. This is limiting pupils' flourishing in RE. Pupils value the importance of RE to understand more about world religions. RE offers a safe space for them to show respect for view of their peers. One pupil explained, 'It's OK to believe different things.' The subject leader has opportunities to monitor provision through activities such as lesson observations and pupil focus groups. The subject leader is supported through a small schools' RE leaders' network and with training from members of the diocesan schools' team. Some RE training for teachers has been led by the subject leader, but there have been limited opportunities for teachers to receive high quality, external professional development in RE.

Collective worship is invitational. It ensures the whole school joins together daily. The daily act of collective worship and prayers during the day are valued elements of the school day. However, acts of collective worship do not always offer a space to be still, quiet and reflect on Christian themes. Pupils have some opportunities to lead collective worship, but there are few opportunities for pupils to be involved in evaluating provision and its impact on their spiritual development. Teachers who lead acts of worship have not had any recent access to training. The parish has long had a vacancy for a priest and this, combined with current work on the building, is limiting access to the church. However, school has been proactive in ensuring links with the local church communities have been maintained as much as possible. For example, members of the school community took part in the parish's act of remembrance for Armistice Day. During the vacancy, another local priest is providing support and regular visits to the school to lead collective worship.

Pupils talk about how the school is developing them as learners, but they do not always show the highest aspiration for themselves to be the best that they can be. Pupils in Year 6 apply to take on various positions of responsibility, including

becoming sports, music and lunch leaders. Pupils also develop their leadership skills through their membership of the active school council. Pupils engage enthusiastically with national charities, such as Children in Need, and local organisations, such as a local foodbank. The school has also held a sleepover in the parish church in aid of a charity for the homeless. These charitable activities develop pupils' awareness of social responsibility for disadvantage and deprivation and give them some understanding of justice and inequality. The extent to which pupils understand that these actions are driven by the school's vision is limited. One pupil described when he picked up litter on a beach shortly after an activity in school on pollution. However, these charitable opportunities have not generally encouraged pupils to become courageous advocates.

Pupils behave well. When it is needed, a restorative approach and consequences are key aspects of the school's approach to behaviour management. In this way, conflicts are dealt with in a Christian manner. The school proudly places itself at the heart of the local community. The headteacher describes her desire for St Giles' to 'be a presence in our community.' Issues around mental health and wellbeing are identified early and effectively. The school's pastoral lead is passionate about doing all she can to meet pupils' needs and providing bespoke support for individuals. Parents acknowledge the openness of staff and their willingness to support. Pupils, parents and staff say that they are listened to and feel valued but do not readily attribute this to the school's Christian vision. The school embraces difference and treats its members with dignity and respect. Parents value the school's 'nurturing,' 'kind' approach. New members of St Giles are welcomed warmly and settle quickly.



The effectiveness of RE is

Requires Improvement

Curriculum planning covers Christianity and major world religions and supports progression as pupils move through the school. However, curriculum activities do not always result in pupils being inspired by RE. There are insufficient opportunities provided for them to ask deep theological questions and explore the impact of faith on people's lives. Consequently, not all pupils, including those with SEND and the most able, are able to flourish in RE.

Contextual information about the school

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| Date of inspection | 07 December 2021 | URN | 117564 |
| Date of previous inspection | 12 March 2015 | | |
| School status | Voluntary aided primary | NOR | 95 |
| Diocese / Methodist District | St Albans | | |
| Headteacher | Sarah Jones | | |
| 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 below national averages. | | |
| Additional significant information (if needed) | The headteacher has been in post since September 2021. | | |
| Inspector's name | Rob Halls | No. | C2006 |