



# Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

## The Urswick School

Paragon Road  
Hackney  
London  
E9 6NR

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**

**Good**

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

**Excellent**

### School’s vision

“Jesus said: ‘If you love me, feed my sheep’” (John 21:17)

The school’s ethos shows our Christian duty to be a source of nourishment to all members of our community, from physically feeding all pupils for free, to providing a safe environment for spiritual, emotional and academic growth. A culture of universal, unconditional respect fosters relationships of compassion.

### Key findings

- The Urswick School experience is truly transformational for pupils and staff. This transformation is clearly rooted in, and lived through, the school’s Christian vision. This vision underpins every aspect of school life; it frames and shapes each day.
- Religious Education is a beacon of excellence within the school, with consistently excellent teaching. Assessment is thorough and thoughtful, with an ambitious commitment to high academic achievement for all pupils.
- There is a strong sense that this is a family. Relationships flourish through the living out of the school’s emphasis on forgiveness and exceptional levels of support at all levels.
- The Urswick School is a loving and inclusive community where diversity is celebrated widely. Staff and pupils are richly nurtured and encouraged so they flourish abundantly.
- Profound opportunities to pray and reflect are provided in collective worship although the depth of impact is less prominent. Prayer during collective worship is invitational, inspiring and actively embraced by all.

### Areas for development

- Post pandemic, to develop further the impact of collective worship so it deeply enhances the rich spiritual wholeness evident throughout the school.
- To further enhance working relationships with a wide range of Anglican churches, including the already established relationship with St. Paul’s Cathedral.
- As staff and pupils are spiritually nourished, enrich current innovative practice in spiritual development through opportunities to nourish others beyond the school.

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 Urswick School is a community driven by a deeply understood and cherished Christian vision. This vision, inspired by Jesus' words, 'If you love me, feed my sheep', is clearly and resoundingly articulated by all. The vision uncompromisingly shapes daily life and strategic planning across the school. Staff and pupils feel deeply loved because of how the vision drives the school. Relationships across the community are characterised by love and respect and a commitment to living out the school's vision. All are nourished spiritually, pastorally and physically. Pupils have a free lunch, a tradition proudly maintained as a daily commitment to the Christian vision. There is a shared sense of aspiration for all. Lessons are inspiring and purposeful at all key stages, enabling all to flourish.

This is a lively and extremely happy school, a place of joy and hope. Staff and pupils deeply value their chapel where they encounter spiritual inspiration and support. The strong link with St. Paul's Cathedral richly enhances pupils' understanding of their school's Christian vision within a wider Anglican context. This gives a profound breadth and depth to their spiritual development. It also supports pupils' musical development within a Christian context. This is enriched by a number of pupils having organ lessons on an organ originally from St. Paul's Cathedral. Pupils value this link with their cathedral and the involvement they have in services there.

The Urswick School's Christian vision drives its wholehearted response to the community's needs. Staff are passionate about their work and its impact in transforming pupils' lives. During the pandemic, staff worked creatively and tenaciously to maintain positive contact with all families. This resulted in high levels of attendance and consistently committed engagement during a very disrupted year. The Christian vision was central in bringing the community together during lockdown. Relationships between school and families are remarkably strong and positive. Pupils know they can depend on an exceptional level of support from staff. This has set the tone for a purposeful and invigorated start to this term.

The emphasis on forgiveness and on restorative justice powerfully shapes pupils' character development. This creates a culture of trust and openness which is striking in its impact across the community. Leaders model and nurture exceptionally positive relationships with colleagues and pupils. There is a tangible sense within all areas of the school of the powerful way staff and pupils work collaboratively. Pastoral support for pupils is extraordinary in its depth and impact. It is one of many transformational ways in which pupils are nourished. Pupils relish opportunities for a fresh start, to reflect on their decisions and be the best version of themselves as children of God. They understand this is one aspect of the nourishment they are given as Urswick students and they explicitly relate it to the school's Christian vision.

