

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Michael's Church of England Primary School			
Address	Cherry Orchard, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS14 9AN		
Date of inspection	05 March 2020	Status of school	Voluntary controlled primary
Diocese	Lichfield	URN	124258

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 Judgement	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Excellent

School context

St Michael's is a primary school with 416 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage but a significant minority are from an Islamic heritage. 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 below national averages.' The school received a short inspection from Ofsted in 2017 and remained as a 'Good' school. The school engages in collaborative working locally and regionally at a range of levels.

The school's Christian vision

At St Michael's we are guided by our Christian values to inspire one another; encouraging confident, committed and caring children to flourish through life's journey.

"Love God with all your heart and with all your mind and with all your strength; and love your neighbour as yourself."
(Mark 12:33)

Key findings

- Exceptional Christian leadership ensures that this school's Christian vision and core values are integral and embodied in everyone and everything.
- The strong partnership between church and school makes a real difference to the lives of pupils, staff, parents and the wider community.
- Leaders at all levels make ethical arguments for the inclusion and support of vulnerable pupils including those with learning difficulties although this could be developed to ensure they flourish fully.
- Collective worship is skilfully planned and led by pupils, staff and clergy.
- Religious education (RE) provides significant opportunities to engage in dialogue with a range of religions and worldviews and provides a safe space for pupils to critically reflect on their own religious and spiritual views.

Areas for development

- Provide a wider range of age appropriate opportunities for pupils to challenge injustice and inequality in their own lives and communities, challenging stereotypes around gender, sexuality, ethnicity and faith.
- Actively engage with other Church schools to explore innovative practice to further develop strategies to enable vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties, to flourish.

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

Leaders at St Michael's have expertly engaged the whole school with their vision based on 'Love God with all your heart and with all your mind and with all your strength; and love your neighbour as yourself.' Mark 12:33. This has been skilfully underpinned with the school's six core values of belonging, friendship, forgiveness, respect, courage and perseverance. These are displayed around the school and are referred to regularly and consistently in discussion between pupils and adults leading to the school's deeply Christian character. Passionate is the term that all members of this school community use to describe relationships, interactions and learning and this is clearly evident.

The school has taken bold decisions to tailor a curriculum that meets the needs of all its pupils including the vulnerable and those with learning difficulties. This is clear from highly engaged and happy pupils who take great pride in the quality of work in their books and Quest journals. Further strategies and innovative techniques could be researched and applied to ensure that all vulnerable pupils flourish. Pupils are inquisitive and reflective learners and their curiosity leads to spontaneity in lessons that is fostered and developed through strong classroom practice. The wide range of alternative approaches such as the Forest School, 'Rainbow Room' and value tokens embody leaders' drive to actively engage and inspire pupils to become confident and caring as stated in the school vision.

A genuine enthusiasm and care for the whole school community by the headteacher and her team has actively enabled pupils to become spiritually aware and explore ethical dimensions across the curriculum. RE has a high status and is delivered with the same rigour as other academic subjects. Topics in RE focus on Islamic and Hindu traditions alongside Christianity. Visits to local churches, mandirs and mosques all provide rich learning experiences for the pupils. In the wider curriculum, geography lessons and activities days provide the opportunities to explore current ethical issues creating pupils who are articulate courageous advocates for the environment and protecting the world both locally and globally.

Pupils demonstrate their courage through the school council which they value. The children have a clear commitment to tackling climate change, injustice and inequality. An example of this is fundraising for their partner Kenyan school that they talk about knowledgeably. Pupils enjoy what they do for one another, stating that 'St Michael's is a school where everyone is welcome and accepted.' Forgiveness and friendship are core values that the learners explain lead to positive relationships where bullying is very rare and behaviour is excellent. These core values are reinforced within the policies and practices of the school and are clearly embedded by all stakeholders.

The pastoral team's fervour provides strong ethical arguments and compassionate care for inclusion and the support of each individual, giving a safe space for pupils to consider and reflect on new experiences at an age appropriate level. Year 6 pupils completing the Junior Police Cadets programme exemplifies this and gives openings for pupils to take a lead in challenging prejudicial behaviour and language. These excellent relationships do not yet fully extend to engage with issues of gender and sexuality as suggested in the guidance of 'Valuing all God's Children'.

The passionate staff feel supported in terms of their wellbeing and the resources that they have at their disposal to ensure that all flourish. The work of the staff 'Wellbeing Group' and the family ethos that pervades the school leads to very low staff mobility and a shared culture of care for all that is tangible on entry. Interview procedures and induction processes refer to the vision and core values, demonstrating the distinctly Christian foundations of this school. Innovative practice is both developed and shared through positive links with a local Multi Academy Trust (MAT), its linked initial teacher training centre and BLISS (Burntwood and Lichfield Improving Schools). This has enabled staff from a range of schools to receive support and guidance in pedagogy, for example in RE and Maths. This is creating future Church school leaders within St Michael's who will have the abilities to lead this and other Church schools in years to come.

Governors are active in their leadership and support and ensure that standards are high through exceptionally rigorous monitoring systems. The work of the School Ethos and Worship Committee highlights the clear

knowledge and intent of governors in ensuring that Christ is at the heart of every decision. This has led to bold consequences, such as the creation of a sensory corridor, being implemented to ensure that the school is inclusive and helps transform pupils' lives. Parents echo this stating that their children are celebrated and supported.

Collective worship at St Michael's is the beating heart of the school and is a place where everybody is involved and inspired. All worship affirms the school's vision and values which are pertinent to each child, all taking something from the messages given. Prayer and reflection are integral to daily worship and subsequent action. Pupils are involved by lighting candles to demonstrate the Father, Son and Holy Spirit with others laying out fabrics that reflect the colours of the liturgical calendar. Their responses to the Parable of the Good Samaritan demonstrated a deeply spiritual and personal understanding not only of the story but beyond and into their own lives. The whole school's use of British Sign Language to share the vision provides a humbling inclusive and invitational element within worship. Pupils explain that they enjoy planning and leading worship and particularly writing the prayers that are then used in worship at the parish church during Sunday services.

At a community level the school regularly visits and contributes to other Christian centres for worship. Pupils, parents and staff all speak of their experiences of activities they have been involved in. For example, worship at Lichfield Cathedral and Lichfield Life Church and strong links to the parish church. One parent stated: 'Church is a central focus. School is church and church is school'. This is supported by the local rector who is passionate about his link to the school and who provides events such as 'Thy Kingdom Come' where pupils examine five aspects of prayer.

The vision and core values of St Michael's are an ever present and demonstrable feature of this distinctly Christian school. Staff, pupils and parents all resound in unison that St Michael's provides for its community due to the passion that is demonstrated by its leaders and pupils.

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