

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St. Nicolas' Church of England Combined School			
Address	Rectory Road, Taplow, Buckinghamshire SL6 0ET		
Date of inspection	12 February 2019	Status of school	VA Academy
Diocese	Oxford	URN	138121

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 Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Excellent
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Good

St. Nicolas' is an average size primary school with 216 pupils on roll. Most pupils are White British. The number who come from different ethnic groups is higher than average. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. Levels of religious and cultural diversity are low. 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. Since the last inspection a new headteacher was appointed in 2016 and a new vicar joined the parish in 2017. In April 2018 the deputy head became the lead for religious education.

The school's Christian vision

'Jesus said I am the vine and you are the branches.'

Nourished by God, we want to grow together drawing on His strength to live out our Christian values so that we can reach out to others in our community. We are all unique and together with God we want to be the best that we can be. Our Christian values are: Love/Friendship, Respect, Honesty, Courage, Thankfulness and Peace.

Key findings

- The headteacher's Christian faith and passionate commitment to helping others grow drives the school vision. The values associated with it are lived out day by day. Consequently, an exceptionally strong sense of mutual support characterises this community where individual pupils and adults feel known and loved.
- The Christian vision underpins all collective worship and offers pupils significant opportunities for spiritual development. Older and younger pupils regularly reflect together as prayer partners. This enriches their care and appreciation of each other.
- Academic progress and attainment are at least in line with national averages. This reflects the good quality of teaching and individual care which are at the heart of the school's vision.
- Leaders' comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of the school's work mean staff at all levels are continually adjusting and refining their work to implement the vision ever more effectively.
- Some valuable links have been made with a few schools locally, and with an African orphanage. Whilst the school is clearly on the path to excellence, the relatively new team have not yet had time to fully establish a reputation for leading innovative and imaginative practice with a wide range of schools locally and beyond.

Areas for development

- Continue the rigorous, careful implementation of personalised strategies to promote the exceptional flourishing of all groups of pupils from their starting points.
- Explore opportunities as a church school to develop and share innovative practice, clearly based on the school's Christian vision, with a wider range of schools.

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. Nicolas's vision of mutual care and ambition for individual growth is rooted in the Bible. 'Jesus said I am the vine and you are the branches'. The school has recently adopted this imagery to express and explain its vision and associated values. The headteacher's powerful Christian leadership is strongly supported by highly committed staff and governors. Their shared vision informs all aspects of school life from strategic planning to the briefest of daily interactions. Parents report that office staff helping with concerns will say, 'what would Jesus do?' Frequent monitoring and evaluation mean leaders at all levels successfully drive improvements inspired by the school's vision. Pupils' views are highly valued. For example, they wrote the anti-bullying charter published in the school's planner. Staff morale is extremely high. A culture of mutual professional and personal support is underpinned by a proactive approach to staff wellbeing. Staff development effectively builds staff expertise and the school's Christian distinctiveness. Development points from the previous inspection have been met. The school 'branches' out to work with other local partners. These include the diocese, and the Buddhist centre. Joint work with some local schools has focused on developing pupils' attitudes to learning or mental health. A close relationship exists with the local church. The vicar is very involved with the school as a governor and regularly leads worship.

Staff are acutely aware of the needs of individual pupils. Planning, lessons and extracurricular activities cater for everyone's needs. Vulnerable pupils and those with special needs and/or disabilities are extremely well supported because staff are dedicated to helping pupils achieve their best. Attendance is very good. Standards of attainment are above national averages. Pupils' progress from their starting points is in line with national averages. These reflect the aspiration that all pupils grow in personal and academic terms. School is transformational for many pupils. One said of his improved English and maths, 'St Nicolas has changed my life.'

