

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| St Catherine's Church of England Primary School, Ware | |
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| Address | Park Road, Ware, SG12 0AW |
| 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 |

| School's vision |
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| <p>St Catherine's is a nurturing community where differences are celebrated and caring, happy children flourish. Children embrace their learning and develop skills of wisdom and resilience, enabling them to live life in all its fullness.</p> <p>"I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." (John 10:10)</p> |
| Key findings |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The headteacher exemplifies inspirational, dedicated and compassionate leadership that empowers the school family. The Christian vision is deeply embedded and drives school development. • The strong focus on nurturing and the commitment to living life in all its fullness results in transformative and life-enhancing support for those in the school community. • Rich experiences, including many and varied opportunities for reflection and questioning, enable pupils to develop spiritually. These stem from a strong and consistent understanding of spirituality across the school. • Collective worship unites and inspires the whole school community and provides meaningful opportunities for reflection. Additional pupil leadership in collective worship would further enhance provision. • Religious education (RE) is innovative and challenging. It promotes the knowledge and understanding of major religions as living faiths. The curriculum is innovative and challenging. Religious literacy is excellent. |
| Areas for development |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop pupil involvement in the planning, delivery and evaluation of collective worship. This will ensure that their role is prominent and the impact of collective worship even wider. |



Inspection findings

St Catherine's is an excellent Church school. The theologically understood Christian vision is deeply embedded and underpins decisions, policies and development at all levels. Leaders, including governors, confidently articulate the biblical basis of the vision. They recognise the compulsion that this brings to welcome and nurture everyone. Thorough evaluation and challenge by leaders ensures that the school's Christian distinctiveness continually meets the needs of the community. The compassionate headteacher empowers others so that they are confident to try new things and therefore appreciate their own potential. Exemplary pastoral care and practical support is provided for all adults and pupils. Staff, parents and pupils speak enthusiastically about the effect that this has on relationships and how they seek to follow her lead. Consequently, all flourish.

The school's Christian vision impacts the whole school curriculum. Leaders have developed teaching and learning to provide frequent opportunities for pupils to develop skills of wisdom and resilience. The value of learning from mistakes, of persevering and maintaining a positive attitude is clearly expressed by staff and pupils. Pupils understand that wisdom goes beyond the acquisition of knowledge to developing experience and good judgement. One pupil explained how second chances help to develop wisdom by learning from mistakes. Pupils speak confidently about examples of these values. These include the temptation of Jesus and the Christian life of the school's patron, St Catherine. They can apply this to their own lives. Living life to the full is also expressed in an appreciation of interests and successes within and beyond the school. Significant achievements, such as recognised progress in gymnastics, are celebrated weekly with the whole school community.

A well-established buddy system brings older and younger pupils together and promotes skills of nurturing and leadership. There is a highly developed understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation which further strengthens bonds. Behaviour throughout the school is excellent. Pupils frequently use learning from Bible stories to influence interactions. Opportunities for reflection, such as taking time to sit in the 'calm corner', are appreciated by pupils and promote good mental health. Instances of bullying and exclusions are extremely rare and attendance is high. Consequently, pupils are happy and safe. They are mature, confident and intrinsically devoted to caring for one another.

Individuals in need of support throughout the community are identified and encouraged through robust and effective communication systems. Provision for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those in other vulnerable groups is superb and highly personalised. No child is invisible and each receives the nurture they require to reach their potential. This ensures that all flourish. Excellent relationships and mutual respect provide the foundations of exceptional caring provision where it is needed. This was particularly prevalent during the COVID pandemic. The school's proactive, practical and reassuring assistance allowed pupils to access appropriate provision and the needs of families to be addressed on an individual basis. This included accommodating pupils from other schools and constantly being available to parents in difficult circumstances, including family bereavement. Parents spoken with were effusive in their appreciation of the individual support that they received at this time.

Care of the environment has a high prominence in the life of the school. The eco committee, led by pupils, is unrelenting in its desire to educate and raise the profile of environmental issues. Courageous advocacy in this area abounds. Posters to dissuade idling cars and persuasive letters written to reduce food waste are among the initiatives undertaken. These actions have brought about positive changes in behaviour, resulting in reduced waste and a cleaner local environment. This commitment permeates the whole life of the school. For



example, the headteacher leads by example in her role on the Hertfordshire County Council Environmental Sustainability Group. This places the school at the heart of environmental issues in the area. Pupils are suitably proud of their achievements and are extremely enthusiastic about further planned work in this area. Activities to motivate and promote aspiration are built into the rhythm of the school year. Pupils understand the impact of intervening to provide for those in need. This drives their choices and their determination to improve society.

Pupils achieve highly in RE and are excited by their learning. Frequent opportunities to make meaningful links with prior learning ensure that all pupils make superb progress from their starting points. Lessons are challenging and encourage pupils to become resilient learners. Pupils use religious terms with accuracy when explaining theological and philosophical concepts. They discuss Christianity as a living faith. The exploration of world religions promotes pupils' understanding of different beliefs and practices in Britain's diverse society. For example, pupils confidently compare the importance of light in the festivals of Diwali and Christmas. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation ensures the RE curriculum is vibrant, relevant and enables the study of principle religions and worldviews. Relevant and regular professional training supports development in RE. Consequently, pupils benefit from an engaging, sequential curriculum that promotes further learning.

Collective worship is the cornerstone of school life. It is inspiring and inclusive. Robust monitoring and evaluation ensure that worship is relevant and impacts significantly on all. Pupils and adults are exuberant in their appreciation of this daily life-enhancing experience. In the early years foundation stage (EYFS) pupils are enthralled by the liturgy including song, prayer and Bible stories and engage with great enthusiasm. Older pupils explain how opportunities to link worship with current news stories empowers them to live out their Christian values. Lighting candles and invitational greetings remind all of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Worship warriors are excited to lead worship, though there is scope to develop further opportunities for this. The parish priest expands the richness of worship and an appreciation of Christian traditions.

Spirituality is a golden thread woven through all areas of school life. Taking time to think about new experiences, to develop pupils' self-reflection and to respond with thoughts and actions in school and beyond develops the spirituality of all adults and pupils. It has a significant impact, is deeply appreciated and all articulate it with great confidence. Time to reflect is viewed as time extremely well spent. Consequently, both adults and pupils have a profound understanding of who they are, how they relate to others and their role in the world. Reflective areas are commonplace in the school and used frequently. One parent explained that this aspect of school life is so important to her child that a reflective, quiet area has been created at home.

At its heart, St Catherine's is an exceptionally nurturing community where each individual is celebrated as a unique and precious child of God.



| Information | | | |
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| School | St Catherine's Church of England Primary School, Ware | Inspection date | 25 November 2022 |
| URN | 117410 | VC/VA/Academy | Voluntary controlled |
| Diocese/District | St Albans | Pupils on roll | 395 |
| Headteacher | Mrs Hazel Leslie | | |
| Chair of Governors | Mrs Dwane Charalambus | | |
| Inspector | Joanna Brookes | No. | 2110 |