



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| St John's Church of England VA Primary School, Kearsley | |
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| Address | Church Road, Kearsley, Bolton, BL4 8AP |

School vision

“For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you, plans to give you hope and a future”
Jeremiah 29:11

At St John’s CE Kearsley we believe God has a plan for each and every one of us, and with God’s love, through the teachings of Christ and our Christian school values of Forgiveness, Respect, Encouragement, Kindness, Love and Equality, we will all achieve our full potential.

‘The Parable of the Lost Sheep’ illustrates God’s profound love for each and every one of his children. God deeply loves and cares personally for us as individuals. We are valuable to him and he will seek far and wide to bring us back home to him. When the one who was lost returns, the Good Shepherd receives him back with joy, and he does not rejoice alone.

School strengths

- School leaders have established a vision that accurately takes into account the community it serves. Emerging from a passion for nurture, the school transforms lives as it seeks to embrace all and put them on a hope-filled path.
- Compassion, modelled by the shepherd in the Bible parable linked to the vision, drives a culture where all are treated well. This makes a significant contribution to the positive way adults and pupils flourish.
- Opportunities to equip and empower children to become agents of change are plentiful. Pupil contributions are driving responses to local and regional issues.
- Pupils enjoy their learning in religious education (RE). They talk with confidence, showing a breadth of understanding about worldviews and faiths, including Christianity. The wide enrichment events that celebrate the diversity of the St John's community are deeply valued.
- The RE syllabus has been carefully organised to ensure its relevance to the school's context. It is well-sequenced and challenging, leading to positive engagement and progress.

Areas for development

- Embed a consistent understanding of spirituality across the curriculum, school environment and acts of worship. This is so adults and pupils can articulate the impact of these opportunities on their own spiritual development.
- Formalise and extend systems of monitoring and evaluation for collective worship so that school leaders can identify the impact it has on spiritual flourishing.
- Ensure global expressions of the Christian faith are incorporated into the RE curriculum. This is so pupils are aware it is a living and diverse world faith.

Inspection findings

St John’s Church of England Primary School is a place where there is a firm belief that all have a purpose yet to be discovered. Since the previous inspection, this school has been on a transformative journey. An evolving Christian vision is now leading to improved opportunities that enable adults and pupils alike to flourish. This vision draws together all that the school strives to achieve. The biblical parable of the lost sheep is central to this thinking. It ensures every pupil has a sense of belonging and nobody is left outside. The nurturing culture of the school shapes the way it creates opportunities for flourishing. It is instrumental in turning all towards a hope-filled path. One pupil said of the vision, ‘no matter if we’re going off on a wrong track, someone will seek you.’ School leaders have prioritised this aspect of school culture. It informs action plans and spending ensuring impact. The revision of the school’s relationship policy demonstrates school practice in making sure no child is left behind. Staff believe it is important someone always puts you ‘back on the path.’ The focus on relationships makes a tangible difference to school life.

Governors know the school well. They identify the Christian vision as important to serving the diverse local community. The vision raises aspirations and seeks to remove social challenges. School leaders are increasingly using the new vision statement to monitor the work of the school. They recognise it drives their work in improving attendance and ensuring curriculum challenge, both leading to flourishing. Staff likewise, are developing their subject areas of responsibility to reflect the vision explicitly. St John’s benefits from a working partnership with Archbishop Temple Trust. Training received on understanding spirituality and engaging with ‘Children’s Chaplains’ is positively impacting the spiritual life of the school.

The Christian vision is lived out through established values. School leaders and pupils accurately identify that forgiveness, respect, encouragement, kindness, love and equality (FREKLE) shape interactions at St John’s. As a result, the environment is calm, pupils and staff treat each other with respect and dignity. Resources used within the school curriculum reinforce the importance and understanding of these values and vision. Although training has taken place on spirituality, this work is in its infancy at St John’s. Pupils do not have a shared language with which to talk about spirituality or show their understanding of it. This limits how they identify and embrace opportunities for spiritual growth. School leaders and staff are working to strengthen this, in both the curriculum and collective worship. However, the impact is not yet clear.

