

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Michael's CofE VA Primary Academy, Gillingham	
Address	The Boundaries, Geldeston Rd, NR34 OHT
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
<p>We are all children of God, each with our own unique gifts and potential. We provide an environment rooted in respect and Christian values, where every individual can flourish.</p> <p>'Let your light shine.' Matthew 5: 16</p>
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective leadership has embedded an inclusive Christian vision which shapes the work of this small, rural school. However, the biblical teaching underpinning the vision is not yet completely understood. This means the distinctiveness as a Church school is not fully appreciated. • The creative curriculum provides rich learning opportunities. This includes a clear ambition for all to reach their potential and recognise their gifts and talents as children of God. Pupils develop a concern for justice but are not yet acting as courageous advocates. • Relationships lie at the heart of the school. This is strengthened by the Christian values of friendship and respect. Pupils feel included, happy and safe. They are rightfully proud of their school. • Invitational and inclusive collective worship is highly valued by the whole community. It helps everyone learn about God through the teachings of Jesus. Pupils appreciate opportunities to plan, lead and evaluate acts of worship. • Religious education (RE) has a high profile and is well led. It provides a safe space for pupils to discuss their own spiritual ideas. However, opportunities to explore spirituality across the curriculum are limited.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure leaders can articulate and share the biblical teaching underpinning the Christian vision. This is to ensure the distinctiveness as a church school is fully appreciated. • Deepen pupil understanding of courageous advocacy so that they can challenge social injustice at a national and global level. • Create opportunities, across the curriculum, for pupils to explore their spirituality. This is so that all subjects contribute to pupils' spiritual development.



Inspection findings

Gillingham St Michael's is a happy and welcoming school. This springs from the Christian vision of 'let your light shine.' Leaders strive to help each person flourish by recognising their unique gifts and talents. All staff are equally motivated to kindle the light in every pupil. Parents recognise the impact of the encouraging, caring environment where committed members of staff are ambitious for their children. Governors are dedicated to their work and know the setting well. They monitor the impact of the vision effectively. This includes challenge and support through the ethos and community committee. Leaders talk confidently about how the vision shapes policies and practice. Examples of positive outcomes are readily shared. However, the biblical teaching which roots the vision is not explicitly understood or articulated clearly. This limits the impact of the vision upon the Christian character of the school.

Partnerships are strong and purposeful. Collaboration with the church is deeply valued and enriches the spiritual life of pupils and adults. The school is part of the Kingfisher Partnership. This growing federation provides strategic support and opportunities for staff development. Training provided through the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust (DNEAT) is also utilised. This further contributes to the flourishing of all.

All are welcomed with dignity and respect as children of God. This is because the vision is inclusive, ensuring every individual is valued and exceptionally well known. Provision is in place for vulnerable learners to flourish. This includes those new to both school and community. In some cases, support is transformative. For example, the introduction of Makaton signing is one way those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are fully included. Early intervention signposts parents to places of support. Leaders are committed to good mental health for pupils and staff. This is because of the deep desire for all to shine as God intends.

Positive relationships are a strength. These are underpinned by the values of creativity, respect and friendship. Pupils are articulate, happily sharing their own opinions and listening to those of others. They are rightfully proud of their school. Older pupils show care and consideration for the youngest through introducing and leading initiatives such as playground buddies and lunchtime clubs. This is because the vision instils a strong sense of community and a culture of care for one another. Behaviour is calm and courteous. Instances of breakdown in relationships are rare. When they do occur, they are addressed via a restorative approach in line with the Christian values. Forgiveness is central and modelled through the example of Jesus. Bullying is rare.


The Christian vision for all to shine ensures a broad and balanced curriculum. This has been skilfully crafted by leaders to give opportunities for everyone to explore their own unique gifts and potential. As a result, pupils develop confidence and become resilient learners who enjoy each school day. Additional activities are valued as a chance to shine. High-quality field trips and the two annual residential visits promote independence and risk taking and develop the Christian values of friendship and respect. Pupils enjoy Indian dancing, modern foreign languages day and exploring the work of black and minority authors. This enables their understanding and celebration of difference and diversity. Pupils are encouraged to be curious and ask questions about the world around them. This extends to global concerns such as deforestation or the plight of endangered animals. As a result, pupils develop a keen sense of justice and describe wanting to make a difference as stewards of God's creation. A typical example is a pupil bake sale raising money for the purchasing of bee friendly plants for the grounds. However, wider opportunities to transform this enthusiasm into practical action are more limited. This means chances for courageous advocacy and social action,

beyond raising money, have not always been fully realised.

Collective worship is highly valued by everyone as an integral part of each day. It is inclusive, those of all faiths and none take up the invitation to participate in their own way. Inspiring content ensures a growing appreciation of the different ways Christians worship. This includes through music, story, silence and reflection. Encountering different customs around the world through the liturgical year ensures pupils have a growing understanding of Christianity as a global faith. The teachings of Jesus are kept central as is time for prayer. Pupils value this time and say this helps them feel closer to God. Pupil leaders, known as the 'Shining Group,' are enthusiastic about their role in planning, leading and evaluating worship. They enjoy this time as an opportunity to shine with their peers.

RE is at the heart of the curriculum. It is empowered by the vision for all to shine. Planning is effective, reflecting a good balance between theology, philosophy and human science. Pupils can engage with religious text and theological concepts. They enjoy RE and clearly articulate the importance of the subject. This includes how it contributes to their spiritual development. This is a strength of the RE curriculum. As a result, pupils have a good grasp on Christianity as a living and diverse faith. Systems are in place that enable teachers to know what and how well pupils learn. Effective practice is shared and standards enhanced through moderation with DNEAT. The RE leader has regular opportunities to share new ideas. This ensures all staff teaching RE do so with confidence and to a high standard.

The vision informs a secure understanding of spiritual development. This is articulated, in part, as a search for identity as a child of God. Throughout the day teachers provide time to stop and reflect. This includes planned moments of awe and wonder. Pupils actively embrace these times and engage positively with their class reflection areas. Occasions to deepen personal moments of spiritual enrichment in worship, RE and reflection are limited by the lack of planned opportunities across the rest of the curriculum.

	The effectiveness of RE is	Good	
	Monitoring, verified during the inspection, demonstrates that the quality of teaching in RE is consistently good. RE floor books evidence progress and depth of understanding. This includes pupils with SEND, vulnerable learners and those working at greater depth. As a result, all flourish in RE.		
Information			
School	St Michael's CofE VA Primary Academy, Gillingham	Inspection date	16 May 2023
URN	141778	VC/VA/Academy	Academy
Diocese/District	Norwich	Pupils on roll	58
MAT/Federation	DNEAT		
Executive Headteacher	Heather Brand		
Chair of Governors	Bruce Gordon		
Inspector	Gemma Taylor	No.	2109