

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St. Michael's Church of England Primary School

Address	Kingsway, Lyme Regis, Dorset DT7 3DY			
Date of inspection	20 May 2019	Status of school	VA primary	
Diocese	Salisbury	URN	113851	

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	Requires Improvement
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Requires Improvement

School context

St. Michael's is a Church of England voluntary aided primary school with 119 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 above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is above the national average. Most pupils live within the catchment area. The headteacher has been in post since June 2016 following a period of time as the acting headteacher. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2018. The on-site preschool has 25 pupils registered. The local church's vicar and team rector left in November 2018. Their replacements have not yet been appointed.

The school's Christian vision

Our five core Christian values
Trust, Honesty, Compassion, Respect and Kindness
are centred on

'Do to others as you would like them to do to you.' (Luke 6:13)

Through these values we inspire children to be the best they can be. Encouraging high aspirations and expectations that will allow them to achieve, explore, succeed and prepare for their own path through life.

Key findings

- The school's focus on Christian school development has recently gathered pace due to strengthened church partnerships, improved religious education (RE) provision and increased leadership capacity following the recent appointment of a deputy headteacher.
- Changes to the school's Christian vision, with an emphasis on its strong link to the Christian values, have increased stakeholders' understanding of its role in driving the school's work.
- Collective worship's strong focus on the five core Christian values has given pupils a clear understanding of how values can positively impact on daily life.
- Strong relationships throughout the school nurture and support each individual school member.

Areas for development

- Improved academic outcomes are necessary to secure the vision of wanting pupils to be the best they can be.
- Governors to embed the more recently introduced monitoring systems so they continue to accurately identify future church school development needs.
- Leaders to support the embedding of the recently introduced Understanding Christianity RE teaching materials so pupils develop a deeper understanding of each Christian theme.

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. Michael's revisited Christian vision, with its associated values, positively impacts on life within the school. A wide community consultation has increased stakeholders' ownership of an understandable vision that is rooted within Christian theology. Revisiting the vision has had an impact on the school's leadership, with leaders ensuring it threads through each school policy. Most importantly, pupils are able to explain the vision's meaning, describing how it guides their daily behaviour. The governors' Christian Ethos group monitors the impact of the school's work. This includes holding pupil interviews. Findings are increasingly effective in identifying the next steps for Christian development. St. Michael's leaders work closely with the diocese and this partnership supports valuable professional training and advice, helping the school to develop as a church school.

Collective worship is planned around the five core values and key events during the Christian year. Each value forms the worship theme for half a term allowing pupils' understanding of the values to be embedded. Worship themes are then followed up in the classroom, enabling the values to be further discussed at age appropriate levels. Pupils can give examples of when their behaviour has been influenced by the values. They are proud when this behaviour is recognised within celebration worship, reinforcing their importance. St. Michael's pupils say they especially enjoy the 'Open the Book' worships that give them an understanding of Bible stories, including the lessons within them. The Trinity is understood at an age appropriate level with pupils describing it as, 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit – all one God.' The school has close partnerships with Lyme Regis' local churches. During an interregnum period additional church members have become closer to the school, providing high quality experiences for the pupils. These have included a child-friendly baptism service for the class teddy bears. This gave the pupils a deeper understanding of why baptism is special for Christians. Church members also organised a 'church trail' where pupils were able to explore the church. The highlight of this activity for pupils was visiting the organ loft where they were able to play the organ with guidance from the church musicians. Pupils said that the sound of the organ made the church feel very special.

There is a shared understanding of spirituality among adults in the school and this is allowing planned and unplanned special moments to be appreciated. Pupils have dedicated 'calm me' sessions where they have time to be still, reflecting on their own skills and those of others. Experiences provided within the curriculum have given pupils the space to talk more openly and explicitly about their own thoughts and understanding. Moments of reflection sometimes include questions that support them in making their own decisions. Pupils use classroom prayer spaces for moments of quiet reflection and prayer during the school day. One pupil described how they use prayer, 'I like it that we pray before food because we can thank God for all that he has provided.'

The school lives out its vision by wanting the best for all its pupils. There is a broad, balanced curriculum and learning is made accessible to all through carefully structured interventions. The vision, with associated values, is depicted in St. Michael's recently created new illustration of a sailing ship. The ship represents the vision for its pupils, sailing into the wind to new places, new experiences and coping with challenges. Some pupils have suggested this vision vessel becomes the new school badge. Pastoral care is a major priority for the school and specialist resources are used to nurture and support pupils with emotional and social well-being. Additional adults are deployed as necessary for vulnerable situations, further strengthening the pastoral support. Academic results since the last inspection have fallen below national expectations. Consequently, the school's vision of wanting all to be the best they can be is not being fully achieved at this time. Leaders recognise that academic success has a major impact on pupils being able to fulfil their aspirations for the future, therefore, they work very closely with agencies beyond the school that challenge and support its drive for improved academic pupil outcomes. School leaders are highly committed towards their pre school, recognising the positive impact early intervention can have on preparation for school. Very strict measures to address poor attendance are communicated to parents, clearly explaining the negative impact absence has on pupils' social and academic development. Parents say they value the care given to their children, describing the huge support given by the school when difficult situations arise. They feel this has had a significant impact on their whole family's well-being. They recognise the school's work in fulfilling this element of its vision with their children, encouraging them to be thoughtful towards others as well as themselves.

Pupils have a growing understanding of injustice and social responsibility. Compassion is shown in their support for local and national charities. Older pupils make presentations to the rest of the school, guiding decisions on which charities to support. Pupils are encouraged to have an interest in current affairs, including discussions and guidance on how to go about addressing injustice. This was shown in their recent letter to the Transport Minister where they challenged the amount of money being spent on transport and brexit. Pupils felt this was unjust, explaining that the equivalent money could have run St. Michael's for the next fifty years.

Positive relationships, based on mutual respect, clearly evidence the impact of the vision within the St. Michael's community. Pupils say that any school adult can be approached if they feel worried. Pupils who have struggled in other school settings have settled well within the school, much due to the care and understanding given to them by adults and their peers.

Increasingly effective RE teaching allows pupils to explore world religions and beliefs. The recently introduced Understanding Christianity teaching materials are being embedded into RE provision and its development has been supported with professional development and diocesan advisory support. This has resulted in increased teacher subject knowledge that is making a positive impact on the quality of learning. Books and other learning evidence show appropriate standards of care and independent thinking. Challenging questioning is taking place within RE lessons which positively deepens pupils' thinking. This also allows an appreciation that there can be a range of valid answers to the same question.



The effectiveness of RE Requires Improvement

RE development has recently gathered pace due to increased leadership capacity within the school. The RE leader engages in local RE forums where ideas are shared regarding curriculum design and good practice. The governors are closely monitoring RE provision and its impact on pupils' learning and this is enabling them to more accurately identify future development needs. RE assessment systems are currently being developed and refined as necessary. The strengthened church partnership, with its valuable support for RE learning, is helping pupils' understanding of Christian concepts. One example was a church-led service linked to the Understanding Christianity unit on Salvation. Pupils were invited to write down things they had done wrong. After making the sign of the cross through their wrong-doing, their papers were then placed into a 'sorry' bucket. The bucket's contents were then destroyed, successfully showing pupils the meaning of God's forgiveness. RE is still in the development stage towards fulfilling all requirements for a good judgement because recent developments are not yet securely embedded into practice. However, there are strong indicators that positive progress is being made within RE provision.

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