Pupils interpret the vine and the branches as meaning that 'Jesus and God are connected, and we should all love everyone'. They support each other well in class and in the playground. The behaviour policy guides pupils to reflect on how they connect and impact on each other. Forgiveness follows reflection and pupils know that if they make a mistake they can 'start afresh'. Relationships are positive across the community. Incidents of bullying or racism are very rare because the school's culture helps prevent them and because they are dealt with effectively. Parents say school helps their children 'become the kind of humans parents want them to be'. Unanimous in their support for the school, parents hugely appreciate the way all staff make time for them. They cite the informative mental health workshops as one example of this. They attribute the care they and their children receive to the school's Christian identity. The school, they say, is 'faith filled' showing 'that God is not just in a church.'

The school's values are integral to learning across the curriculum, enacting the vision for individual growth. Staff work hard to broaden pupils' horizons. They do so through a broad curriculum, carefully chosen topics and texts. These build pupils' ethical decision making and knowledge of the world. Their understanding of life in multi-cultural Britain is further extended by visits to different places of worship. Diversity within the school community is also celebrated. Recent examples include celebrating the Chinese New Year and a talk on Hinduism from a parent of that faith. St. Nicolas is an inclusive community whose members recognise and appreciate differences and similarities between people and their beliefs. The school environment stimulates pupils' understanding of their responsibilities. Thus, they take on roles within the Eco group or become playground buddies or house captains, for example. Pupils select and support a wide range of charities. The school's long-standing link with a Lesotho orphanage is strongly facilitated by a member of staff so pupils feel personally connected to children overseas. Thinking 'of everything we have and what they don't have' motivates pupils to take action.

Collective worship is a daily opportunity to better understand the biblically based Christian vision and values. Carefully planned by the headteacher it gives pupils an inclusive, invitational experience of the 'vine' and the 'branches.' During the inspection older pupils sensitively guided younger prayer partners to reflect on their personal growth in one of the values. The 'Ubuntu' pupil group, modelling humanity to others, is open to all and Key Stage 2 members regularly plan and lead collective worship. Worship is varied and interactive involving a range of leaders including some from different denominations or faiths. Prayer is a key feature of daily worship. Pupils write their own prayers and say prayer gives them 'peace and lots of ideas'. Regular, robust monitoring of worship develops experience of it within the community. An annual re-enactment of the Last Supper, and worship led by the vicar,

builds pupils' understanding of the Eucharist. A Year 3 pupil explained, 'I learned that communion is being in touch with God and also with friends and family'.

Pupils enjoy religious education (RE) and respond well to teaching that encourages enquiry, empathy and reflection. A thoughtfully planned scheme of work has been recently introduced exploring Christian theological concepts and knowledge of other religions. Pupils tackle significant challenging questions such as why there might be different accounts of the resurrection in the Bible. Both RE and collective worship are given a high priority in the school as they express and develop the vision.

A well-developed sense of spirituality is a hallmark of the school. Pupils' understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy spirit supports this. One pupil said, 'the Holy Spirit gets us through tough times and helps us carry on.' Spirituality is carefully nourished. Staff, trained to capitalise on 'wow' moments, value the spirituality they encounter in school. One described the atmosphere in the building that 'gives you a feeling of love and being respected'. All members of this cohesive learning community are united in living out its Christian values. Together these values manifest the vision and effectively enable pupils and adults to fulfil their God given potential. The school aspires to be excellent as a church school and with an increased focus on innovative outreach as a church school is making very positive steps towards that goal.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

Teaching and learning within RE is securely good as evidenced by monitoring and pupils' attainment. Lessons are active, creative and pupils' collaborative working reflects the school's vision of mutual support. Effective leadership has ensured that staff receive appropriate and ongoing training. Consequently, they feel increasingly confident to exploit opportunities within the new scheme of work even more fully. Assessment reliably informs staff planning. However, at the moment not all pupils are as clear about their individual strengths and development needs in this subject as they are in others. Class books demonstrate their pride in their learning and include thoughtful questions and significant reflections.

Headteacher

Clare Wagstaff

Inspector's name and number

Elaine Skinner 914