

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

St Michael's Church of England VA Junior School, Norwich	
Address	Astley Road, Chapel Break, Bowthorpe, NR5 9LA
School vision	
<p>As in The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25: 14-30) we see it as our role to inspire children to work hard, making the most of their gifts in the service of God and to take well-considered risks for the good of all.</p> <p>"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart." Colossians 3:23</p>	
School strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults and pupils flourish at St Michael's because everyone understands and embraces the Christian vision. Leaders, staff and governors are inspired by the example of Christ to serve their pupils and families. In this tightly knit community, everyone understands that individuals flourish best when they work for the good of all.</li> <li>• St Michael's is a diverse and inclusive school where nobody is beyond the ambition of the Christian vision. Leaders are keenly in tune with the needs of pupils and their families, and strive to meet them all. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL).</li> <li>• Leaders ensure that pupils have opportunities to serve each other and their community. They empower them to be agents of change for the good of all.</li> <li>• Daily acts of collective worship set a spiritual tone that permeates the atmosphere of the school. Everyone is treated with respect and consideration during worship as adults and pupils reflect with calmness and curiosity. This daily encounter with the teachings of Christ positively impacts on behaviour and relationships throughout the whole day.</li> <li>• The religious education (RE) curriculum is carefully planned to enable pupils to experience a rich diversity of knowledge. This covers a number of religions including Christianity. Pupils respond thoughtfully and enthusiastically to challenging questions about what they learn in RE.</li> </ul>	
Areas for development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a clearer understanding of how leaders want adults and pupils to develop spiritually through their experience of collective worship. This is so that all can be supported to grow as spiritual beings.</li> <li>• Provide more opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to learn about why some people experience injustice. This is so that pupils can understand the issues of injustice that they are tackling when they act as agents of change.</li> <li>• Help pupils to remember more of what they have learned in RE so that they can deepen their understanding of religion.</li> </ul>	
Inspection findings	

Every detail of the Christian vision has been carefully thought through by leaders and governors to ensure that it is right for St Michael's. Staff are inspired by the biblical example of Christ's service to the disadvantaged. They speak eloquently of their own vision to serve the pupils and families in their school. They are particularly motivated to support the high proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged or speak English as an additional language. The school is federated with a local Church of England infant school in the All Angels' Federation. The executive headteacher leads both schools. Leaders are attentive to the needs of their pupils, and strive to do what is best for them. For example, staff identified that some pupils had forgotten how to play well together after their enforced Covid isolation. The school responded by providing innovative and imaginative activities and resources in the playground at breaktime and lunchtime. This has enhanced the wellbeing of pupils, and improved their relationships with each other.

The work of governors explicitly serves the Christian vision. They explain how the school's behaviour policy is built on Christian principles of restorative justice. They visit the school regularly, and see for themselves how this helps pupils to learn and get on well with each other. Governors manage the school's finances with the Christian vision in mind. For example, they make sure that the pastoral team is well funded so that the wellbeing of children and their families is prioritised.

The curriculum encourages pupils to be risk takers in keeping with the school's Christian vision. A shared understanding of the parable of the talents roots this vision in Christian theology. The ambitious curriculum and calm yet purposeful learning environment help pupils to make the most of their God-given potential in lessons. The 'Voice 21' project supports pupils to improve their vocabulary and take the risk of speaking out about what they have learned. The school also provides wider opportunities for pupils to flourish through risk taking. These include visits to the beach and trips to the theatre in London. In addition, outdoor school activities enable children to risk new experiences and flourish more broadly.

Collective worship has a significant impact on the atmosphere in school, and the positive relationships that arise as a consequence. This is because worship promotes calmness and an understanding of everyone's equal importance as a spiritual being. Leaders plan worship carefully to promote the Christian vision and its underlying values of trust, hope, respect, perseverance and success. Regular reference to the Bible and the teachings of Christ help adults and children to understand the vision's roots in Christian teaching. Many staff are well supported to lead worship. Representatives from the local parish church also help to lead worship and teach children about the Bible. The school community is welcomed into the local church to celebrate key festivals such as Christmas and Easter. Nobody is obliged to take part in any religious activity, but everyone is given time to reflect upon and respond to the person of Christ. Prayer spaces are provided around the school premises where pupils can choose to create their own prayers. Muslim pupils are also provided with their own prayer space. Times of worship provide ideal conditions for the whole school community to develop spiritually. Leaders are sometimes unclear, however, about what they want this spiritual development to look like. This means that some flourish less well than others as spiritual beings.

The Christian vision ensures that the welfare and wellbeing of pupils, families and staff is taken seriously. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. Leaders help families to deal with external agencies, and make sure that SEND pupils benefit from a curriculum that is ambitious for them. The school's team of pastoral support workers supports the welfare and wellbeing of children, families and staff. Where necessary, individual pupils are well supported to help them to regulate their behaviour and to restore their relationships with other pupils in line with Christian teaching about forgiveness and reconciliation. A key aspect of this is 'peer mediation' where staff support pupils to resolve each other's conflicts.

Many languages are spoken in this culturally diverse school. The 'Cultural Society' empowers pupils to learn about each other's cultures, and stand up to racial prejudice. Because of this, pupils speak with pride of their different backgrounds and languages, and are respectful and accepting of each other. A school leader supports other Church of England schools across the Diocese of Norwich to learn from this exemplary work.

The curriculum teaches pupils how to serve others. Some of them have opportunities to serve their local community by visiting residents of a local care home or taking part in local litter picking. Others learn to serve each other in school by attempting to reduce dangerous parking outside the premises or by raising money to subsidise school trips. The curriculum does not yet, however, enable them to understand the causes of the injustice that their actions aim to overturn. The Christian vision also promotes opportunities for pupils to serve each other as leaders. These include eco-council, peer mediators, young interpreters, and reading and writing champions. This ensures that pupils flourish by using their talents to promote the interests of others.

The religious education (RE) curriculum is carefully crafted to provide pupils with accurate knowledge about a range of religions including Christianity. Leaders work closely with the Diocese of Norwich to make sure that the curriculum challenges pupils to learn about religion and respond thoughtfully to what they have learned. Leaders support teachers continuously to improve their knowledge of the subject, and teachers are confident and enthusiastic about what they teach. Because of well-chosen teaching resources, pupils have a good understanding of important Christian ideas such as salvation or the Holy Trinity. Pupils are challenged by 'big questions' such as 'Is believing in God reasonable?' They comment with sophistication on ideas such as spirituality or conflict. The curriculum also teaches pupils about Christianity as a global faith by, for example, looking at different experiences of baptism around the world.

Pupils progress well in RE. They write and talk about their learning in lessons with a sophistication that develops as they get older. They respond thoughtfully to the different religions they learn about, and enthusiastically answer the 'big questions' that the curriculum asks of them. Pupils' work shows the progress that they make from lesson to lesson. It is sometimes difficult, however, for them to remember some of the details of what they learned longer ago.

The inspection findings indicate that St Michael's Church of England VA Junior School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
Inspection date	25 September 2023	URN	121146
VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary aided	Pupils on roll	400
Diocese	Norwich		
MAT/Federation	All Angels' Federation		
Headteacher	Helen McCarney		
Chair	Rosemary Games		
Inspector	Richard Hopkins	No.	2234