

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Michael's Church of England Primary School

Address	Front St, Bishop Middleham, Ferryhill DL17 9AL		
Date of inspection	27 March 2019	Status of school	Voluntary Aided Primary
Diocese	Durham	URN	114258

Overall Judgement	Grade	Excellent
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	Excellent
The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Excellent

School context

St Michael's is a Voluntary Aided Church of England primary school with 132 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 below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages. The school has recently federated with a local primary school, is the lead school for Durham School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) and has been selected to be a lead school in English (English Hub).

The school's Christian vision

We aim to nurture the value and worth of each individual's distinctive character, gifts and abilities as God given gifts in all of us by providing a high standard of education and opportunities for growth mentally, physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually for life in all its fullness. (Genesis 1:26)

Key findings

- The Christian vision, clearly articulated and understood by all, is the moral compass which guides leaders' decisions enabling adults and pupils to flourish and encounter life in its fullness, upheld in loving relationships.
- Inspirational leadership, grounded in the Christian values and vision of the school, impacts on the whole school community and echoes far beyond it in the strategic partnerships that the school has proactively established.
- Collective worship unites the whole school in a vibrant and joyful expression of its Christian vision and opportunities to encounter God which resonate throughout school and beyond.
- RE has a very high priority in the school and is exceptionally well led. The impact of high quality professional development for staff, extensive range of visitors from different faith groups and excellent teaching ensures pupils relish their RE lessons and make strong progress.

Areas for development

- In light of the new ministry team at the local church, maintain and further embed links which are of mutual benefit to school, parish and the wider community.
- Further extend the range of outdoor opportunities that pupils have for developing a personal spirituality.

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 Christian vision is much more than a set of words; it is the very lens through which everything that happens at St Michael's is viewed. The weaving of the school's distinctive Christian vision into all areas of school life creates a nurturing community where the uniqueness of each individual is cherished, enabling all to flourish. Leaders talk with confidence that God has made all in his image and they strive passionately to ensure that the school enables adults and pupils to use the unique gifts and talents that they have been given.

Leaders, staff and pupils clearly articulate the biblical principles that securely underpin the school's vision and the core Christian values. The cherishing of each individual's gifts within the school's vision is the driving force behind the significant expansion of the school and the opportunities that this brings for the school and for other schools. A number of dynamic partnerships, which enable the flourishing of God given gifts, have been established including being the lead school in the Durham SCITT. Adults who have trained through the SCITT describe how they have excelled through the nurturing support that they received. The school provides opportunities, beyond itself, to inspire and encourage the next generation of teachers.

The school's strategic partnership with local Church of England schools, including the proactive organisation of professional development and moderation opportunities, has enhanced provision in RE and collective worship beyond the school itself. Partnerships have been further enhanced through the recent accolade of being selected by the Department for Education to be a centre of excellence in English teaching (English Hub). This provides enhanced opportunities for the professional growth and development of staff which further enables opportunities for pupils in the school to flourish. Governors are highly ambitious in achieving the vision and effectively monitor how this is lived out. The decision to federate with a local Church of England school was implemented through their passionate drive that adults and pupils in both schools flourish, expressing the vision of the school.

Innovative practice, impassioned staff and the practical implementation of the school's vision ensure that all thrive and that progress is above average for all groups of pupils. The inspiring curriculum is tailored to the individual needs of the school and reflects the aspirational language of the vision, meeting the academic and spiritual needs of all learners. The curriculum is greatly enhanced through visitors such as leaders of local faith groups, authors and artists. These visits significantly enhance pupils' understanding of diversity and culture and create an ethos of mutual respect and care throughout the school. Pupils are impassioned when discussing their enjoyment of the RE curriculum. One pupil shared that RE 'helps you to make the right choices'.

All pupils are important at St Michael's and adults have extremely high expectations of pupils' achievements from every starting point. Attainment at Key Stage 2 in 2018 was in the top one per cent of all schools nationally. A love of learning is evident throughout the school in pupils' engagement in their learning and their own high aspirations. The importance that the school's vision places on each child as a special individual is reflected in the excellent provision for pupils who may be vulnerable. Families deeply appreciate the school going 'the extra mile' for their children and the transformational impact that this has. As one parent noted, 'This is more than just a school, it is more like a family'.

Pupils talk with great enthusiasm about the wide range of opportunities they have for social action and charitable giving and show an excellent understanding of how this links with the school's vision and values. Christian values such as 'koinoia' (community) are clearly understood and lived out by the pupils and enhance strong relationships with the local community. Pupils' letters of appreciation to the local 'bin men' and caretaker reflect their understanding of the school's vision that all are appreciated.

Behaviour is exemplary throughout the school, enhanced by a clear understanding of the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation based on biblical stories and the teachings of Jesus. Profoundly nurturing relationships between adults and pupils, which are at the heart of the school's vision, enable each pupil to flourish. One pupil articulated the impact of this by expressing that, 'That's why I am the person I am here today'.

The importance that leaders place on the mental and physical wellbeing of adults and pupils enables all to thrive. Effective links with external agencies, growth mindset training and the provision of activities such as yoga and the 'Fit for Life' programme stem from the school's vision. Staff are very appreciative of the caring culture which respects and enhances them professionally. One member of staff shared how the nurturing she receives had 'helped me to grow even further'. The wellbeing of adults and children links seamlessly to the school values of endurance and hope and enables all to thrive.

Joyful and engaging collective worship binds the whole school community together. Worship provides meaningful opportunities for adults and pupils to encounter the teachings of Jesus and explore their relevance today. Opportunities for varied styles of worship including time for stillness and reflection and understanding of the Eucharist, enhance pupils' spiritual growth. Through highly effective leadership and training, staff and pupils are enabled to lead worship, so it is of consistently high quality. Pupil leadership opportunities are enhanced through the pupil RE team supporting the monitoring and planning of worship. Pupils enjoy leading prayers which are insightful and demonstrate a deep personal spirituality. Worship very effectively weaves together the core school values and key Christian festivals to further enhance the Christian vision of the school.

The impact of worship extends beyond pupils' time at St Michael's in the respect and tolerance they show to the opinions of others. With the recent appointment of local clergy, both the school and clergy are very excited about how this new relationship will further enhance worship at St Michael's. Pupils' spiritual growth is enriched through opportunities to use the reflective areas for private prayer and reflection. The school has plans to extend this further through developing outside reflection areas.

Pupils are inspired by RE. Pupils are able to articulate fluently the clear theological interpretations of biblical texts and accounts of Christian and other religious traditions. The school has actively provided opportunities for visitors from a range of faiths to enhance the RE curriculum and the understanding of faith. Through strategic partnership, the school is actively involved in leading innovation in RE in school and beyond. Pupils are inspired by RE and the impact of what they learn is evident in excellent relations and the nurturing and care that they show to one another.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

RE is central to the school curriculum which is highlighted by the strategic decision to teach RE first lesson each Monday throughout the school. RE is exceptionally well led. As a result of this, the school's commitment to professional development and the high quality of teaching, pupils make excellent progress. Pupils fully embrace the frequent opportunities to engage inquisitively and sensitively with challenging questions and delve deeply into an understanding of Christianity and other religions. This is demonstrated in the quality and depth of information in pupils' books and detailed verbal responses from pupils. The strength of RE is illustrated through the achievement of the RE Quality Mark Gold Award.

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