Daily times of collective worship allow the community time to reflect on the school’s Christian vision and its associated values. Consequently, pupils and adults know the biblical parable of the lost sheep, recognising its relevance to their lives. They thoughtfully identify respect is their key to living well together. All of the ‘FREKLE’ values shape school life. Whilst distinctly Christian, times of worship include how these values are grounded in teachings of a range of world faiths. This ensures that all feel an integral part of this special time. Worship follows a varied pattern across the week and school leaders resource and plan for this time. Worship at St John’s Church is highly valued and has spiritual impact on the whole community. The newly established pupil chaplains, known as ‘Faithful Friends’, are developing opportunities to respond to worship throughout the day. Ownership of areas to enable pupils to reflect on key themes and values allows them opportunity to spiritually lead others. Some monitoring of worship takes place, but this is limited. Consequently, leaders are unable to identify the full impact that worship has on the spiritual flourishing across the school.

The recently achieved National Nurture Award celebrates the culture of the school that goes above and beyond to treat people well. As ambassadors for nurture, St John’s school is having a positive impact on the work of other schools across Bolton. School leaders are creative in funding and

developing a nurturing environment. Designated rooms in the school have a significant impact on the wellbeing of pupils. Spaces to instantly respond to emotional need and space to reset, ensure pupils are ready to learn. A passionate 'Nurture Team' contribute to the hope-filled atmosphere. Pupils also lead in these spaces effectively, for example the Gardeners and Seeds group. Year 6 pupils support new children in Early Years. Inspired by the vision, this contributes to them quickly settling into school and embracing a first visit to the local church. A wide variety of student leadership groups and clubs develop key skills and self-esteem for pupils.

Pupils show noticeable pride in being given positions of responsibility. They share praise for each other in making a difference. The culture inside of school empowers pupils to speak out on behalf of others. Writing letters allowing pupils to have greater access to 'The Den' exemplifies this. Each class has a Christian role model who has made an impact for good on their communities. This inspires pupils to advocate for change in the world around them. Learning about injustice develops curiosity and a response of the question, 'how can we help?' Class based projects lead to action and charitable work. Student leaders raise awareness through assemblies and acts of worship. Collaboration with other schools in Farnworth Combined offers a platform for pupils' voices to be heard. As a result, they know they can make a difference and are moved to act with compassion.

A new syllabus for RE has been carefully planned to reflect the make-up of the school's diverse community. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their lessons, sharing a good depth of knowledge about world faiths, including Christianity. They take pride in their work. Opportunity to explore a personal worldview helps pupils see that RE contributes to unity across the school community. School leaders recognise this subject plays an important role in educating good global citizens. Learning is enriched through numerous visits to places of worship, utilising public transport to reduce costs. Pupils talk with passion about these visits and of how they feel valued. Parents appreciate that enrichment opportunities are broadening minds. Understanding one another and acceptance of what makes each person unique, are key motivations for engaging with learning. Staff are effectively supported in adopting this new curriculum. Careful monitoring and evaluation ensures that teaching is not less than good. Consequently, pupils demonstrate good progress. The teaching of a balance of world faiths through enquiry is strong. However, the global diversity of Christianity is underdeveloped. New international families bring valuable contributions to this.

The inspection findings indicate that St John's Church of England Primary School is living up to its foundation as a church school.

| Information | | | |
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| Inspection date | 6 March 2024 | URN | 105241 |
| VC/VA/Academy | Voluntary aided | Pupils on roll | 180 |
| Diocese | Manchester | | |
| MAT/Federation | | | |
| Headteacher | Suzanne Howard | | |
| Chair | Anne Quigley | | |
| Inspector | Jen McIlveen | No. | 2242 |