



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School	
Address	St Nicholas Close, Elstree, Hertfordshire, WD6 3EW
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)	Requires improvement

School's vision
'Learn, enjoy and succeed together for life in all its fullness' John 10:10
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This Church school's Christian vision is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. However, the theological underpinning of the vision and the monitoring of its impact are less well developed. The school's Christian vision inspires the regularly reviewed curriculum. As such, this is meeting the learning and spiritual development needs of all pupils, given their starting points. Respect and kindness are well developed in this Church school, so pupils behave and live well together, enabling all to flourish. Collective worship is well planned and organised. However, monitoring the impact of collective worship on the spiritual growth of pupils and adults is still developing. The planning and monitoring of the religious education (RE) curriculum have yet to be sufficiently embedded so that continuity and progression are sustained.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the theological underpinning of the school's Christian vision so that it is articulated and lived out by the whole school community and drives all strategic decisions. Enhance the monitoring of the impact of collective worship on the spiritual growth of pupils and adults so that everyone flourishes. Ensure that there is sufficient depth in RE curriculum planning so that quality teaching and learning enables all pupils to make appropriate progress.

Inspection findings

St Nicholas is an inclusive school, with strong Christian values, where pupils and adults are cared for and enabled to flourish. The headteacher is well respected for her leadership and compassion. She is supported by a committed staff and governing body who are passionate about the Christian ethos of the school. Their priority is the way in which pupils and staff are nurtured.

The school's vision combines the call to 'learn, enjoy and succeed together' with the biblical text of 'life in all its fullness'. Although members of the school community know the vision well, many pupils do not understand its meaning and how it may impact upon their lives. The vision's lack of clear theological roots means that it does not drive strategic decisions, and nor is its impact monitored in a meaningful manner. The experienced governing body is very supportive of the headteacher and the school. However, their involvement in strategic planning and robust monitoring and evaluation is limited.

The curriculum has been regularly reviewed and amended to meet the needs of all pupils during the school's recent years of falling pupil numbers. Average levels of attainment across all subjects in national tests are well below the national averages, and pupils' writing and oracy are weak. Nevertheless, staff and leaders at all levels support the learning of all pupils and ensure that even the most vulnerable pupils make progress. Following the lifting of restrictions on socialising, post Covid-19, school leaders have noted a reticence by many families to engage with extra-curricular activities. Recognising the importance of such activities for spiritual and character growth, the school has introduced forest school into the curriculum offer for all classes. This supports the pupils to develop resilience and perseverance to overcome barriers.

RE curriculum planning has been developed by school leaders to meet the specific needs of pupils. This is because the composition of St Nicholas is changing and it now has a diverse community and mixed age classes. The RE curriculum covers a relevant range of topics, but planning has not ensured that pupils make sustained progress, appropriate to their ages and starting points. Many pupils do not flourish in RE because they have yet to secure the knowledge, skills and understanding necessary to engage with theological ideas. Teachers have not fully accessed the training that is available from the diocese for the teaching of RE. School leaders monitor RE provision; however, the assessment of standards are not moderated externally to validate evaluations and inform continuity and progression.

Pastoral care is where the school's Christian vision shines through. The school is a calm and positive environment where pupil behaviour is good. This is because of the work carried out with a sense of Christian compassion to support the specific needs of all pupils. Relationships between pupils and with adults are respectful, both in lessons and around the school. These are founded upon the school's core values of appreciation, honesty, friendship, respect, kindness and faith. They are the foundation upon which leaders are supporting the pupils to develop resilience and moral character. Consequently, all live well together within this school community, enabling all to flourish.

Pupils engage in a range of charitable activities, which they value both as fun events and as a reflection of their Christian values. However, such actions have yet to develop as a coherent, vision-led approach to engaging in social action and understanding social injustice. The partnership between the school and local church is strong, but elsewhere few formal partnerships have been developed. Nevertheless, leaders do ensure strong links with parents, who value everything the school does for their children.


Not only has the size of the school has changed in recent years, but there has also been an increase in pupil mobility. The school's pupil intake has become far more diverse, reflecting changes within the local community. Despite the challenges that such rapid changes present, leaders have ensured that a culture of embracing difference prevails. Pupils treat one another, and are treated, with dignity and respect and diversity is celebrated. Incidents of prejudicial language and behaviour are rare, which pupils' comments support.

Daily collective worship is used as an important occasion to express the school's Christian vision and values. It is an aspect of school life that has developed and improved since the last SIAMS inspection. This daily experience enables pupils and adults to pray and reflect and come together as a class or school community. The newly introduced St Nicholas sash is a creative way of engaging the pupils with the school's vision, such as by writing a prayer. Sash winners are rewarded for embodying the school's values and they celebrate by proudly wearing their sash.

Governors and the lay preacher from the local church often participate in and contribute to collective worship. This helps to give the pupils a connection to the wider community. Pupils respond positively to the routines that have been established to support their sense of togetherness. The lighting of candles, prayers, and song are all well planned and encourage pupils to gather, engage and respond.

A Year 6 worship committee has been formed to actively involve pupils in the planning and celebration of regular church services. In addition, prayer spaces have been created in every classroom so that pupils can reflect and grow spiritually. Pupils understand the contribution that collective worship, church services and prayer make to the Christian life of the school. However, pupils do not yet recognise these approaches to Christian worship as expressions of the school vision. Monitoring and evaluating the impact of collective worship on the spiritual growth of pupils and adults is ongoing.

School leaders at all levels are passionate about embedding a culture of aspiration for all pupils and adults to flourish. All are supported to be the best they can be; the person God created them to be. At this good school, they can do so in a secure environment founded on clear Christian values.

	The effectiveness of RE is	Requires improvement	
	<p>RE curriculum planning does not provide pupils with sufficient depth to make sustained progress over time. As a result, standards are low in RE and pupils struggle to recall what they have learnt. Teaching covers an appropriate range of Christian and different worldviews so that pupils develop a respectful understanding of their diverse community. However, there are limited expectations for pupils to express their understanding through the skills of critical analysis and interpretation.</p>		
Information			
School	St Nicholas Primary School	Inspection date	16 January 2023
URN	117431	VC/VA/Academy	VA
Diocese/District	St Albans	Pupils on roll	98
MAT/Federation	Not applicable		
Headteacher	Kate Johnston-Grant		
Chairs of Governors	Revd David Aplin and Geoffrey Stack (Co-Chairs)		
Inspector	Ian Gurman	No.	C21/22
QA Assessor	Lizzie McWhirter	No.	244