Without exception, staff are extremely ambitious for their pupils. The establishment of a sixth form has raised aspirations, developing academic curiosity and compassionate global citizenship. The decision to introduce psychology and photography at key stage 4 further enhances the inspirational curriculum which is rich and engaging. The school's vision drives the '#No Limits' approach which has inspired Year 11. They are aspirational about their future, both for themselves and for others. The programme is thoughtfully led and evaluated and has a powerful impact on pupils' progress and on their sense of self-worth. The school's Christian vision explicitly drives support for pupils at risk of underachievement to help them to live life in all its fulness.

There is a well-established pattern of collective worship, which is central to the school day, although there are opportunities to enrich this further. Students and staff value being able to worship together again this term. There is a rich culture of reflection and a strong emphasis on prayer. Pupils pray with confidence and enthusiasm. The prayer tree in the foyer is an inspiration to all and reflects the collective commitment to living out the school's vision. The school chaplain produces a weekly thought which is inclusive, encourages deep theological reflection and is biblically rooted. Pupils have a rich, insightful understanding of their own spirituality and their personal development which they recognise as coming from the school's Christian vision.

Diversity is championed at The Urswick School through the 'Urswick Includes' programme. Pupils value the safe spaces available in the school. This is understood by all as evidence of the school's vision in action. Students are conscientious

and determined in seeking out ways to be courageous advocates. Their involvement with Hackney Citizens and the Youth Parliament reflects their ambitious drive to look beyond their school to support others. Pupil leaders in year 11 are inspirational role models to those in younger year groups. Their leadership is consciously driven by the school's Christian vision. Just as they are 'fed' at The Urswick School, the school's vision enables them to feed others.

The headteacher and senior leaders model a dynamic and joyful sense of purpose. This is shared by governors, who have a deeply aspirational commitment to the school and its vision to transform pupils' lives. The Christian vision profoundly weaves throughout all procedures and policies and richly echoes throughout every element of school life. It drives the behaviour policy and the work done by heads of learning and profoundly reflects their understanding that every pupil is a child made in the image of God. The innovative approach to curriculum development is rooted in the drive to 'feed' all pupils so that they flourish intellectually within the school. Leaders give high importance to RE; all pupils take GCSE RE at the end of Year 10. Leaders took the decision to enter Year 11 GCSE in November 2021 rather than submit grades in June. This boldly reflects their drive to ensure the flexible curriculum enables all to flourish.

Senior leaders respond to Jesus's call to, 'feed my sheep' with an energetic and targeted approach to staff development. There is an exceptional level of professional support for staff at all levels; they are nourished just as pupils are. Staff have a strong sense of belonging at The Urswick School. They are inspired by working within a staff team with a shared and powerful drive to live out the school's Christian vision. They are passionate about their work and its impact through the school.

As a result of a shared Christian vision that inspires all, pupils are confident, curious and compassionate. The implementation of the school vision is deeply embedded and is lived deliberately and joyfully each day. Consequently, the experience of all staff and pupils at The Urswick School is truly transformational.



**The effectiveness of RE is Excellent**

The quality of teaching in RE is consistently excellent. RE lessons are driven by rigorous intellectual challenge and thoughtful engagement with religious texts. Lessons are recognised as inspirational by pupils and staff. Pupils receive thorough written feedback which supports them to excel. RE is a popular and much valued subject in the sixth form. There is a collegiate approach to planning within the department, which supports high levels of achievement and positive student engagement.

### Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	13 and 14 October 2021	URN	100284
Date of previous inspection	11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> February 2015		
School status	Voluntary aided secondary school	NOR	913
Name of MAT/Federation	N/A		
Diocese	London		
Headteacher	Richard Brown		
Pupil profile	The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is significantly above national averages.		
	The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)	The school's context makes it the most deprived Church of England secondary school in the country. Over 70% of students come from significantly disadvantaged backgrounds. The school has increased its intake in recent years at the request of Hackney Education.		
Inspector's name	Elisabeth Stevenson	No.	946