



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School & Nursery

Address School House Lane, Aylsham, Norwich, NR11 6EX

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

Dream, Believe, Achieve

We are a school, rooted and inspired by Christian values which nurtures children to achieve infinitely more than we might ask or they may dream; empowering them so they can flourish as confident citizens now and in the future.

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

Ephesians 3:20

Key findings

- The school's distinctively Christian vision, supported by effective partnerships, which shapes policies and has driven actions through a recent period of change, challenge and expansion. Originally advocated by the highly effective headteacher, it is now genuinely owned by the whole school community bringing hope, aspiration to all.
- The school has a clear definition of spirituality and spiritual development in policy, however it is neither securely understood nor clearly articulated by staff or pupils.
- All in the school community are served very well with excellent pastoral care and mental health support. Leaders are driven by the Christian vision, they believe that all deserve to fulfil their God given potential. This belief results in inclusive, non-judgemental practice which reduces the risk of exclusions and early intervention for those needing support, enabling the flourishing of all.
- The Christian vision has motivated leaders to prioritise collective worship. Their aspiration is that worship enables pupils to experience 'joyful encounter.' It is appreciated by many in the school community. Worship is invitational and inclusive; it has inspired some pupils to deeper faith and commitment. There are opportunities to involve pupils more in its planning and delivery.
- The school has developed and reviewed a broad and balanced curriculum for religious education (RE) and staff have received training in its delivery. Pupils make progress and develop skills over time due to carefully planned deeper opportunities to question, reflect, compare and critically review. Pupils would benefit from further understanding of Christianity as a diverse faith.

Areas for development

- Broaden the impact of the school's understanding of spirituality so that pupils have more meaningful opportunities for reflection and transformation in both the curriculum and the wider curriculum.
- Provide more opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to understand and respect difference and diversity.
- Involve pupils in the planning and delivery of collective worship so that all understand that their contributions are valued.
- Deepen pupils' understanding of Christianity as a living and diverse faith.

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

Leaders have ensured that the school's Christian vision is well established and deep rooted. They explain enthusiastically how the vision has rallied them to 'do more than we can imagine' (Ephesians 3:20). It has enabled them to draw deep from wells of faith during the recent period of challenge, school improvement and expansion. Governors ensure that the impact of the vision is regularly monitored. Teaching practice is shaped by the vision as staff model learning from mistakes, building resilience and a belief in change and transformation. Vision clearly inspires the school community, motivating all to reach for their goals. Parents report of the positive impact that the vision has on their children's self-belief and aspirations. Collective ownership and belief in the vision is a strong feature; it is the motivating heartbeat of action and policy. Important strategic decisions have been made including changing the school's status, the phases taught and the current building expansion. This strategy protects the sustainability and relevance of the school in line with the Christian vision. Significant mutually beneficial partnerships with the Diocese, the local church and cluster of schools are in place and enhance the impact of the vision. A developing global partnership with a school in Kenya is beginning to expand the reach of the vision internationally.

Despite challenging times managing the pandemic's impact, leaders and staff have worked tirelessly to improve the learning offer through the curriculum. School leaders have implemented systems to raise standards and meet the needs of all. The inspirational headteacher has effectively built a cohesive and committed team. All are driven by the vision which speaks of belief in a 'broad curriculum that seeks to develop wisdom.' Leaders aspire to see pupils reach their potential. This has resulted in the Local Authority's improvement order being lifted as the school's learning offer has improved. The curriculum is described as a 'work in progress' and leaders are regularly reviewing provision so that it meets the needs of all learners. Big questions are planned into the curriculum and our diverse world is considered. Leaders have created a definition of spirituality but find it hard to explain. Although some reflective times are planned to develop spirituality, there are opportunities to create more across the curriculum and in the extra curricula offer. The RE curriculum has a good balance between theology, philosophy and human science. Pupils view RE as a 'main subject alongside maths and English', it is given sufficient curriculum time. The new relationships and sex education curriculum addresses difference and is designed to foster respectful attitudes. More planned opportunities to consider diversity across the curriculum would be helpful. The recent Collaborative Arts Project helped pupils think about diversity and cultures around the world. Inviting visitors from a range of world faiths to support the teaching of RE, would further pupil's cultural understanding. In this way, the vision statement that 'honouring...diversity enables people to flourish together' would have further impact. Pupils develop curiosity through questioning and explore ethical issues. Most children appear to enjoy their learning, although some appear less motivated. Pupils' responses to RE lessons was mixed, younger children appearing more engaged and enthusiastic than some older pupils. All would benefit from opportunities to help them further appreciate and understand Christianity as a living and diverse faith. Forest schools provision is enjoyed by pupils and they are able to transfer skills learned, such as team work, into daily life. Ethical and

