

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Vision

At St Michael's we strive to develop and inspire courageous, respectful and resilient learners encouraging them to serve with kindness and tolerance guided by our Christian values so that they can flourish, living 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10).

St Michael's Church of England (Aided) First School is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. It has the following notable strengths.

Strengths

- The Christian vision, and associated values, drive the decisions and actions of the school. Pupils and adults are inspired by its message and try to live up to its challenge. As a result, this is a community that is enabled to 'live life in all its fullness'.
- The curriculum has been thoughtfully crafted to enable pupils to explore their sense of self and their place in the world. They are encouraged and well-supported to think deeply about the 'big questions' in life. This means they are growing in confidence when articulating opinions and ideas.
- Collective worship is at the heart of the life of the school. Leaders ensure that everyone is invited and welcomed. Many different opportunities for the exploration of spirituality are offered. As a consequence, within their worship, pupils and adults flourish spiritually.
- The vision and values inspire pupils and adults to treat each other with kindness and respect. There is a strong belief that everyone is an important and valued member of the school community. As a result, there is a shared joy of being together that resonates throughout this community.
- Pupils have a strong voice and feel heard. They effectively explore local and global issues in their learning and are encouraged to articulate their opinions and beliefs. Therefore, pupils are confident in driving actions throughout the school and into the wider community.

Development Points

- Provide learning opportunities to explore the diverse ways in which worldviews and beliefs are practised in religious education (RE). This is so that pupils can understand the range and variety of ways in which faith is lived and experienced.



Inspection Findings

St Michael's Christian vision, and its associated values, are the strong foundation of this Church school's identity. Its impact resonates throughout the school community. Pupils and adults are challenged to be the best that they can be in all areas of their lives. As a result, they have high aspirations and try to live by a strong moral code rooted in the Christian values. The vision, inspired by Jesus' words, and created by the school community, challenges leaders to take ambitious decisions to enable pupils and adults to live 'life in all its fullness'. They look outwards to extend the experiences of their pupils and create powerful partnerships that enhance the life of the school. Consequently, pupils are offered many opportunities to experience the richness of life in their own local community and beyond. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation, by governors, ensures that decisions and actions remain true to the ambitions of the Christian vision.

The thoughtfully crafted curriculum mirrors the vision's ambitions for everyone to flourish. Leaders ensure that it develops pupils in all aspects of life. There are planned moments to explore the school's Christian values, including times when pupils challenge themselves and take risks. Pupils therefore understand how values such as resilience and courage positively impact upon their lives. Extra-curricular activities encourage pupils to discover their interests and talents. Well-considered visits to other parts of the country widen their experiences beyond their local community. Pathways to explore and understand this are woven into the curriculum and school life. This gives space and time for stillness and reflection. The spiritual garden, together with carefully chosen books, art and music, all inspire a spiritual response. Pupils explore the wonders around them as well as researching issues of concern. They are encouraged to consider their feelings on these issues and how they would like to respond. Consequently, pupils are beginning to develop a strong sense of their spiritual self. The school has correctly identified, in their planning, the need for further enrichment and additional pathways. Therefore, they are enabling pupils to continue to deepen their understanding of spirituality.

Collective worship further enhances the spiritual flourishing of both pupils and adults. Everyone is welcomed and valued for their contribution. Provision is made for those who may have difficulty accessing some aspects of worship, meaning they are able to fully participate. There is a strong partnership with the local church and members of the parish regularly lead worship in school. Visits to the church for festivals such as harvest and Christmas, enrich the experience. Many different opportunities for the exploration of spirituality are provided. There are poignant times of learning, music, reflection and celebration. Singing lifts the spirits and embodies the value of joyfulness. During times of reflection, pupils and adults are quietly respectful of each other. Pupils are celebrated for exemplifying the Christian values both outside and inside the school. The prayer based on the vision reminds pupils of the ambition that leaders have for them.

The RE curriculum reflects the vision's ambition to create respectful learners. It is regarded by leaders and staff as a core, academic subject. It is well-crafted and ensures that pupils learn about Christianity, together with world religions and worldviews. There are planned opportunities for pupils to discuss 'big questions' such as 'Is life like a journey?' The exploration of these ideas gives them the chance to explore issues from a wealth of different viewpoints. Learning is well-sequenced, allowing pupils to use their existing knowledge to build understanding, thus developing confidence in exploring new concepts. Pupils study religious texts and discuss how these impact on the daily lives of believers. Planned visits to places of worship, and visitors coming into school, helps to bring learning to life. This provides opportunities for learning and understanding about how people's views can determine the way that they live their lives.



Leaders effectively monitor standards in RE through systematic assessment and rigorous analysis of learning. This means they have a strong grasp of pupil outcomes. They effectively target support for anyone who may need it, and ensure the regular training of staff. For this reason, they have the knowledge and skills enabling them to be effective in their teaching. Pupils with barriers to their learning are well supported to ensure they can succeed. Consequently, pupils have a strong knowledge and understanding of the main features of Christianity, world religions and worldviews. However, they have a limited understanding of the diversity of ways in which these are understood and practised. There are well-planned opportunities for meaningful discussions that enable pupils to articulate their opinions. They use their knowledge to back up their ideas, listen respectfully to one another and present their ideas clearly. Effective teaching enables pupils to achieve well overall.

Pupils are given many opportunities for their voices to be heard. The vision ambassadors and the innovation group provide their own ideas to leaders to help improve the school. There are also many other roles of responsibility such as library and play time monitors. Older pupils are encouraged to support younger ones through their roles as reading buddies. All of this reinforces the belief that it is their responsibility to care for others. Opportunities to learn about injustice and fairness are threaded throughout the curriculum in an age-appropriate manner. Pupils are then encouraged to consider how actions can have an impact close to home and globally, positively or negatively. This inspires them to act upon their concerns, for example, campaigning to reduce the use of palm oil and single-use plastics. As a result, pupils are learning that their actions, no matter how small, can make a difference.

This is a school where relationships are rooted in the Christian vision and values. Staff describe their joy in coming to work and the feeling it gives of belonging to a school community. Leaders ensure that staff are well looked after, promoting a healthy work-life balance. They encourage staff to follow their interests and aspirations and to reach for their goals. This means that staff feel valued and know that they each play an important role. This is mirrored in the relationships between staff and pupils who treat each other with kindness and respect. The disadvantaged and most vulnerable are supported well, helping them to meet their needs. Pupils understand that they and their friends are happiest when they get along. Staff support them to understand their feelings and how to articulate them. This helps pupils to be able to express their emotions. As a result, pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they are ready to learn.

Information

Address	Market Place, Penkridge, Stafford, Staffordshire, ST19 5DJ		
Date	5 December 2024	URN	124343
Type of school	Primary Voluntary Aided	No. of pupils	148
Diocese	Lichfield		
Headteacher	Zoe Cahalan		
Chair of Governors	Rachel James		
Inspector	Lesley Montgomery		