

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St. Alban's Church of England Nursery and Primary School			
Address	Baldwin's Gardens, London, EC1N 7S		
Date of inspection	13 February 2020	Status of school	Voluntary aided primary
Diocese	London	URN	100036

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	Good

School context

St. Alban's is a primary and nursery school with 186 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of Bangladeshi heritage. Most 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. Since the last inspection there has been an almost complete change of senior leadership and significant teacher turnover.

The school's Christian vision

All our pupils should grow in:

Faith in God, or be inspired by faith, and in their own ability to fulfil their potential,
 Hope to be the best of examples, to work to change themselves and the world for the better, and
 Love reflecting God's love in unselfish love for others. (based on 1 Corinthians 13)

Key findings

- The school's clear, well-established, Bible based vision has, over the years, provided a safe framework within which to weather times of staff turnover and instability.
- Every child is cherished as a unique and special child of God and their individual needs are catered for in a way that ensures that they grow and flourish in hope, faith and love.
- Collective worship is a strength of the school. It is a highly effective outworking of the school's Christian vision and values. Pupils are intimately involved in planning and leading worship as well as evaluating its effectiveness.
- Strong, supportive leadership from the recently appointed Religious Education (RE) leader means that teaching and learning in RE is continually improving; children relish the opportunities to think deeply and they are responding well to higher expectations.
- Relationships throughout the school are overwhelmingly positive and harmonious. All members of the community, children and adults, demonstrate real care, compassion and love for each other.

Areas for development

- Teach children about how they can reflect God's unselfish love by challenging injustice and inequality and give them regular opportunities to do so.
- Fully embed, and demonstrate the continuing impact of, recent excellent developments in RE.

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. Alban's school is a warm, welcoming and highly inclusive school. Every pupil, regardless of their needs and starting points is embraced and provided for as a unique and special child of God. Leaders at all levels, promote the school's vision that 'all pupils should grow in faith, hope and love'. This biblically rooted vision is so embedded into the very fabric of the school that, despite a period of significant staff turnover and a change of headteacher, the beating heart of the school has not changed. Indeed, one member of staff who returned after having taught elsewhere commented, '... when I came back it was like a whole new staff but it felt like I'd never been away!'.

Relationships, at all levels, throughout the school are warm, compassionate and overwhelmingly positive. Staff flourish and their morale is high because everyone feels respected and supported. Quality induction and professional development support all staff. This has enabled some support staff to become teachers and some teachers to aspire to become Church school leaders. The school is continually improving because the school's leaders, with their vision at the centre, are exceptionally conscientious about evaluating the impact of what they do and acting on the results of their evaluations.

Led by the school's vision and associated values, pupils' behaviour is excellent. They aspire to live by the school's values and they actively relate their behaviour and learning to them. They speak of being inspired by the adults at school and older pupils are acutely aware of their responsibility to set good examples to younger children by being kind, being righteous and being loving. Through the school council initiated development of a kitchen garden, pupils are developing a real passion for looking after the environment. Although the school supports several charities, including Streetchild, opportunities for pupils to understand and challenge inequality and injustice at home and abroad are not well developed.

Providing for children with a range of needs is an indisputable strength of the school. School leaders believe that each child is unique and of immense value. This inspires them to work relentlessly, as a team, to ensure that all flourish and reach their full potential. Parents of children with special needs speak passionately about the love and care their children receive and how that gives them real hope for the future. A strong focus on mental health and wellbeing is illustrated by the well-used open access to the 'Prayer Tree' at break-times and the centrally located 'Worry-Box'. Pupils talk easily about the importance of having time for quiet reflection and how crucial it is to express concerns and worries

The deep-rooted and successful partnership with the parish church is a beacon of faith, hope and love in the local community. The vicar is a regular visitor; he is well known to pupils and their families and provides an additional layer to the already excellent pastoral support that the school provides. There is a close and productive relationship with the diocese. This results in very effective and reciprocal professional learning and development for all involved. For example, the recently appointed Religious Education (RE) lead has received highly effective subject training and the school's special needs coordinator is supporting the diocese in enriching the RE curriculum for children with complex needs. The school works successfully with a small group of other local church schools; for example, in moderating RE standards.

With the vision for all pupils to develop the independence and skills that will give them a hope for the future, the school's leaders make some bold curriculum decisions. One such decision is the annual 'University' project. During this time, pupils choose to work in cross-age faculties to plan, prepare, practice and produce a stage show. This enables pupils to cultivate their curiosity and individual talents, as they dedicate time to pursue topics and activities that inspire them. In English and maths, pupils' progress, from their starting points, is good.

Daily collective worship is at the very heart of school life. It is extremely well planned, led and evaluated by staff, clergy and pupils. Pupils of various faiths speak of feeling completely comfortable to join in but not pressured to say things they may not believe. They say that they truly value the time spent together, the chance to reflect and be quiet, to think deeply and to apply the school's vision to everyday life. Pupils, staff and even parents speak enthusiastically about how messages from worship stay with them and cause them to reflect throughout the day. For example, after hearing Jesus' parable of the lost sheep, participants were encouraged to think about someone they knew who might be 'lost' and what they could do to help that person. Worship includes Anglican liturgy and traditions and always has a focus on biblical texts. Of particular note is the exceptionally effective

collective worship team. This team of pupils helps to prepare and lead collective worship. They act as role models for others during worship and they promote deep thinking by posting weekly 'Big Questions' such as 'Why does God remain so hidden?' around the school. Through collective worship and RE lessons, pupils develop an excellent, age appropriate, understanding of Christian theology and liturgy including the Trinitarian nature of God and of the Eucharist.

Curriculum planning for RE is highly effective and fulfils statutory requirements. It is extremely well led by the recently appointed RE leader who provides excellent support for all staff to improve their subject knowledge and creative practice. The school's vision for 'all pupils to grow in faith, hope and love' is at the centre of developments in RE and children with special needs are exceptionally well supported. This vision is extremely well understood by pupils. For example, in letters written (and sent) to their MP, pupils very eloquently pleaded for the government to demonstrate more love, faith or hope in dealing with current social problems. Learners say that they enjoy their RE lessons and speak enthusiastically about the purpose of the purpose of them with one pupil commenting 'RE is a really useful subject. It helps you to understand people and if everyone tried to understand people then the world would be a more peaceful place'. Children of all faiths demonstrate a high level of religious literacy. They speak easily, yet respectfully about their own and others' beliefs, sacred spaces and traditions. Innovative 'Christianity Days' enable staff and pupils to develop a deeper understanding of Christianity through immersive experiences and creative activities. This excellent practice now needs to be fully embedded into the fabric of the school.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

The recently appointed RE leader ensures that assessment is used robustly to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, regardless of starting points, all groups flourish academically in RE. Vulnerable pupils progress particularly well because of highly personalised teaching methods. Pupils are rightly proud of their work. Careful monitoring and the use of internal and external training means that the standard of teaching is always good and sometimes excellent.

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Inspector's name and number	Jan Matthews 855