

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School

Vision

Let Not Your Light Be Hidden... Let Your Light Shine

'You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they might see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.' Matthew 5:14-16

St Matthew's Church of England Primary 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 powerful Christian vision resonates deeply with pupils and adults enabling them to express how they make their light shine. It binds this diverse community together providing a shared purpose that supports pupils and adults to flourish.
- Leaders have created a curriculum that is driven by the Christian vision and values. This challenges and engages pupils, including those who are vulnerable and who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Opportunities are provided for pupils to develop spiritually. These enable them to thrive and aspire to be the best they can be.
- Strong partnerships with the Diocese of Birmingham, local churches and the community enable pupils and adults to live well together. Leaders are relentless in their desire for the community to live life in all its fullness. This results in the school making a positive difference to its pupils and their families.
- Inspired biblically by The Parable of the Good Samaritan, the school is bound together by excellent relationships. These are underpinned with the values of respect, faith, choices and learning together. Pupils demonstrate an awareness of injustice and have a deep sense of responsibility towards others. This enables them to be agents of change within their local community.
- Religious education (RE) has a high profile across the school. It is skilfully and enthusiastically led. Pupils learn well due to a carefully constructed curriculum. Consequently, they are knowledgeable about a range of worldviews and faiths, including Christianity, and readily articulate their learning and understanding.

Development Points

- Extend opportunities for pupils to think deeply about challenging injustice. This is so that they are able to go further in making ethical choices and being agents of change.
- Create further experiences for children to learn about Christianity as a global and diverse faith. This is to enrich their understanding of different approaches to Christian worship and practice.



Inspection Findings

The deeply Christian vision and values are at the heart of St Matthew's. They enable unity in this inner-city community. A warm welcome permeates the school. As a result, families know that they are precious, loved and accepted for who they are. The importance of light is positively expressed and experienced throughout the school. This creates a sense of bringing together the whole community, uniting those who follow Christianity, a range of faiths or none. The values of faith, respect, choices and learning together, provide a framework for living harmoniously. These are illustrated by The Parable of the Good Samaritan, guiding pupils and adults within the school. Consequently, pupils value difference and diversity. They talk confidently about how it is good to be different and that people should be treated as they would like to be. Decisions taken by leaders and governors are driven by the vision. Staff care passionately about meeting the needs of everyone within the school, including those with SEND. Collectively, these vision-enriched actions result in pupils and adults being able to flourish.

The school's curriculum, including a range of enrichment activities, is driven by the Christian vision. This is enhanced by a shared understanding of spirituality. Adults ensure that pupils participate in these experiences including residential trips. Staff provide specific opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum. As a result, pupils talk confidently about spirituality and awareness of their own spirituality is enhanced. The youngest speak in terms of 'filling their bucket'. Older year groups highlight opportunities throughout the day to be peaceful and calm including in lessons such as maths. Courageous decisions have been taken around staffing to ensure that pupils are grouped in classes according to their needs. Consequently, they are able to thrive. The newly established alternative provision enables the most vulnerable children to encounter a curriculum that facilitates their flourishing. Staff know each pupil as an individual and strive for them to achieve academically. Governors regularly evaluate the school's curriculum through learning walks, book looks and pupil conversations. It is evident that they have a clear view of the school's strengths and the impact of the school's vision and values.

Daily collective worship, underpinned by the school's shared understanding of spirituality, is highly valued by pupils and staff. Inspired by their strong understanding of their own faith, pupils embrace the opportunity to pray, celebrate, be silent and reflect. Pupils appreciate the opportunity to come together in worship to share the important things. They speak of worship as a time where they learn about Jesus and how it helps them to reflect on their own faith. The community is warmly welcomed to, and included in worship. Everybody is invited to participate making these gathered times special and enriching. Strong partnerships with the diocese, the parish and nearby churches enable further opportunities to worship, be still and reflective. These are embraced by pupils and adults resulting in a deep sense of spirituality. Pupils are inspired at Prayer Spaces. They speak passionately about it providing a different way to pray enabling them to be calm and reflect on their own actions. This combination of activities empowers pupils and adults to be able to pray at any time.

Vision driven actions by governors, leaders and staff enable this community to see the light in themselves. Staff, parents and pupils rightly see St Matthew's as a place of refuge within the community. The school commits to teamwork inspired by its motto, 'Learning together in the love of God.' Parents participate in regular workshops, receive support to build a family home, and encouragement to gain employment. The school's highly effective partnership with a local charity supporting refugees, results in bespoke support for those in significant need. The Good Samaritan inspires pupils to respect one another, to acknowledge difference and to forgive. Sorry boxes in classrooms enable restorative approaches to disagreement to be enacted. Consequently, pupils feel listened to and that their concerns are acted upon. Because of this the school draws on a comprehensive range of strategies and



links with professionals to ensure that good mental health is supported. This means that pupils and adults can be sure of access to timely and appropriate support when they need it. The vision, and the warmth of the school's Christian ethos, has a significant impact on the community. The experience of many was described as a warm blanket that supports them even in the most challenging of times. Astute and empathetic leadership ensure that staff grow professionally and are supported in the darkest moments.

Pupils fully embrace the work of the peacemaker project which provides time to reflect on their actions and take personal responsibility. Peer mediators enable individuals to solve problems with their friends. Parents value the opportunity to be involved in restorative conversations with staff. Committed school leaders, inspired by the vision, create fruitful community partnerships such as the local council and neighbouring mosque. Such mutually beneficial partnerships result in events such as a local litter pick and food collections for local charities. Pupils have a strong sense of justice and responsibility. Their understanding of the challenges faced by refugees within the community is heartfelt. This is evident in their unwavering commitment to supporting the work of a local homeless charity through their change for change jars. Such activities enable pupils to make ethical choices and be agents of change. This work is truly reciprocal with specialist support workers supporting the most vulnerable families. Whilst this is a strength of the school there are currently limited opportunities for pupils to consider issues around inequality beyond their community.

The RE curriculum is ambitious and meets the requirements for the subject as a Church school. Leaders and governors ensure that RE is prioritised for all year groups. Drawing on the Sandwell Agreed Syllabus, in partnership with the diocese, RE provides opportunities to deepen pupils' knowledge of key Christian beliefs. However, there remain limited experiences to explore a sufficiently wide range of Christian worship and practice. Appropriate choices have been made about which faiths and worldviews to include, reflecting the local community. Strong links with local places of worship enhance the plans for learning. Effective leadership enables RE to be well resourced. Staff and governors benefit from quality training to develop their understanding.

Teaching is strong in RE with pupils' thinking challenged throughout lessons. These lessons provide a safe place to debate and explore ideas. As a result, pupils confidently consider ethical and philosophical issues such as belief in life after death. This is underpinned by their knowledge and understanding of a range of religious and worldviews. Pupils' work is of a high standard and progress is clearly evident in half-termly assessment activities. There is evidence of how learning has been deepened through visits to places of worship. Outcomes inform future teaching and staff professional development. Pupils talk enthusiastically about how faith inspires them and how this can present both challenges and rewards. Through the Values and Ethos committee, leaders and governors evaluate the quality of learning effectively.

Information

Address	St Matthew's Church of England VA Junior and Infant School, Windmill Lane, Smethwick, B66 3LX		
Date	10 December 2024	URN	104000
Type of school	Voluntary Aided	No. of pupils	460
Diocese	Birmingham		
Headteacher	Fiona Deakin		
Chair of Governors	Ian Williams		
Inspector	Helen Robertson		