

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Thomas's Church of England Primary School			
Address	Hodnet Drive, Ashton in Makerfield, Wigan. WN4 8PQ		
Date of inspection	7 November 2019	Status of school	Voluntary Aided primary
Diocese / Methodist District	Liverpool	URN	106465

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Excellent
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Excellent
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Excellent

School context

St Thomas's is a primary school with 205 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below national averages. There are exceptionally strong links with St Thomas's Church and with three local schools within a hub.

The school's Christian vision

'Secure in Faith, Learning Together'

'Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path' – Psalm 119 v105

Key Findings

- The school has exceptionally strong links with the church which are further enhanced by the school/church worker and other members of the clergy. Their impact has transformed the quality of collective worship.
- The religious education leader's unremitting focus on the quality of RE has led to creative teaching and learning and rigorous systems for monitoring and assessment.
- There is a rich and exciting curriculum, enhanced by extra-curricular provision that ensures all pupils, including those that are disadvantaged, flourish and make progress from their starting points. It enables pupils to reflect and explore the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions of all subjects.
- There is a nurturing and pastoral culture in school that supports pupils, staff and parents alike so that all feel valued and cared for.
- Whilst RE effectively develops pupils' knowledge of a range of world faiths, many pupils lack clear understanding of the difference between faith and culture.

Areas for development

- To further develop the pupils' explicit understanding of local, national and international issues and help pupils to identify when changes need to be made, empowering them to act.
- To establish global partnership links to schools in different parts of the world in order to help pupils to challenge stereotypes, developing a deeper understanding of diverse faith and culture.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

St Thomas's distinctively Christian vision is paramount in the daily life of the school. It is underpinned by the foundation scripture which was selected by pupils and reflects their well-developed understanding of their faith being rooted in and upheld by God's word. All stakeholders are certain that the Christian vision has transformed lives through its unremitting focus on developing faith and spiritual, moral, cultural and social understanding. The core Christian values of forgiveness, respect, truthfulness and service are fully developed through the curriculum, collective worship and through the input of the school-church worker. Employed by the church, she provides exceptional support in the pupils' spiritual development, enhancing religious education (RE) lessons and running a lunchtime faith club. Within her role, she has developed the opportunities for pupils to see prayer as a way of having a personal relationship with God through the use of prayer journals. Prayer leaders navigate their class through the different prayer activities, ending each week with a prayer celebration. There are exceptionally strong links between the school and St Thomas's Church, both of whom are partnered with three other schools in the local 'hub'. This provides the opportunity for adults and pupils to work collaboratively, developing innovative projects across the schools where good practice has been shared. Examples of this include pupils from each school's ethos group coming together to work on their own school's vision and its associated values.

Senior leaders, including governors, have a clear understanding of church school education. They are committed to their own continuous professional development and that of teachers, accessing training from both the diocese and the hub. One governor described the governing body as courageous advocates themselves. They advocate the distinctively Christian ethos that permeates and shapes all school policies and practices for which they rigorously hold the school to account. They have ensured that all areas of development from the last inspection have been fully addressed. They describe the headteacher as 'the heart of it all', an opinion shared by the teachers and parents who say that she is the driving force and sets the tone for others to follow. Religious education is expertly led by the deputy headteacher who has developed rigorous assessment systems that allow her to monitor the attainment and progress of all pupils. Teachers are creative in their delivery of curriculum content and pupils are articulate in their explanation of how RE helps them to reflect on and develop deeper knowledge of their own and others' faith.

The school's admission arrangements ensure that all are welcome, reflected in the excellent provision the school makes for the diverse needs of individual pupils. The rich and exciting curriculum, enhanced with varied extra-curricular provision, allows all, including disadvantaged pupils, to flourish and make progress from their starting points. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness of British values such as individual liberty and democracy through the school council, the ethos group and as a school ambassador. Pupils take complete ownership of different projects throughout the year including fundraising during Christian Aid Week and raising awareness of charities such as Water Aid and Samaritan's Purse. The pupils speak passionately about two children from Ghana whom they sponsor, explaining that each class works hard to reach the goal of raising £25 each month. As a result, pupils are beginning to develop an understanding of injustice and inequality and to see how they can empower others with their input, no matter how small. Many pupils are still in the early stages of their understanding that faith and culture are very different things. Although diversity is celebrated within school, pupils still have stereotypical views on how faith is practised and by whom in the wider world.

The pupils' excitement about learning and school life is reflected in high percentages of attendance and punctuality and rewarded with outcomes and progress measures that exceed national averages in all subjects. Staff ensure that spiritual development is fundamental to their teaching and pupils engage fully in deep and meaningful discussions. Adults understand their role to be that of nurturer, keeping pupils completely safeguarded. They are also challengers, empowering pupils to have aspirations and strive to be everything God intends them to be. Pupils develop a healthy respect for difference and demonstrate tolerance and respect with impressive maturity. One pupil explained that, 'We are all unique and God loves us just the way we are.' This inclusive outlook is shared and promoted by adults who take their responsibility of celebrating and valuing all of God's children very seriously.

Developing pupils' rights and responsibilities is a priority across the curriculum. They are promoted particularly well through the 'no blame' behaviour management policy and practices. Pupils are impressively reflective and

reasonable, accepting responsibility for their own actions and swiftly forgiving and reconciling so that positive relationships can be resumed. The school's 'open door' policy is extended to staff and parents alike who feel confident that any issues or requests they have will be facilitated wherever possible. Staff feel valued and respected. They speak passionately of tangible ways in which their wellbeing has been a priority, and their personal needs have been supported.

Collective worship and RE are both paramount in the pupils' spiritual development. A member of the church community leads worship weekly and attends classes to support curriculum delivery. This is in addition to the school-church worker who has also focussed on the ethos group to help them develop their ability to plan, deliver and evaluate worship. There is a strong worshipping community who meet in school on Saturday mornings for bible study, worship and prayer. Many pupils attend youth club at church in the evening and go on the church residential weekend. The vicar speaks passionately about the church's aim to reach out to the parents and families who would not ordinarily attend church and this has resulted in increased numbers of school families joining the church congregation.

Worship in school is inclusive and invitational and fully reflects the school's Christian vision and core values. It is rooted in biblical teaching, Christian festivals and seasons and reflects Anglican practice. It includes the teaching of British values, personal, social education and global citizenship. Pupils speak about the nature of God in age-appropriate terms and are developing their understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit with the use of symbols. Year 6 pupils learn about the Eucharist as part of their RE curriculum.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent / is Good / Requires Improvement / is Ineffective

As a core subject the RE provision reflects the Church of England Statement of Entitlement. Following Liverpool Diocese's syllabus, enhanced by 'Understanding Christianity' resources, teaching is never less than good and often outstanding. The creative ways in which RE is taught allow pupils to explore the Bible and other texts and develop higher order thinking. As a result, pupils are able to reflect on their own and others' religious and spiritual convictions and respectfully articulate differing points of view. RE is assessed half termly and achievement is in line with other core subjects. It is evident that all pupils, regardless of their ability, make at least good progress in their learning and standards are in line with or exceed national expectations.

Headteacher	Judith Jones
Inspector's name and number	Joanne Abram 913