

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Ashford Church of England Primary School

Address	School Rd, Ashford TW15 2BW		
Date of inspection	07 March 2019	Status of school	VA primary
Diocese	London	URN	125228

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

School context

Ashford Church of England school is a primary school with 413 pupils on roll. The school has a low level of religious and cultural diversity and few pupils speak English as an additional language. 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. Since September, the school has been in partnership with another local church school, whose headteacher is now Ashford's interim executive headteacher. The school was judged to be 'good' by Ofsted in September 2018.

The school's Christian vision

We are a caring Christian community where everyone adopts an "I can" attitude; everyone feels valued, safe and loved by God. We celebrate our God-given individuality, achievements and talents and we aspire, with God's help, to become the best that we can be. We believe that each one of us has the ability to achieve our highest potential, living and learning in the fullness of God.

Key findings

- The revised vision, which is now distinctively Christian, has been quickly established in the school. It is known and understood by all members of the school community, who can explain what it means to them to believe 'I can' do all things 'through Christ'.
- Leaders set a strong example, ensuring that improvements made to the school emanate from their Christian vision so that all can flourish.
- Pupils learn through the curriculum and worship themes about respect for others and the importance of valuing each individual's uniqueness.
- The school's inclusive and inspiring worship is enjoyed by pupils and adults. It enables them to develop spiritually and reflect on their behaviour and attitudes.
- Religious education at its best is hands-on, thought-provoking and helps pupils think critically about their beliefs and those of others.

Areas for development

- Ensure that pupils of all abilities are consistently challenged in RE lessons, through hands-on and creative learning activities embedded within the curriculum.
- Strengthen pupils' awareness of injustice around the world through the embedding of the school vision and collective worship.

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 school's vision, now underpinned by the Bible verse 'I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength', has been swiftly adopted by the school community. The clear focus on an 'I can' attitude is enabling pupils to aspire to higher standards of achievement and attitude in all areas of school life. There is a growing understanding of the Christian teaching that it is Jesus who provides the strength they need. The school's leaders are quickly addressing school improvement issues yet doing so in line with their Christian vision. Activities undertaken to improve teaching and learning, for example, are done supportively and in a way that nurtures both pupils and adults. Leaders work effectively as a team, aiming to be 'invitational, encouraging and good communicators'. There is a strong commitment from the school's governors to ensuring that the school is led according to the school's vision and Christian values. This is evident in how the partnership with a neighbouring church school has been undertaken, in collaboration with the diocese. The partnership with Laleham school is an example of generosity and mutual flourishing, which benefits both schools. Networks with local schools and with the diocese are helping staff and governors to develop their understanding of church school education, as well as effective religious education (RE) teaching.

Leaders have taken decisive action to address issues both from the last inspection, and those arising from their own self-evaluation. As a result, worship is rapidly becoming an area of strength and pupils' respect for others both within and beyond the school has improved. Leaders understand their context well and employ approaches to underachievement which nurture the development of each individual child. They are tackling persistent absence, for example, through a robust system of checks, meetings and interventions which deal with the underlying needs of pupils. This is getting these pupils more ready for learning.

Worship has been central to the school's improvement journey, ensuring that valuing individuals (both pupils and adults) is at the heart of all the school does. RE is taken seriously by the school, who understand the RE Statement of Entitlement, and the leadership of the subject is secure. Judgements made by leaders are accurate and identify appropriate next steps.

The school's broad and varied curriculum is a strength and enables pupils to learn about the wider world. This has been particularly enhanced by new resources for teaching personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils speak of the impact this has had on their ability to understand people who are different to them and explore ethical issues. Progress overall in the school is broadly average, and whilst there are some areas of underachievement, the school can demonstrate it is taking decisive action to address these. Vulnerable pupils are being particularly attended to, and systems are in place to help all pupils aspire to attain the best they can. Where pupils' basic skills are a potential barrier to learning, teachers adapt lessons to make them accessible so that pupils can learn well across the curriculum. 'Hook' activities, such as a reconstructed crime scene involving a giant egg, engender awe and wonder. Pupils' spiritual development is thus attended to across the curriculum and reinforced through class prayer and reflection.

The school's vision has been successful in encouraging pupils to strive to be 'the best [they] can be'. Pupils are keen to be challenged and speak enthusiastically of the lessons which 'stretch' them. Through the curriculum, they are encouraged to think about the wider world. Pupils enjoy taking part in charitable activities, which they are instrumental in choosing. The school has sponsored a child overseas, as well as engaging with a local homeless charity. However, pupils are not yet confident in articulating their concern for injustice and inequality for others around the world.

Pupils behave well and demonstrate appropriate attitudes to learning. They say that since the introduction of the 'iShare' worship themes this year, behaviour has improved both in the playground and in class. They see behaviour as an out-working of what they learn in worship and from the curriculum. The school's policies on behaviour, wellbeing and mental health are robust, and they take this seriously for both pupils and adults. It is a priority for leaders to create a safe environment that pupils and adults want to work in. Pupils are rightly proud of their work in promoting anti-bullying.

The school's curriculum has helped pupils to develop their understanding of difference since the last inspection. Pupils say that worship themes also show them the need to include everyone. Parents say that learning the

stories of Jesus teaches the pupils not to discriminate and to see everyone as valuable to God. The school takes particular care of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, going the extra mile to meet their needs. Arrangements for appropriate relationships and sex education are in place, and the new PSHE curriculum is effectively developing pupils' understanding of healthy relationships.

Collective worship is enjoyed by pupils and adults alike and all say they feel included. It inspires them towards having an 'I can' attitude, rooted in Christian teaching. They speak enthusiastically of the new 'iShare' approach to worship and the re-energised singing. Worship makes a significant contribution to everyone's spiritual development, since the themes are further developed in class. In worship, pupils learn about Jesus Christ as a person of the Trinity, both through biblical teaching and traditional Anglican prayers and responses. Some pupils can explain the meaning of Holy Communion, although this is not widely understood. All members of the school community appreciate the 'broad spectrum' of worship styles and involvement of both the parish clergy and other local church leaders. Links with the local community have helped the school to develop their approach to charitable giving, which is reinforced through worship. Pupils sometimes lead and evaluate worship and their ideas help to shape future plans. Newly introduced 'class worship' has helped parents to feel much more included in the life of the school. The prayer life of the school is well established. Reflection areas throughout the school environment facilitate the school community to grow spiritually.

Through RE, pupils learn about the Christian faith and other major world faiths. Pupils say this helps them to understand others. They are developing their understanding of theological concepts at an age-appropriate level. Leaders provide high-quality support and training for teachers, and engage in local and diocesan networks for RE.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

Monitoring of RE shows that there is good quality teaching and learning taking place across the school. Where this is at its best, high-level questioning is used to extend pupils' thinking about the beliefs of themselves and others. In a Year 6 lesson seen, pupils explored different styles of church worship, both in the UK and Uganda. They enthusiastically justified their own views about different worship styles. The best teaching also allows pupils to explore subjects experientially, ensuring that there are no barriers to pupils' learning in RE, especially for vulnerable pupils. Good use of assessment is enabling teachers to adapt lessons for the ability levels within their classes, so that pupils are now making good progress. They have been developing systems for challenging all pupils in lessons, but this is not embedded, and as a result, pupils are not yet stretched to the highest possible levels.

Executive Headteacher	Neil Meehan
Inspector's name and number	Emily Norman 912