

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St John's Church of England Primary School, Highbury Vale				
<b>Address</b>	Conewood Street, Islington, London, N5 1DL			
<b>Date of inspection</b>	01 May 2019	<b>Status of school</b>	VA primary	
<b>Diocese</b>	London	<b>URN</b>	100440	

<b>Overall Judgement</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?		
<b>Additional Judgements</b>		
<b>The impact of collective worship</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>The effectiveness of religious education (RE)</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

### School context

St John's is a primary school with 210 pupils on roll. The school has a low level of religious and cultural diversity with half the pupils being from a white, British background. Almost a third of pupils speak English as an additional language but very few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is slightly below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national averages. Since the last inspection, there has been a complete change of leadership.

### The school's Christian vision

At the heart of the school vision is a desire for a life-giving relationship with one another and with God. Through Christ who gives us the strength, all can achieve where every child is valued as a unique individual created in the image of God.

### Key findings

- Relationships within and throughout the whole school community are overwhelmingly positive which enables pupils and adults to flourish.
- A well designed and inclusive curriculum reflects the school's vision and ensures that every child 'as a unique individual, created in the image of God', through Christ, can achieve.
- School leaders have invested considerable time and resources into highly effective provision for children's mental and physical health and relationships education, thus preparing them well for life beyond St. John's.
- The prayer life of the school is, quite rightly, described by many stakeholders as 'truly extraordinary' and 'life-giving'.
- Pupils with special educational needs or social vulnerabilities often make particularly good progress in RE, because of the creative ways in which they are supported to flourish.

### Areas for development

- Through explicit teaching and active involvement in democracy, current affairs, social justice and courageous advocacy, empower children to translate the love of God for all people into words and actions thus creating a better Britain for the future.
- Establish a regular programme of visits to a range of places of worship in order to deepen children's understanding of the diversity of religious traditions.

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. John's is a truly inclusive, welcoming educational community with its roots firmly planted in the words of St. Paul, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me'. Parents praise the way in which every child, regardless of ability, gender, background or ethnicity is nurtured as a unique individual and they clearly attribute this to the school's stated vision and its biblical roots. Leaders at all levels, including the elected pupil House Captains, take responsibility for modelling the vision and values in all aspects of school life. Induction of new staff and trainees is thorough. It includes the unique aspects of a church school, the importance of developing spirituality and keeping the school's vision at the very centre of school life. Since the last inspection, even though there has been a complete change of leadership, the school has remained true to its aims. This is because: the values, vision and ethos of the school has been embedded amongst all parts of the school community for many years. The governors regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and policies are designed to promote the school's vision. Areas for development from the previous inspection have been addressed.

The vision for all to achieve, regardless of their starting points is the driving force behind the intelligent design of the curriculum. For example, the pedagogy behind the maths curriculum is that every child, regardless of ability, starts the learning journey at the same point and travels as far as they are able. An emphasis on questioning, enquiry and problem solving skills in many areas of the curriculum ensures that pupils will be equipped for life in modern Britain. National assessments show that standards at St. John's are above the national average. Pupils have high aspirations and many quote the words of St Paul as being the source of their confidence.

School leaders are unashamed in their commitment to focus, not just on test scores but, on curricula that ensure pupils develop '... life-giving relationships with one another and with God'. In pursuit of this vision, leaders have invested considerable training, resources and timetable space in establishing a comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. This curriculum complements, very well, religious education (RE) lessons, prayer times and reflection opportunities. Pupils speak eloquently about the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation, with one boy explaining, 'Probably the lunch hall or the playground is where most forgiveness and reconciliation actually goes on [but] you can talk about it in Prayer Space or RE if you like.' Relationships within all parts of the school community are overwhelmingly positive. Pupils flourish because they feel safe with, and respected by, children and grown-ups at school. Staff flourish because they feel valued, part of the community and their training needs are met. There is a well-established culture in which children will challenge each other in their attitudes to diversity and difference. Poor behaviour is rare and parents report that incidents are dealt with quickly and compassionately with a focus on forgiveness, reconciliation and rehabilitation.

As well as explicit teaching about positive relationships within the school, pupils learn to value and contribute to the wider community. Links with charities such as Goodwill Children's Homes and the Memory Café at one of the parish churches mean that they develop empathy and understanding of the lives of others. Children speak passionately about the charities they support and the importance of working together to 'stop unfair-ness' and 'give opportunities to others that don't have the same advantages as us'. In order to fulfil the school's vision enabling every child of God to achieve, pupils need more opportunities to be involved with social action and advocacy projects.

Staff and parents speak highly of the way in which being part of the school community has provided support through even the most difficult of times. One parent explained how it was only when she became part of the school that she truly felt a part of the wider community. Leaders consistently ensure that policies, protocols and staff training not only support positive and safe relationships but that they stem from, and move the school towards, achieving its vision. Close links with the diocese, various networks and three local churches result in many mutual benefits for all parties. For example, good practice and training are shared and governors are supported in their self-evaluation of the school as a church school. Local clergy explain how engagement with the school pushes them to be more creative in their own parishes. In return, through links with the churches, the school community gains added depth to its connection to the local community. The RE leader shares her expertise and innovative ideas with deanery and diocesan schools.

The highly effective RE leader is non class based which reflects the commitment of the senior leaders to support development in this subject. Because teachers receive regular training and feedback about their teaching, they feel supported and confident in the teaching of the RE curriculum. The introduction of an innovative 'Core Learning Journey' template, designed by the RE leader, has had significant impact on the way that teachers plan to ensure

excellent progress in RE. Pupils say that they particularly enjoy learning about the different religions and scriptures and they recognise how understanding religion will help them understand their neighbours when they grow up. However, children do not always have enough opportunities to visit a diverse range of places of worship or receive visitors to talk about different faiths and world views. The school's excellent RE provision reflects the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education.

The vision of leaders for promoting relationships with one another and with God' can clearly be seen in collective worship at St. John's. The prayer life of the school is, quite rightly, described by many stakeholders as 'truly extraordinary', 'inclusive' and 'life-giving'. Well supported by the Parent Prayer Group, older pupils organise an innovative 'Playground Prayer Space' which allows concerns and worries to be recorded and left, with God, on an impressive playground cross. The termly programme of daily assemblies - planned by the worship leader, local clergy and a pupil council - includes regular 'Prayer Circles'. During these times, pupils learn to look outside of themselves and reflect upon the wider world by engaging with current affairs in the context of the school's values and assembly themes. As is the case in daily assembly, the faith or world view of all pupils is always respected. Participation is described as being, 'as much about being in the moment' as it is actively praying. Daily assembly is led by various clergy and staff which leads to all participants, children and adults, experiencing a wide range of Anglican traditions and having a good understanding of Christian theology, including the Holy Trinity. The impact of collective worship extends well beyond the daily assembly. The school has a well-established, yet continually evolving understanding of spirituality. Parents speak of their children wanting to slow down and reflect, to engage with 'deep' ideas and of coming home looking to continue conversations rather than just repeat facts that they have learned.



**The effectiveness of RE is Excellent**

Regular monitoring and robust assessment shows that teaching and learning at St. John's, is excellent. Through their 'Core Learning Journeys', it is evident that children make sustained and rapid progress and standards for all groups are excellent. From very early on, children quickly develop skills such as questioning, research and text analysis. Pupils with special educational needs or social vulnerabilities often make particularly good progress because of the creative ways in which they are supported to flourish.

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