



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Whitwick St John The Baptist Church of England VC Primary School

Address Parsonwood Hill, Whitwick, Leicestershire, United Kingdom, LE67 5AT

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

Overall grade **Good**

The impact of collective worship **Good**

School’s vision

Grow, achieve, bloom, repeat...

'Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop, a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.'
Our vision is 'Grow, Achieve, Bloom, Repeat...' supported by the Parable of the Sower. We pride ourselves on providing the necessary foundations that enable children to grow, bloom and experience success and become lifelong learners.

Key findings

- The Christian vision is fully embedded and clearly underpinned by the parable of the sower. Pupils and adults describe how they have been able to flourish and ‘bloom’ during difficult times.
- Christian values are intrinsic to the lives of the whole school family and one way in which the vision is worked out, enabling pupils to 'grow and bloom.' As a result, staff and pupils have developed excellent relationships, based on a shared approach, which enables all to thrive.
- Provision in religious education (RE) is a strength of the school. The very effective co-ordinator has ensured that staff are knowledgeable about the subjects and faiths taught. Consequently, there is a real ‘buzz’ about learning and pupils flourish in RE.
- Governors are passionate about their role in school. Monitoring takes place, but is not of a strategic and robust nature. Consequently, regular evaluation of the school's Christian distinctiveness does not feed into development planning.
- Collective worship impacts the lives of the school community. However, there are limited opportunities for spiritual development, including opportunities for prayer and reflection.

Areas for development

- Leaders and governors to develop further rigorous and continuous monitoring of Whitwick St. John the Baptist as a Church school, so that evaluation leads into development planning.
- To facilitate creative opportunities for worship and reflection, to enhance spiritual development and prayer.

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 Christian vision of 'Grow, Achieve, Bloom, Repeat...' is deeply embedded at Whitwick St. John the Baptist and clearly links to the parable of the sower in the gospel of St. Matthew. Consequently, all members of the school family are using a common language to describe how the school vision greatly influences their own lives. Many learning analogies relate back to the statement, such as pupils having a 'blooming moment' and the Christian values being the strong 'roots' which enable them to grow. 'Penguin Power' is an alternative term, recently adopted by the pupils, which has enabled them to take ownership of the vision and explain how the parable makes an impact in their daily lives. The headteacher has fostered a very positive link with another local school which is mutually developing the Christian character of their communities.

The leadership team have a clear understanding of recent developments in Church school education. They seek to provide the solid 'roots that will enable all to 'grow and bloom'. They have ensured that staff develop through in-service training and regular updates. Subsequently, adults in school wholeheartedly live out the vision as a natural part of everyday life. Leaders carefully consider the vision when planning and making decisions. However, this is sometimes not secured by being articulated in the school's policy documents. These do not always clearly explain the way in which the vision drives practice. Governors are passionate about their role and convey how the school has changed as a Church school since the last inspection. Governor monitoring takes place and highlights areas for development, but is not strategic and robust. As a consequence, continuous evaluation of some aspects of Christian distinctiveness is being overlooked and is not contributing to improvement planning.

The headteacher and her team have worked hard to ensure the vision is understood by all and it is now deeply rooted in every aspect of school life. Curriculum subjects are planned using four key 'drivers' pertinent to the school and which enable pupils to flourish. Subject planning includes consideration of Christian values. Innovative and bespoke provision of an alternative curriculum is individualised for pupils with emotional needs. The special needs co-ordinator was relentless during the pandemic in ensuring statutory duties were met. This has enabled all to thrive during difficult times. A family liaison worker is also successfully supporting vulnerable families. An area called 'The Nest' allows a safe space to work, chat and sometimes pray with pupils who are struggling emotionally or having difficulty accessing classroom learning.

The contribution made by the teaching of religious education is a strength of the school. The subject is well-planned by a very effective co-ordinator. Innovative and inspirational staff training has resulted in a solid understanding of many aspects of biblical knowledge and spirituality. Consequently, there is a 'buzz' during creative and engaging RE lessons. Pupils learning is very effectively supported by a system of speech bubble assessments. They describe the importance of understanding different faiths and religions in a multicultural society. Due to the pandemic, visits to places of worship have not yet resumed, limiting first hand experiences of nearby faith communities.

The response to 'living out' the vision over the last two years has been life changing for many of the school family. Parents speak of school staff 'going the extra mile' and valued the support received during the pandemic. Contact with families was creative, ensuring individualised provision for many. Projects arranged by the school were well-supported and extended into the wider community. A surprise Easter message from school staff was shared via social media on Easter Sunday morning and gave hope and encouragement to the whole school community. Anxious pupils were introduced back into the school setting with understanding and careful thought. Staff were resilient and there was a united acceptance that 'they were all in it together.'

The overarching vision statement is entrenched in school culture. One parent reflected the views of many, saying, 'The Christian values that underpin collective worship have become key topics of conversation within our family.' Regular 'Big Q' days encourage pupils to ask big questions about life and faith. Pupils are beginning to challenge as they

become courageous advocates for change, although knowledge about being part of a wider global society is not yet fully developed. The behaviour policy makes a significant contribution to the vision for pupils to ‘grow and bloom’. It was re-written after acknowledgement that it was not underpinned by forgiveness and reconciliation. Pupils now have the opportunity to physically write on a leaf why they are asking for forgiveness and articulate what they need to do to ‘turn over a new leaf.’ This has had a very positive impact on how unwanted behaviours are addressed.

There is an all-encompassing acceptance that everyone should be treated with dignity and respect. The implementation of a well-thought through diversity charter enables all members of the school family to flourish. Pupils speak of sometimes ‘falling out’ but know how to apply Christian values positively to resolve problems. They say bullying is rare. The school has recently changed their Relationships and Sex Education curriculum to one which aligns more closely to the school’s Christian vision.

Collective worship is planned around Christian values, which are commonly referred to as the ‘root’ values. Reflection big books celebrate the impact of the focus value. Families and other adults in school were able to access remote worship during lockdown and appreciated the opportunity to be together in challenging times. There is a sense of reverence as classes enter worship. Pupils open worship by placing a Bible, cross and candle whilst explaining their link to the Trinity, demonstrating clear understanding. Links are made to the Christian value and Bible stories. However, opportunities for spiritual development are limited. There are few meaningful opportunities for quiet reflection and prayer, both in formal and informal contexts. Suitable outdoor spaces are rarely used for prayer. Good relationships are developing with the relatively new church leadership team. The vicar regularly leads worship and facilitates ‘listening lunches’ in the outdoor classroom where pupils can chat or pray. Members of the Year 6 chaplaincy team lead worship each half term, enabling them to reinforce understanding, develop confidence and articulate the focus value.

Active acceptance and watching over one another in love at Whitwick St. John the Baptist equips everyone to flourish and live life in all its fullness. In the words of one member of staff, ‘I couldn’t ask for anything more!’

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	19 May 2022	URN	120171
Date of previous inspection	17 November 2015		
School status	Voluntary controlled	NOR	368
Name of MAT/Federation	n/a		
Diocese	Leicester		
Headteacher	Helen Noon		
Pupil profile	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 in line with national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)			
Inspector’s name	Linda Hardy	No.	944