

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Saint Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School			
Address	Bolton Lane, Ipswich IP4 2BT		
Date of inspection	16 January 2020	Status of school	Voluntary aided primary
Diocese	St Edmundsbury and Ipswich	URN	124782

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	Good
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Excellent

School context

St Margaret's is an urban primary school with 420 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, although an increasing number have come from other countries. Many 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 headteacher has been in place for two years and has introduced new leadership structures. The school has doubled in size since the last inspection, and includes children from many different faiths.

The school's Christian vision

St Margaret's CEVA Primary School prides itself on transforming lives. Through living and learning together in God's love, we are able to encourage and support each other, enabling a flourishing community and using our unique God given skills. We are rooted in the scripture from Paul's letter to the Philippians "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me".

Key findings

- In keeping with the school's vision, senior leaders have developed a new staffing structure which allows them to offer both practical support within the school wherever it is needed, and support within the diocese. There are many examples of them having offered valued support to other schools.
- Pupil behaviour and attitudes are of the very highest standard. The school's vision and values are the driving force behind this, and are widely supported by parents and the community.
- Pupils behave well in collective worship (CW) and value its place at the heart of the school day. However, their leadership roles are insufficiently developed to confer significant ownership.
- Parents have the opportunity to join weekly worship in St Margaret's church. They see the staff as very approachable and open, but have few regular and formal opportunities to offer their views. As a result, the self-evaluation process for CW does not fully represent the views of the whole school community.
- Pupils are inspired by religious education (RE) and recognise it as a safe place to confidently explore their own faith and that of other people. This multi-faith school allows pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds to learn about each other's faiths in an atmosphere of mutual respect and friendship.

Areas for development

- To develop systems for monitoring and evaluation that involve the whole school community, so that all viewpoints are considered in strategic planning.
- To give pupils greater ownership of CW by developing their roles in its planning and leadership.

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

The school has recently reviewed its vision with all stakeholders. The new vision statement is deeply Christian and emphasises learning together in God's love, encouraging and supporting each other. The school has worked hard to ensure the vision is fully understood and makes a practical difference to the whole community. Its impact is affirmed enthusiastically by parents, governors, staff and the diocese.

The vision is strikingly realised in the extent to which the school provides high quality support. The leadership structure makes this possible, with the headteacher taking responsibility for strategic development whilst the wider team focuses on operational matters. Middle managers are equipped to make a positive contribution. The Christian ethos of the school is secure and sustainable because it is a key component of induction for new members of staff, who are attracted to the school by its growing reputation within the diocese. Support and encouragement underpin all relationships and partnerships within and beyond the school. A growing role in supporting other schools through, for example, mentoring new headteachers, leadership secondment and expertise in religious education reflects the extent to which the diocese has confidence in the school's capabilities. A commitment to encourage and support all members of the community underpins wellbeing policies and practice. For example, the school is part of a national project to recognise and improve mental health and wellbeing for all members of the community.

The powerful way that the vision is being realised within the school is obvious in the way it supports and encourages its many vulnerable pupils. The school has invested widely to provide support for them. There is a counsellor and a chaplain, and staff man a rainbow room to provide support for children feeling vulnerable during the school day. A breakfast club provides childcare for working parents and ensures all children can get a breakfast before school begins. As a result of good financial management and successfully bidding for many grants, governors have been able to target additional staffing at vulnerable groups, with considerable effect. Data shows that pupils' rates of progress usually exceed the national expectation in all areas. Vulnerable pupils are rapidly catching up, so that in many cases there is no discernible difference in their academic performances. For example, between girls and boys a 42% difference three years ago is now no significant difference. There is a noticeable love and care which school staff have for all pupils which goes beyond the requirements of their job and demonstrates their own personal Christian convictions.

Reinforcement of chosen Christian values, such as trust, respect and perseverance, and the school's Christian vision have led to a culture of mutual respect and very high standards of behaviour. This is immediately obvious to any visitor and much valued by parents. Parents confidently describe the impact of the vision and school values, and express their support for the school's Christian ethos even though many are not Christians themselves. One parent said that 'we are aware that the Christian vision is (...) fundamental'. Another, who recently taught in the Middle East, said that she 'can't believe what is going on here. (My children are) so confident and comfortable. We are so happy!' The school's values are distinctively Christian but appeal to those of all faiths and none. A parent who described herself as having no religious affiliation described the 'significant shift towards inclusivity since (the headteacher) arrived,' making the values appropriate and relevant for everyone.