charitable activities are well supported by pupils and parents. Leaders are responsive to pupils' courageous advocacy, supporting those inspired by the school's vision to raise money for charities such as Guide Dogs for the Blind. In this way, the vision that all in the school community will become 'light bearers and hope givers for our world' is fulfilled.

The Christian vision has fostered an incontrovertible belief that every child deserves a chance to flourish. Leaders have developed excellent pastoral care and provision for mental health for all in the school. Parents and staff describe an open door policy and say that they feel listened to and supported. The staff are a cohesive team who feel valued and are flourishing. Vision driven financial decisions to invest in nurture provision and strategic decisions to 'put the wellbeing of staff and children at the centre of all we do' has led to a culture of care. Early intervention has meant that some children who were at risk of exclusion have been transformed. A parent explained that their child with behaviour issues is now 'changed,' attributing this to 'a perfect example of the school's vision in action'. The phrase 'above and beyond' describing the school's interactions with the families of vulnerable children, is used by many parents. The school's involvement with families including telephone calls out of hours, reassurances and non-judgemental attitudes alongside supportive actions during the pandemic are an exceptionally strong feature of the school and have contributed to the flourishing of all. Leaders model being advocates for those who are vulnerable and this attitude is deeply embedded in the school.

The school community has only recently begun to meet again in person for collective worship since the pandemic. During lockdowns, leaders, inspired by the school's Christian vision of 'joyful encounter,' ensured that collective worship was a priority. Parents expressed appreciation of the online offer during the pandemic saying that it gave them 'a sense of belonging'. Pupils and staff say that they enjoy collective worship and are motivated to be there. Worship is invitational and inclusive; pupils with additional needs are present and staff manage pupils' emotions and behaviours so that the whole community is together. Pupils comment that collective worship makes them think; they speak of the impact of messages such as forgiveness on their personal relationships. They do not talk about the impact on their spiritual growth. One pupil, however, requested baptism following teaching on the subject. Pupils' perceptions indicate that neither personal prayer nor reflection are valued as highly as other aspects of worship. Pupils can explain the Christian understanding of God in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Whilst reflective times take place weekly in class collective worship, reflective spaces, times of stillness and silence are not otherwise evident. These would be beneficial, allowing space for personal prayer and contemplation. Pupils are not currently involved in the planning and delivery of collective worship, but desire to be. There are very strong links with the local church and its clergy are held in high regard. Weekly collective worship lead by church leaders consolidates this positive relationship.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

The headteacher is an effective subject leader giving RE a high profile in the school. As a result, the progression of skills and development of understanding in all pupils' work is evident. Disadvantaged pupils and those with additional needs flourish in their RE learning. Predominantly effective teaching means that the majority of pupils are making good progress when compared to those of a similar age.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	4 May 2022	URN	121027
Date of previous inspection	10 June 2015		
School status	Voluntary aided primary school	NOR	176
Name of MAT/Federation	n/a		
Diocese	Norwich		
Headteacher	John Neenan		

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 in line with national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)	Since the previous inspection, the school has converted to become voluntary aided and has expanded to include Key Stage 2. Ofsted graded the school requires improvement in 2019.		
Inspector's name	Jane Trampnow	No.	954