



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Ippolyts Church of England Primary School

Address Ashbrook Lane, St Ippolyts, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 7PB

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 **Excellent**

The impact of collective worship **Excellent**

The effectiveness of religious education (RE) **Excellent**

School’s vision

To provide the best possible education for each child as a unique individual, within the context of a caring, Christian community.

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” John13:34

Key findings

- Highly committed and skilled leadership has created a vibrant Christian learning community in which every member flourishes. Dedicated staff and skilled governors share the inclusive, embedded and deeply Christian vision which inspires and directs every aspect of school development.
- Remarkably strong, nurturing relationships, based on a deeply Christian vision, support all members of the school family. These sustain pupils and adults at times of personal need, supporting their mental health and emotional wellbeing extremely well.
- Collective worship is creative, inspirational and inclusive, providing opportunities to worship in a variety of ways. It facilitates exceptional spiritual growth in pupils and adults, supporting and sustaining the school’s vision of demonstrating love for one another.
- High-quality religious education (RE) provision, based on an enquiry-led approach, requires pupils to think deeply and is both challenging and transformational in considering how pupils can aspire to live out the school vision.
- The vision and associated values are the foundation from which all pupils are enabled to achieve their potential; spiritually, academically and socially. They have a strong impact on pupils’ highly positive attitudes to each other, to life and to their learning.

Areas for development

- Continue to develop the spirituality policy in order to fully capture and build upon the excellent practice of the school.

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 love and care shown by staff and governors for pupils and their families is palpable. The deeply Christian vision to 'Love one another as I have loved you' shines through the calm and creative working atmosphere immediately sensed by visitors. During lengthy periods of remote learning and school closures parents remained overwhelmingly supportive of the school offer. The school lives out its vision through the love and care shown in supporting families. This could be seen through staff delivering food parcels to the most vulnerable and visiting the home of every pupil in Year 6. Parents recognise that even during the most challenging times the school vision to 'love one another' held firm. The school vision has been carefully developed with strong theological roots. For example, Corinthians 13 is used to provide the challenge of 'How to Love'.

Leaders are totally committed to continuous improvement. The carefully constructed curriculum, and the approach to develop each child as a learner, is based on the vision that recognises the 'uniqueness' of every child. The extremely thorough cycle of self-evaluation and monitoring ensures that pupil progress is tracked, and individual needs identified and supported. As a result, all aspects of school development are successfully driven by the shared Christian vision and associated values which are at the heart of all decisions, ensuring the pupils continue to 'receive the best education possible'. Policies too have been shaped by the vision to create an ethos of dignity and respect for all. Governors and leaders have a robust equalities policy and set of objectives that reflect the school vision, focusing on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. However, the spirituality policy does not adequately capture and drive the existing high level of provision. Governors know the school extremely well. Through regular monitoring visits and meetings with staff and pupils, they have a very clear understanding of the school curriculum and the way in which the vision drives this. As a result, all pupils make at least good progress with many making excellent progress.

All staff strive to provide the best possible learning environment and educational practice. Over many years of stable leadership, senior leaders and governors have created a unified, harmonious staff team. Morale is high because staff know that they are supported both personally and professionally. Many comment on how the Christian character of the school has positively impacted on their own personal lives, providing love and support during times of challenge. All staff benefit from well-targeted professional development opportunities, supporting middle and senior leadership and preparing future church school leaders. Several members of the staff team work closely with the diocesan adviser and attend leadership training. St. Ippolyts' expertise in RE is shared with other schools at diocesan and local authority conferences, providing an active contribution to improvement across the education system. The school enables both pupils and adults to flourish in all aspects of life due to the excellent mental health and wellbeing provision. This work is intentionally planned as an outworking of the school vision and has a transformational impact on the lives of members of the school community.

RE and collective worship make very substantial contributions to pupils' spiritual growth. Pupils are eager learners because they are excited and inspired by their learning. They are confident and mature, and through an inspiring enquiry-based curriculum they articulate their thoughts clearly and disagree well. Reflection is integral to learning across the curriculum, through which the Christian vision is threaded seamlessly. Pupils express their ideas creatively through art, poetry, prose and prayer. The outstanding quality and depth of their personal responses can be seen in vibrant art displays and RE whole class books. Teachers are adept at questioning. This deepens pupils' thinking because they are frequently challenged to explain or consider why such a belief is expressed. Provision for pupils' spiritual development and emotional wellbeing is extremely well-considered. 'Godly play' is used exceptionally well in early years to create spiritual moments of deep reflection on stories from the bible. Pupils have quality experiences through a regular pattern of visits and visitors. Annual enrichment experiences are provided, including a '3 Faith Tour'. This involves visits to three different places of worship and enhances the children's experience and understanding of world faiths. Spirituality and emotional wellbeing are well understood by all, with opportunities to explore spirituality provided across the curriculum. The recent work on 'my relationship with myself, others and something greater' showcases examples of spiritual reflection.

Inclusive collective worship is the heartbeat of the school community. Pupils frequently take part, helping to act out stories, answer questions and provide responses following weekly reflections. Worship is a joyful and participatory experience for pupils and staff. The extent to which pupils are engaged in planning, leading and evaluating worship is

exemplary. They explore the bible and the life and teaching of Jesus imaginatively, so that worship constantly refers to the school's vision and associated values. Worship leaders meet weekly with the headteacher and take responsibility for leading key aspects of worship. The vicar is a frequent visitor to the school, supporting collective worship and RE lessons in year 6. Christian festivals throughout the year are celebrated by the community through services held at St Ippolyts Church. Pupils experience a range of different worship styles led by staff, clergy, pupils and visitors from other denominations. All pupils have experience of the eucharist and understand the connection between what happens in church on a Sunday and school collective worship. Prayer and reflection are key features of daily worship. Pupils write and use their own prayers for public and personal use and are familiar with traditional prayers and graces, such as the Lord's Prayer, which is often sung. The monitoring and evaluation of worship is frequent and involves pupils, senior leaders and governors.

Pupils make a very clear link between Jesus' teaching, the Christian vision and their own actions, such as supporting several local charitable causes and recognising injustice in the world. Through the ecologically conscious curriculum, pupils respond to the needs of others, recognising that everyone can do something to make a difference. In line with the findings of this inspection, parents strongly believe that their children grow spiritually and personally, gaining self-confidence as a result of their curricular experiences. They recognise the profound impact the school vision has on the children's spiritual wellbeing and comment that this is evident in the relationships they see between siblings at home. Behaviour is exemplary. Attendance is very good. The whole school community is encouraged to live out the vision through their interactions and relationships in everyday life.



The effectiveness of RE is **Excellent**

Teaching and learning are consistently good, and a high proportion is excellent, supporting pupils' exploration of religious belief and practices. Pupils are inspired by their learning, developing key skills of enquiry and analysis. As a result of an expertly crafted curriculum, pupils gain a deep knowledge and understanding of key concepts in Christianity which are developed and built upon. As a result, all pupils, including the disadvantaged and those with special needs and/or disabilities, make excellent progress.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	21 October 2021	URN	117440
Date of previous inspection	24 February 2015		
School status	Voluntary aided primary	NOR	173
Name of MAT/Federation	N/A		
Diocese / Methodist District	St Albans Diocese		
Headteacher	Rachel Peddie		
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	Allan McLean	No.	823