Pupils recognise and regularly challenge injustice and inequality, both locally and in a global context. They go beyond the school's vision of supporting each other to identify causes they wish to support themselves. There are many examples of pupils choosing to raise funds to support those who have less than they have, or who are in a greater need, including Lighthouse, St Elizabeth's Hospice and Children in Need. Through their active school council, they are able to take a growing role in challenging inequality both locally and in a global context, and the school is keen to develop this. There is a link with a school in Kenya which as well as raising money to help them, has given pupils a good understanding of the problems faced by people living in developing countries.

School leaders work very closely with the local church community, fulfilling the vision and encouraging and supporting each other. They effectively share resources and expertise for mutual benefit. Because the church is a larger venue, it is used to enable parents to join worship every week. The service is led alternately by the

vicar and the school chaplain, and is supported by older pupils. There are links between websites and pupils contribute prayers for use in church services and the annual parish prayer book. For many years the vicar has been an important member of the governing body, and all foundation governors are drawn from the parish church.

CW is used effectively as an opportunity for the school to share its vision and explore its Christian values. It is inclusive and inspirational and appropriately based upon the life of Jesus. The impact of CW can be seen in the way pupils have accepted and live out the school's Christian values in their everyday lives. Worship provides valued opportunities for pupils' spiritual development, and usually involves considerable elements of prayer and reflection. Although the hall is adequate for worship, it is not as inspirational as most other communal areas of the school, where there are many high-quality and inspirational displays. Pupils have a sound understanding of the terminology and traditions of the Anglican church. They have opportunities to plan class worship and the worship group allows some to support leaders in whole-school worship, but most pupils' roles in planning, leading and monitoring are limited, and as a result, pupils have limited ownership of CW.

Pupils' spirituality is well developed and obvious to those who spend time with them, and is a consequence of both the school's vision and values and the high value given to it. Spirituality is developed across the whole curriculum, with pupils being regularly encouraged to reflect, to offer their views, and to praise others for offering theirs. Displays in classrooms demonstrate the high value teachers place upon pupils being in touch with their own feelings, and being willing to share these with their peers. Big questions are regularly considered, especially in RE but also in other subjects, when there are many possible valid answers. Pupils regularly write and say prayers, some of which are collected and shared, and some of which are used by the church. In order to further encourage reflection and spiritual development, the school creates a prayer space on the playground every term. In addition, a dedicated outdoor prayer and reflection area has very recently been established, although as it is not yet fully utilised by pupils its impact cannot be assessed.

RE is a valued core subject and has a very high profile in the school. It is taught to a very high standard and follows the Emmanuel Project, which provides a thorough understanding of Christianity and Anglican traditions, whilst also providing pupils with understanding of and respect for other world faiths. Pupils confidently express their own ideas and feelings, and respect those of other people. The RE leader was seconded to help the diocese write this project. RE effectively encourages pupils to develop their thinking and to respect the ideas and feelings of those who differ from them. It is used to reinforce and develop the school's distinctively Christian vision and the values that it wishes to develop. The school makes effective use of parents and visitors from different backgrounds to support teaching. RE provides opportunities for pupils to consider big questions, and there is much evidence in classes of pupils being encouraged to think deeply and express their opinions. The skills and attitudes learned in RE enhance the wider curriculum and have an influence upon progress in all subjects. Governors have developed their monitoring role and monitor RE regularly, providing valued feedback, enabling the headteacher and subject leaders to improve and develop the subject.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

The school's monitoring, carried out by the co-ordinator, governors, senior staff and occasionally external advisors, shows that standards of both teaching and learning in RE are always good and very often outstanding. Pupil progress, regardless of starting points, is in line with or above age-related expectations. Work scrutinies and lesson observations carried out during the inspection entirely support this.

Headteacher

Jo Kidby

Inspector's name and number

Stephen Green 809