

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School			
Address	St James's Passage, Duke's Place, London, EC3A 5DE		
Date of inspection	23/05/2019	Status of school	VA primary
Diocese	London	URN	100000
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	Excellent
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Excellent

School context

Sir John Cass Foundation is a primary school with 286 pupils on roll. Around a quarter of pupils are of white British heritage and the remainder are from a wide range of ethnic groups. Very many pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is above national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above national averages. The headteacher has been in post since September 2018.

The school's Christian vision

Biblically grounded in 1 Corinthians 13, the school's vision is that every member of the community will develop a questioning approach to faith, grounded in the principles of Christian hope, which prompts everyone to seize every opportunity for growth, to look beyond themselves and lovingly serve their community and the wider world.

Key findings

- Leaders, governors and clergy share and live out an exemplary Christian vision that is rooted in the biblical teaching about faith, hope and love. It evokes a shared commitment to meeting the academic, personal and spiritual needs of all members of the school community so that pupils and adults flourish. In the words of the school prayer, this is a place which brings, 'peace and hope and a light' to the community it serves.
- A shared understanding of spirituality underpins the school's vision and drives its decisions. It creates a harmonious learning community characterised by the compassionate, caring relationships between and among pupils and adults which expresses the love at the heart of the vision.
- Pupils understand that Christian love leads to compassionate action. They engage with the local and wider communities, recognise injustice and look for ways in which they can make a difference through the many opportunities for service that the school provides.
- Collective worship is an expression of the school's inclusive vision. Irrespective of their own faith or belief, all who attend know that they are there because they are invited and because they matter. Pupils and adults say that they are affirmed by worship, challenged by its content and encouraged to respond.
- Religious Education (RE) is given very high priority in the school's curriculum. As a result of the school's commitment to deep thinking and questioning about the nature of faith and belief, pupils leave the school with a secure understanding of Christianity and of the key aspects of the other faiths they study.

Areas for development

- Explore ways in which pupils can engage with the Eucharist in creative and innovative ways that respect the integrity of pupils.

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

This is a school that has shared the Christian gospel through education for three centuries. While the leaders' ambitious Christian vision reflects the school's work in modern Britain, it is underpinned by this sense of history and continuity of faith. Leaders, governors and clergy articulate an inclusive vision of faith, hope and love which is evident in every aspect of the school's work. From the moment they join the school, pupils quickly understand the scriptural message of faith, hope and love. This simple articulation of the wider vision is consciously lived out by all members of the school community. It results in the warm, compassionate and caring relationships that exist between and among adults and learners. It creates a harmonious learning community where high levels of mutual care are evident and the principles of forgiveness and reconciliation are applied. Pupils know that they are regarded as unique and special because they are loved by God. They attend enthusiastically, behave impeccably and work hard. Therefore, they make excellent progress, attaining standards that are consistently higher than nationally expected. Adults flourish because they know that they matter too – they say that working here inspires them to be the best they can.

With the new headteacher, leaders and governors have highly effective systems for reviewing their Christian vision and its impact on the life, work and ethos of the school. They know the school and its pupils well and carefully plan to meet their needs. The rich, innovative and dynamic curriculum reflects their deep commitment to provide for pupils' academic, personal and spiritual development. It is further enriched by the many excellent additional opportunities provided through strong partnerships with the diocese, the Foundation and the City Corporation. As a result, pupils are curious and excited learners, living out the school's desire for open and questioning minds, and so growing in wisdom.

Pupils quickly appreciate that Christian love requires a compassionate response and learn to look beyond themselves. They develop a genuine sense of community. In school, they value diversity, appreciate difference and celebrate the successes of their peers. Beyond school, they rapidly recognise injustice and look for ways in which they can make a difference through serving their local community and beyond. For example, having learnt about food waste, pupils and parents are working with the church to collect food and distribute it among the homeless. Pupils' questioning about homelessness has led to links with local charities for whom funds are raised and material collected. Through individual pupils and the proactive pupil council, the school is realising its vision for greater engagement with local, national and global concerns. As a result, it has a significant impact on the wider community. It is recognised as a beacon of Christian hope and its pupils become fierce advocates for change.

In promoting the Christian principles of hope and love, leaders and governors have developed a strong culture of inclusion. Parents say that this is a 'global school' where all are welcomed and all are valued. They recognise that, while the school is distinctly Christian, all faith is handled respectfully and their children's character developed. The provision for supporting pupils' and adults' mental health is impressive. There are excellent systems in place with access to professional support so that the wellbeing of the whole school community is safeguarded. The strong and energetic link with the parish church provides excellent pastoral and spiritual support for staff and pupils, engaging both in the life of the church.

Collective worship, which the school calls 'assembly', is an anchor point in each school day. Its importance echoes the school's vision of an inclusive and hopeful community. Irrespective of their own faith or belief, all who attend worship know that they are there because they are invited and because they matter. Worship is biblical, centred on the person of Jesus and the Christian understanding that God is Father, Son and Spirit. Excellent use is made of prayer and liturgy that give pupils experience of Anglican tradition. The weekly act of worship in the church enables them to share in Anglican practice. Although pupils learn about the sacrament of Eucharist, no school acts of communion take place. Pupils and adults say that they are affirmed by worship, challenged by its content and encouraged to action. Parents of all faiths welcome their opportunities to share in worship and pupils say that, whatever their faith, they embrace the times of quiet reflection and enthusiastic singing. They feel they are drawn closer to God and many pupils of non-Christian faiths say that worship deepens their own faith. Pupils say they love the many opportunities they have to play a role in writing prayers, leading and evaluating worship. The strong relationship with the parish church adds significant capacity and clergy play a key role in planning and leading acts of worship. The regular use of the parish church enables pupils to see church and school as natural partners.

RE is given very high priority in the school's curriculum, treated as a core subject and is popular with pupils. In an expression of the school's inclusive vision, pupils learn from a wide range of world faiths in addition to Christianity. This meets the expectations of the Church of England's Statement of Entitlement and the well-organised curriculum ensures that pupils encounter different expressions of faith in a cohesive way that matches their thinking skills. The skilled and experienced subject leader monitors and supports teaching and learning highly effectively. She has worked with other leaders and the diocese to ensure that teachers have the deep subject knowledge they need to teach the range of faiths covered. Teachers' innovative practices and very good subject knowledge ensure that RE is consistently well taught. There is a key focus on developing pupils' reflective and analytical skills. They make connections between different expressions of faith and ask and answer questions at a much deeper level than might be expected at any age.

Since the last inspection, teachers have improved their assessment skills and are working with diocesan officers to extend this work. As a result, they understand both what pupils have learned about faith and belief and how their evaluative skills are developing. As a result, when they leave the school, pupils have a deep understanding of Christianity and of the key aspects of the other faiths studied and so have a secure awareness of the importance of faith and belief. The school plays a leading role in developing quality RE among other schools in the Tower Hamlets deanery. This close collaborative working has enabled it to become a centre of excellent RE practice.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

Regular and systematic monitoring of RE, which uses a range of measures to grade the quality of lessons, suggests that teaching and learning is consistently good and often outstanding. This was confirmed by observations during the inspection and by the views of pupils who love the interactive learning and the visits to places of worship. Current data suggests a sustained trend of high attainment and excellent progress. The school's leaders and those responsible for leading RE are wholly committed to ensuring that all pupils, including the most vulnerable, flourish. As a result, all pupils, except those few with complex special needs make exceptional progress and even those who find learning difficult make good steps from their starting points. Pupils say that RE helps them to understand religion and its place in society.

Headteacher	Alexandra Allan
Inspector's name and number	John Viner NS144