

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Michael's Church of England Primary Academy, Exeter	
Address	South Lawn Terrace, Heavitree, Exeter, EX1 2SN
School vision	
<p>Our vision takes its inspiration from the Bible and in particular The Parable of the Sower. We strive to provide the good soil that enables all our children to flourish. We believe our purpose is to nurture and enable everyone in our community to flourish as this will enable children to be the person they are fully capable of being. We articulate this as 'deep roots, bearing fruit; enriching lives every day'.</p>	
School strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear Christian vision creates the school's ethos and drives strategic decision making. Pupils and staff have a good understanding of how the vision and values develops and enriches their lives and learning. • There are strong partnerships with local churches and community organisations. The school is also supported by a variety of enthusiastic volunteers. Pupils work well with these partners to become effective agents of change in their local area. • There is a positive climate of respect and compassion. The school community is kept safe and supported with kindness. Pupils, including vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), have their academic, social and learning needs met effectively. • Pupils spiritual lives are well developed through enjoyable and varied worship experiences. This is as a result of good planning and well led collective worship. This instils a strong sense of close community. • Enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff ensure the extensive and challenging religious education (RE) curriculum is delivered well. This is due to strong subject leadership. 	
Areas for development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Christian vision by further developing curriculum enrichment activities. This is so that a greater range of provision extends to all pupils, including vulnerable and disadvantaged students. • Develop existing strategies for supporting well being, including for mental health, so that the whole school community can flourish. • Embed a collaborative action plan to develop the school's Christian distinctiveness and ethos in line with its vision. 	
Inspection findings	
<p>St Michael's has a strong Christian ethos, creating an inclusive and compassionate learning environment for pupils and staff. The Christian vision is underpinned by Jesus' parable of the sower. Pupils are represented by the 'seeds' in the story, who have different challenges to overcome in their lives. The soil is the school which helps them to grow and develop. This vision inspires leaders to</p>	

support pupils in every circumstance, giving them ‘deep roots’ of confidence and resilience. It successfully drives strategic decision making, so that their lives are enriched and they are able to flourish. Pupils rightly appreciate the support that staff give them to become independent learners. They understand and value the fact that they are committed to helping them develop and achieve well. Leaders have recently worked alongside governors, St Christopher’s Trust and the Diocese of Exeter to refine the vision. As a result, governors are well informed and regularly monitor its impact on the life of the school. They make changes, which results in improved policies and practice. The trust is supportive, providing quality training and sound advice. Its own vision closely mirrors that of the school. They work together to enhance St Michael’s Christian ethos. The current improvement plan for developing Christian distinctiveness has been completed. However, a new development plan is not in place to improve and build on its strong Church school ethos.

The school has a curriculum which is designed to be broad and vibrant. It supports pupils’ learning about difference and diversity, and enriches their lives. Leaders have ensured that themes are enhanced by linking them to a variety of experiences. These include learning about diversity in all its forms. Work on fair trade, the challenges facing farmers in Ghana and a diverse range of artists all help to support this. Pupils are inspired to want to help, and raise money for various charities. They enjoy a very successful ‘Diversity Day’ where local families present aspects of their food, culture, and religion. This cements the inclusive, community ethos of the school, helping everyone to be understood and to develop. Governors accurately summarise this ethos by saying ‘this school is a comfortable place to talk about beliefs and values, and to be confident to be who you are’. There are a variety of extra-curricular clubs and activities. There also many activities to enrich the formal curriculum. These are not always accessible to all pupils, particularly the vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Collective worship is well led. Leaders provide detailed planning to ensure a wide variety of enriching experiences. This means that worship is joyous, reflective and makes a positive contribution to pupils’ and adults’ spiritual lives. Activities led by local churches and organisations mean that pupils can enjoy different forms of worship. Singing is cheerful, enthusiastic and gives pupils a strong sense of community and togetherness. Worship is based around the Christian values, which are explicitly taught and exemplified by Bible stories and illustrations. These shared values give pupils strength of character, confidence and resilience in their daily lives and learning. Prayer is the heartbeat of the school. In addition to the school prayer, pupils are confident to write and share their own ideas. They contribute prayer requests which are passed to a parent-led group who meet regularly at the school to pray. In this way, the Christian ethos is supported and upheld by the local community. The school is beginning to explore the nature of spirituality in greater depth. Leaders are developing an understanding of how spiritual development can positively impact on teaching and learning strategies.

Positive behaviour is promoted by a calm and purposeful learning environment. This is as a result of relationships which are built on trust and mutual respect. Pupils and staff feel safe at this school. Vulnerable pupils and those with SEND are supported with compassion. Pupils’ learning, social and academic needs are met by staff. Leaders and governors work to protect and support the mental health of adults and pupils. However, in recent times of change, necessary strategies are being developed to enhance well being.

Pupils appreciate the responsibility and autonomy they are given. They are proud to be part of various groups who lead their peers in making positive changes in the local community. These include an eco group, wildlife champions and a global awareness group. In this way, pupils are empowered to challenge injustice and become agents of change in their world. They are supported and encouraged by staff and local volunteers and this further develops strong community links.

RE is led by well informed and enthusiastic staff. This ensures that the curriculum is challenging for pupils, and includes a wide range of religions and interesting worldviews. RE is well resourced, including the use of visits and visitors to enrich the subject. Teachers use skilful questioning to draw out pupils' responses and develop their thinking. As a result, pupils enjoy RE. They are confident and articulate, and are thus able to discuss difficult concepts with understanding. This also develops their own worldviews. Staff regularly assess pupils' work, and use this to inform their planning. However, this is at an early stage of development. The trust provides good quality training and advice which supports subject leaders and teachers well. As a result, there is highly effective teaching, which engages learners, and pupils make good progress.

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

Information			
Inspection date	1 March 2024	URN	139818
VC/VA/Academy	Academy	Pupils on roll	420
Diocese	Exeter		
MAT/Federation	St Christopher's Multi Academy Trust		
Headteacher	Karen Leach		
Chair	James Heaver & Lucy Herring		
Inspector	Judith Larrington	No.	948