

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Dalton St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Vision

Belong. Believe. Achieve. Dalton St Michael's, A Place to Shine. This is rooted in Matthew 5:16. 'In the same way, you should be a light for other people. Live so they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in Heaven.'

Strengths

- Leaders have developed a Christian vision, which clearly reflects the needs and context of the school community. This, and the vision's highly pertinent biblical root, enables pupils and adults to develop and shine.
- The needs of pupils, including those who experience barriers to learning, are well met. They are fully included, well supported and develop the skills and confidence to flourish and succeed.
- Collective worship is valued as a time to come together and is enhanced by the partnership with the local church. This contributes to a gradual deepening of spirituality.
- The Christian vision instils a sense of belonging and responsibility in pupils. The positive relationships resulting from this ensure pupils feel nurtured, safe and free to flourish.

Development Points

- School leaders have not ensured that the provision, profile, and priority of religious education (RE) result in an effective curriculum. Therefore, leaders should ensure that the curriculum includes the study of a range of world faiths and worldviews.
- School leaders have not ensured that the quality of RE teaching is good, and that pupils make at least expected progress. Therefore, leaders should enable staff to access relevant professional development opportunities. This is to ensure teaching and assessment lead to pupils making progress.



Inspection Findings

A warm welcome and a strong sense of belonging is evident as you enter this smaller than average school. The school's unique context, set side by side with the local church, is reflected in the Christian vision. This has been established and developed over time. The aspiration for all to feel accepted, explore their own beliefs and succeed is embedded across the school community. A local landmark, the Ashurst Beacon, inspires the biblical root of the vision by its representation of light and hope. A member of staff explained how, 'Jesus' light allows us all to shine here.' As a result, pupils and adults receive nurture and encouragement to develop their talents. Consequently, they thrive in this environment. Decisions and actions by leaders, including governors, are strongly rooted in the Christian vision of the school. A range of carefully chosen, key Christian values set a strong foundation to guide the life and work of the school. They drive the vision forward relentlessly. They have shaped the school over time and have a clear impact on the confidence, behaviour and achievements of pupils. For example, parents reflect that pupils settle well into high school because of the secure, confident start they receive at St Michael's.

The Christian vision threads through the school's curriculum, which takes advantage of the semi-rural location of the building. Local ponds and woodlands immerse pupils in the beauty of the natural world. They recognise the impact of pollution on local wildlife, taking care of trout and releasing them into streams. Pupils effectively explore the concept of spirituality through artwork and curriculum workshops. A pupil expressed the impact of this approach as 'looking at the stars, guiding me like beacons on the way to go.' Pupils recognise and articulate moments of wonder, for example, the beauty of the morning dew on cobwebs. Parents praise the impact of the school on pupils who experience barriers to learning. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included and their learning is adapted to meet their needs. This means they flourish and develop. The curriculum is enriched by visits to museums, historic cities and the theatre. Pupils build character and resilience during a residential trip to an outdoor adventure centre. As pupils' experience and character builds, their spirituality deepens.

Collective worship is valued as a special time of day for the school community to be together. Staff value it as a time of stillness and reflection. It is a clear expression of the Christian vision and ensures Christian values are lived out in the school's daily life. It deepens the understanding of the vision and values. Pupils recognise, and can articulate how worship helps to teach them about the life of Jesus and how to care for each other. Invitation to prayer, drama activities and songs of praise encourage participation and develop spirituality. Pupils choose to write prayers giving thanks for their school, food and friends. The strong partnership with the local church community is a real asset to the development of worship. Church members rejoice in engagement with pupils and their families. Clergy regularly lead worship in school and pupils celebrate key Christian festivals, for example, Easter in church.

The RE curriculum gives pupils a sequential knowledge of Christianity. Engagement with text and enquiry-based learning results in pupils displaying a sound knowledge of the Bible. They discuss how Christians learn a good way to live from the life of Jesus. They relate this to the school's vision, for example, linking the story of the paralysed man to the value of friendship. Very young pupils learn about thankfulness through Harvest play activities in early year's provision. Visits to the local church teach about Anglican traditions including baptism. However, pupils are not taught an appreciation of Christianity as a global world faith and do not learn about major world religions or worldviews. Consequently, their knowledge of world faiths is too often confused and inaccurate. This means school leaders have not ensured that the provision, profile and priority of RE result in an effective curriculum. The RE assessment systems evidence how pupils make progress as they learn about Christianity. However, they do not fully reflect their potential. School leaders have benefitted from a range of development opportunities from the local diocese. Although, they have not yet implemented the outcomes sufficiently to impact positively on the breadth and diversity of the curriculum. Opportunities for staff to access professional development in RE or to learn from good practice in other schools are limited. School leaders have not ensured that the quality of RE teaching is good, and that pupils make at least expected progress.



The Christian vision and values set the tone for the nurturing and supportive relationships in school. Consequently, pupils display exemplary behaviour. Pastoral support and a commitment to wellbeing result in a culture of trust and friendship. New staff describe the warm welcome they receive and how quickly they are assimilated into the team. Leaders have an 'open door' policy and staff value the compassion and understanding shown to them in times of need. The whole school responsibility for pastoral support works effectively. Pupils know who to speak to about any difficulties and feel happy and safe in school. Pupils explore the value of compassion and demonstrate this in the way they care for each other if they are sad. The positive mental health of pupils is a priority. Those with emotional difficulties are sensitively identified and access interventions from a children's mental health charity. This improves their emotional health and enables them to be ready to learn.

The biblical root of the vision ensures pupils display a sense of responsibility to themselves and to others. They describe themselves as role models and set a positive example as they take care of younger pupils. The vision motivates pupils to take part in a range of social action projects. They participate in a 'Hop into Spring' event to raise money for sports equipment and collect items for a local foodbank at Harvest time. A local preservation project inspires them to look after the environment and release mayflies into the wild. Pupils also take responsibility for helping to keep the school safe by identifying potential hazards. Members of the school's pupil parliament voice the views of their peers at a debating event with local schools. This results in them developing skills around justice and courageous advocacy and becoming active citizens. Pupils show respect for difference and value their own uniqueness, while recognising the beliefs of others. They are not afraid to stand up to injustice and discuss the impact of this on emotional and physical health. They engage in meaningful discussions about harm caused by bullying and share examples of actions they would take if they witnessed this. They talk maturely about different kinds of families and give poignant examples of the effects of war on individuals. The vision is reflected in the integration of Christian values into the lives of pupils. The act of singing for senior citizens at Christmas nurtures their sense of empathy and fosters a deeper connection with their local community. It inspires them to lead with kindness, compassion and service.

Information			
Address	Higher Lane, Wigan, Lancashire, WN8 7RP, United Kingdom		
Date	3 October 2024	URN	119493
Type of school	Voluntary Aided	No. of pupils	64
Diocese	Liverpool		
Headteacher	Adele Robinson		
Chair of Governors	Saartje van Walbeek		
Inspector	Anne Barker		

