

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Saint Aidan's Church of England Academy, Skelmanthorpe	
Address	Smithy Close, Skelmanthorpe, Huddersfield, HD8 9DQ
School vision	
Inspiring Children to Love, Laugh, Learn and Live Life in all its Fullness (John 10:10)	
School strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is rooted in genuine kindness and an all-encompassing acceptance of all. Lives of those it serves are unequivocally transformed. Each member of the school community is lovingly celebrated as a unique child of God. • The Christian vision, deeply rooted in theology, empowers this highly effective Church school. It binds the community in a singularity of purpose that supports adults and pupils to flourish. Leaders at all levels ensure that the vision and associated values nurture the experiences of all. • The wellbeing of all is of paramount importance to leaders. Nurturing support for mental health and wellbeing meets the emotional and spiritual needs of pupils and adults well, allowing all to flourish. • Collective worship has a profound impact on the personal and spiritual life of the school community. Inspiring biblical teaching impacts tangibly on the way pupils think and behave. Regular moments of prayer and meditation create a sense of peace, bringing wholeness and hope to all. • The leadership of religious education (RE) has skilfully designed a well-balanced, engaging curriculum, which builds on prior knowledge. As a result, pupils demonstrate a deep understanding of worldviews and a range of religions, including Christianity. Exemplary opportunities to respond creatively ensure excellent progress in RE. 	
Areas for development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop pupils' independence to explore opportunities of injustice and global inequality in the world. This is so they can make a positive difference, by acting as agents of change, both in and out of school. 	
Inspection findings	
<p>St Aidan's fosters a culture of loving kindness and acceptance. Christian vision and values intertwine into every layer of school staff ensure every pupil and their family feel connected, known and loved. The vision is modelled and upheld by strong leadership. This has ensured that the school has established itself as a beacon within its community. Adults and pupils clearly articulate the vision, and its associated values. This unites the school in its determination that 'all you do be done in love'. The school ensures that even challenging conversations are framed in that context. As a result, adults, including parents and pupils, clearly recognise that each person is valued as a unique individual.</p>	

Dynamic school leaders, supported by the trust, have put in place systems and processes that are robust and purposeful. There is a culture of rigorous discussion and questioning, which ensures pertinent support is put in place for all who need it. Governors are actively involved in the life of the school. The school's vision is an anchor point for all decisions and monitoring.

Leaders place the good mental health of everyone as a high priority. Consequently, staff flourish, knowing that their professional development and wellbeing are considered equally. Careful budgetary decisions ensure that staff are available to support those needing additional nurture and therapy. Rooted in love, the school's exemplary pastoral care makes a difference. Pupils are eager attenders, coming in with a smile. Pupils are trained to be 'carers' and staff to be mental health first aiders. All are encouraged to articulate their emotions and understand it is 'ok to not be ok'. As a result, pupils feel free to be themselves.

The school's Christian values, compassion, respect and hope have formed a common language. All find opportunities to celebrate progress, behaviour and attitudes linked to these. Parents rightly praise the positive influence the school's vision and values have on their family life. One described how their child inspired her to be more hopeful. Another parent spoke of how they 'regularly see the vision in action in the incredibly kind and supportive way my family has been supported.' School leaders are relentless and passionate in ensuring that every pupil is equipped with the skills they need to grow and make progress. As a reflection of this, school staff provide highly individualised provision and teaching.

Sparked by the school's vision and values, school leaders have implemented an innovative curriculum. Opportunities to grow spiritually and explore situations of injustice are woven intentionally throughout. Through books, topic work and classes named after influential people, pupils understand courageous advocacy. The school's, 'I am me, I am loved, I can change the world' means most pupils recognise they can be agents of change. As they live out the clear vision, pupils at the school are very aware of the need to balance rights and responsibilities. They often speak of the need to 'treat our neighbours as ourselves'. They are willing to challenge injustice within the context of their school, for example standing up for their friends. There are clear links to local charities. Pupils select the charities by considering the difference their support can make. Support for 'St Aidan's in Zimbabwe' has led to surplus laptops being sent to the school and letters and photos exchanged. Across the curriculum pupils can identify opportunities they have for the consideration of ethical issues and making principled choices. However, pupils have not fully developed an understanding of how they themselves can meaningfully engage in social action against injustice.

Leaders' recent introduction of 'windows, mirrors and doors' is further developing spirituality and a deeper love of learning. The box for windows has books about diversity, difference and bible stories and asks big questions. This leads to reflection (mirror) and finally pupils put into place what they believe and value (the door). For example, one book about a hearing-impaired pupil inspired pupils to lead collective worship using sign language. Pupils use spirituality books in the classrooms and the mirrors. A pupil explained that when looking in the mirror, he sees 'spirituality as being strong and not giving up.'

Collective worship is joyful and an integral part of the school day. It is highly valued by all. A pupil explained that 'without daily worship we wouldn't feel whole.' The inclusive and respectful culture of worship ensures that all members of the school community know that worship is for everyone. Those of all faiths and non-religious faiths take up the invitation to participate in their own way, reflecting on the relevance of biblical passages to their lives. A pupil expressed that she was inspired by Jesus' Good Samaritan to live a more compassionate life. Another reflected on the importance of making a situation right by saying sorry and acting differently through the story of Zacchaeus. Pupils

speak about the power of prayer and the impact that being still and quiet has on their wellbeing and happiness. Staff report the ‘sense of peace and joy’ that they feel during and after collective worship. The deep culture of reflection allows pupils and adults to express their spirituality. There is a strong relationship with the local church who proactively and influentially support the worshipping life of the school. The collective worship group are passionate about their role. They share how it is a privilege to serve and lead their peers in worship. The enthusiastic team regularly leads acts of inspirational worship across the school. Supported by the clergy team and school leaders, their confidence and understanding in planning and leading inspirational acts of worship is blossoming.

RE expresses the school vision by ensuring pupils respect diversity of faith, belief and viewpoints. The RE gold quality mark is reflected in lessons that encourage everyone to put forward their ideas and respect all views. Pupils say RE gives them confidence and prepares them for their move to middle school. The headteacher and subject leaders ensure that RE remains high priority and a valued subject. Careful consideration is taken to ensure each child has access to RE lessons that build upon previous knowledge. There is depth and challenge so pupils find learning motivating. Staff training from the diocese develops teachers' expertise. This results in RE teaching that stimulates learners. Engaging approaches, such as art, drama, music and movement increases pupils' understanding of the key messages within Bible stories. As a result of strong teaching, pupils make excellent progress in RE irrespective of their starting points. They respond to the high expectations of teachers who make learning irresistible. Mistakes are avenues to better learning, improvement and success. Dedicated teachers provide timely feedback upon pupils' work and clearly encourage them to the successful outcomes they eagerly pursue.

The inspection findings indicate that St Aidan's academy is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
Inspection date	28 November 2023	URN	143228
VC/VA/Academy	Academy	Pupils on roll	163
Diocese	Leeds		
MAT/Federation	16581 Learning Accord Multi Academy Trust		
Acting Headteacher	Alison Walshe		
Chair	Lynda Earnshaw		
Inspector	Elaine Bowers	No.	960