

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Address	James Street, Failsworth, Manchester, M35 9PY		
Date of inspection	15 November 2018	Status of school	VA primary
Diocese	Manchester	URN	I05712

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

School context

St John's is a primary school with 304 pupils on roll. The school has low level of religious and cultural diversity and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national averages. The school is preparing to become part of the Church of England Sola Fide multi-academy trust, which has worked with the school in recent years and deployed a new headteacher for the school from September 2018.

The school's Christian vision

At St John's, everyone is special, everyone unique. Living, Loving, Learning: Together in God's World, we are driven by scripture: 'Let all that you do be done in Love' (1 Corinthians: 16:14). We inspire our children through Christian and public service, within the wider values of Sola Fide Academy Trust.

Key findings

- Courageous and highly effective leadership has swiftly reinvigorated the school's overt Christian vision, ensuring that it inspires and underpins all aspects of school life.
- At the foundation of pupils' learning are the core values of the school which encourage high aspirational standards of performance from all groups of pupils, including the vulnerable.
- St John's cherishes the intrinsic worth of each member of the school as a person of infinite value made in the image of God. All are therefore deserving of the best possible education, care and nurture.
- The Christian climate of this school, enriched by the school's core values of love, hope and respect, supports positive relationships for all, effectively modelled by the staff for pupils to emulate.
- Collective worship is invitational in its approach, using carefully-planned themes. Many link to the school's core faith values and pupils' learning in religious education (RE).

Areas for development

- Extend the development of good practice in all areas of Church of England school life by consolidating and extending effective links with partner schools within the multi academy trust (MAT) and diocese.
- Support pupils in independently planning and leading collective worship, whilst gathering regular evaluations of worship from a range of stakeholders, to inform future worship plans.
- Deepen pupils' insight into religious education (RE) by providing additional learning approaches that develop their theological understanding of key Christian beliefs.

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

Sustained by the faith-driven expertise of the local Church of England Sola Fide Multi Academy Trust (MAT), St John's has swiftly transformed its approaches to pupils' care, nurture and learning. Since the last Ofsted inspection, the school has harnessed the power of its refreshed Christian vision to drive forward and embed its improvement agenda. Senior leaders now have a robust system of assessment and planning that ensures the school continues to flourish and meet pupils' needs in the best possible ways.

The school's vision has been reconsidered so that it now stems from the highly-appropriate biblical quotation 'Let all that you do be done in love'. A member of staff explained, 'This means we show everyone our respect and love through kindness and care.' The quotation also embraces the concept of working to full potential and developing personal mastery of something previously found difficult. A Year 6 pupil explained, 'I keep trying when my work seems hard, because it's all worth it when I achieve.'

Senior leaders' well-considered curriculum decisions, driven by the Christian vision, enable all pupils to flourish. All groups of pupils achieve ambitious targets and almost all meet or exceed national expectations by the end of Year 6. Pupil absence figures are low, meeting national expectations, because support is offered to families for whom regular school attendance is a concern. The development points from the last inspection have also benefited from the application of the refreshed vision.

The school's Interim Executive Board acts in place of a governing board in the run-up to the school becoming an academy. Its considerable expertise includes members who have extensive experience of Church school education. As a result, the school's Christian vision remains at the forefront of all developments.

Whilst the school is not culturally diverse, the school's vision and curriculum content ensure pupils understand that everyone is entitled to respect and love. Ongoing links with pupils in a contrasting local school provide a positive, influential insight into Islamic belief, customs and lifestyles.

Collective worship is carefully planned using biblical content to underpin the significance of the school's vision and its three core values. Celebrations of the major festivals of the Anglican year help pupils to perceive God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Major festivals of other world faiths are included within worship, as are significant local and international events. As a result, worship is a meaningful part of the day and this is clearly apparent in the reverence and attentiveness of all present.

Pupils enjoy being able to take on responsible roles during worship, but these do not extend to regular occasions when they independently plan, deliver and evaluate it. Invitations to pray and reflect are part of the daily liturgy. The Lord's Prayer and the school prayer are frequently used in pupils' worship in both school and in church. Leaders of worship include the headteacher, teaching staff and the parish priest. Older pupils are able to perceive the significance of the Eucharist to Christians by attending its weekday celebration in the church. As part of their personal faith journey, pupils have the opportunity to become confirmed church members.

Because prayer and reflection are integral to school life, they continue through the school day. Pupils can choose to join the weekly prayer group where they enjoy developing their personal use of prayer and reflection. The school's focus on spirituality supports pupils in their personal investigations of faith. For some, it also provides an opportunity to explore a personal relationship with God. Pupils' growing spirituality helps them appreciate the awe and wonder of God's creation and encourages them to ask the big questions of life and belief. The school's vision and values inspire them to support others less fortunate than themselves through informed charitable giving. Currently, the school does not have on-going international links to extend pupils' Christian stewardship actions beyond fund-raising.

Pupils' behaviour is strongly influenced by the Christian vision, which is the foundation of the school policy. As a result, the supportive and respectful harmony of the school community is impressive and welcoming. There are very few incidents of bullying or discriminatory behaviour. Staff are vigilant, acting swiftly and compassionately to resolve any situation. However the policy has insufficient focus on the need for Christian forgiveness and restorative justice.

The Christian vision also gives high priority to wellbeing for everyone. Parents know the staff will help their children to overcome barriers to learning, and provide loving care during the school day. Pupils receive appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) that engenders informed respect and inclusion. An older pupil commented, 'Everyone deserves to be treated equally. Anybody that's transgender, I'd encourage them to follow their dreams.' Mental health is also promoted as an integral part of each person's wellbeing, with targeted support from external agencies when required. A member of staff is able to support colleagues with mindfulness therapy.

The school's links to the MAT and diocese have provided professional development with a distinctly Christian emphasis for all staff. Diocesan officers also support the school's development. Ongoing links support the school in working effectively with St John's church. Members of the congregation uphold the work of the school through prayer and regular updates. They also give practical assistance such as the lay leadership of the pupils' prayer group and the vicar's pastoral role within school life.

Use of the diocesan RE syllabus ensures pupils have rich RE learning experiences that develop their knowledge of Christianity and other major world faiths. However, RE does not include sufficient emphasis on pupils' theological understanding of the Christian faith. Pupils are supported in considering the significance of sacred texts, particularly the Bible. During the inspection, this was exemplified in the mature way junior pupils were able to analyse Old Testament prophecies foretelling the coming of Jesus. Pupils explained that RE is also a time for respectful, open discussion of personal belief or none. Pupils' awareness of Christianity as a vibrant multi-cultural world faith with many styles of worship is also a focus within RE studies.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

The RE subject leader has ensured that RE continues to develop as a subject that stimulates pupils' interest and enjoyment. With her guidance, the school has introduced floor-books that show the progression and high standards achieved in each class within their content. As a result, RE outcomes are seen to be at a similar standard to other areas of the curriculum. The school has benefited from membership of the local diocesan RE hub, which has provided helpful insights to current RE developments.

The RE lead teacher monitors outcomes from each class, and gives guidance and support to staff with the aim of ensuring that all pupils benefit from excellent teaching in the subject. Because all class teachers are responsible for RE, cross-curricular links to other subjects and collective worship are facilitated and clearly evident. This makes RE a highly influential core subject at St John's.

Headteacher	Simon Buxton-Moore
Inspector's name and number	Nigel Castledine 652