

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Alphege Church of England Infant School			
Address	Oxford Street, Whitstable, Kent CT5 1DA		
Date of inspection	17 March 2020	Status of school	Voluntary Controlled
Diocese	Canterbury	URN	118659

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	Good
Additional Judgement	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good

School context

St Alphege is an infant school with 144 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is slightly below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is slightly higher than national averages. The school has entered into a partnership with another local Church infant school. The head of school and executive head over both schools have been appointed since the previous denominational inspection. In common with other local schools, there has been a falling roll.

The school's Christian vision

Loved, Inspired, Shining. Our vision is for: Each person to know they are loved as they are by God, flourishing and reaching their potential. All our families to live life in all its fullness, inspired to learn through a creative curriculum. Our school to "Shine like a star", bringing hope and courage to our community.

Key findings

- The school has developed a distinctive Christian vision that informs all its decisions and drives school improvement. This is clearly based in a biblical narrative that is well understood by stakeholders.
- The school is effective in meeting the needs of all pupils through an inspirational and stimulating curriculum that enables them to make good academic and personal progress. Provision for spiritual development is strong in the arts subjects such as music and drama and religious education (RE) but is less developed in other subjects.
- The school is highly inclusive in its mission to serve its community, creating an environment that fosters acceptance and positive relationships and allows all to flourish.
- Collective worship provides a calm setting in which the whole community come together to reflect on the school's vision and associated values. Leadership has been extended to include a wider range of stakeholders, however systematic monitoring and feedback that drives improvement is limited.
- New leadership has brought a fresh, open dialogue to teaching and learning in RE. Not all pupils are confident in their use of subject specific vocabulary and skills need to be developed further to enable more pupils to reach a greater depth of understanding.

Areas for development

- Establish regular monitoring and feedback of collective worship to develop the confidence of leaders and to increase pupils' participation and engagement.
- Develop provision in RE to improve pupils' vocabulary and skills, enabling them to express ideas clearly and to achieve a greater depth of understanding.
- Develop opportunities across the whole curriculum that enable adults and pupils to explore spiritual and ethical ideas and issues.

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 has worked with its stakeholders to develop and implement a distinctive and inclusive Christian vision that is relevant to its community. The vision and its associated values are clearly rooted in biblical teaching. The parable of the Lost Sheep is used to help young pupils to understand how God loves each person. Every day, pupils enjoy looking for the lost toy sheep around the school. The vision informs all school plans and decisions and the impact of this is now being seen in high parental confidence in the school and good pupil outcomes. The school has entered into partnership with another Church of England infant school, strengthening leadership and enabling mutual support. The on-site nursery shares the same vision and values, and enables pupils to get off to a flying start when they begin school. There is an increasingly supportive relationship with the local group of churches who regularly lead collective worship and run an after-school homework club. The school promotes church and diocesan initiatives and events, and benefits from their support. The school has ensured that staff and governors receive appropriate training and reflect together on developments in church school education. This has ensured that the vision is central to everyday practice and has focussed its plans for improvement. Recommendations from the previous SIAMS report have been addressed, bringing positive outcomes for pupils.

In line with its vision, the school provides an exciting, creative curriculum that makes the most of all that the local area has to offer. The school knows its pupils very well and carefully tailors the curriculum to suit their needs and interests. Pupils are engaged in their learning and make strong progress during their time in the school. A wide range of extra-curricular activities supports pupils' personal development and talents. Provision in subjects such as art, music and drama is excellent and offers many experiences that encourage pupils to explore spiritual and ethical ideas. However, this is less well developed in other subjects.

Pupils suggest ways in which they can make a difference in the world by responding to wider issues in society. Activities such as litter picking on the beach, promoting a plastic free environment and supporting a local food bank help to live out its vision to bring hope and courage to the community. A global dimension is introduced through topic work, charitable fund raising and meeting visitors to the school. In response to recent wild fires in Australia, pupils requested a fundraising event to raise money for the protection of wildlife. The school builds up resilience in pupils by promoting good attitudes to learning. For example, learning disposition dinosaurs like 'perseverasaurus' encourage them not to give up when things are difficult.

Pupils' behaviour is very good and there have been no exclusions. The school is highly inclusive and teachers model good attitudes that support these young learners to develop positive, loving relationships. Consequently, pupils from all backgrounds feel secure and flourish in this environment. At pupils' request, a friendship bench has been installed in the playground to promote care and consideration of one another. The mental health and well-being of adults and pupils is well supported. The school works hard with families to promote high attendance. Although the rate of absence is higher than the national average, every effort is made to build relationships and work with external agencies to improve outcomes for pupils. The school has 'Together Everyone Decides' teams. This is an approach in which decisions are made having heard and valued everyone's point of view. Pupils learn that there are positive ways to hear and resolve differences for the benefit of all.

Collective worship is central to the day, bringing the community together to reflect on important messages. Pupils are introduced to the life and teachings of Jesus through Bible stories that promote the school's vision and associated values in ways that are relevant to their lives. Key festivals in the church year are celebrated and seasonal services, held in the parish church, are well supported by parents. Pupils enjoy singing songs and acting out Bible stories. They join in with sentences such as 'Go in love – we go in love' and sometimes contribute their own prayers. A pupil worship team has been established. They monitor worship, providing feedback that has led, for example, to a greater emphasis on singing. Leadership of worship has been extended to include team members of local churches and all teachers. There is a need for a more systematic monitoring to support new leaders and drive further improvement. Reflection areas around the school encourage pupils to think about themes and write their own prayers supporting their spiritual development.

New leadership of RE has opened up useful discussion and introduced fresh approaches to the subject. RE lessons take an enquiry-based approach where pupils are encouraged to ask 'big questions' about the world around them and to explore what people believe. Pupils encounter a range of religions, cultures and traditions, supporting the development of their understanding of difference and diversity. The recent introduction of persona dolls, representing children from a range of faiths, has helped to make this more accessible to young pupils. Staff link pupils' learning to the school's Christian values. For example, in a lesson about Jesus' last supper with the disciples, pupils were able to identify an example of koinonia, which is a current focus. Learners enjoy engaging activities such as art, drama and music that help them explore new ideas. They are introduced to subject specific language, such as 'resurrection' and 'salvation' in lessons about Easter. However, pupils are not confident in using such words. There are new systems for assessment in place which track pupil progress. Currently, too few pupils across the school are working at a greater depth of understanding, indicating a need for greater challenge. The new leader has been well supported through training and working alongside staff from the partner school. Monitoring and evaluation have identified areas for development, informing action plans and creating a cycle of improving practice. Statutory requirements for RE and collective worship have been met.

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Inspector's name and number	Melanie Williams 911