

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bowes Hutchinson's Endowed Church of England Primary School

Address	Bowes, Barnard Castle, Durham DL12 9LG		
Date of inspection	21 May 2019	Status of school	Voluntary Aided
Diocese	Leeds	URN	114237

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	Good
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Good

School context

This is a primary school with 55 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 above national averages. The school has experienced significant growth in numbers since the previous inspection.

The school's Christian vision

Love life, God, each other. With love, I can and I will. Together we will succeed.
Live courageously. Learn every day.
'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.' John 15:12

Key findings

- The Christian vision is supported by all members of the school community and is evident in positive relationships and attitudes. The vision informs and underpins actions taken by school leaders and governors.
- Collective worship, both in school and in church, is inclusive and encourages adults and pupils alike to participate. It is an important vehicle for change in the school. Pupils are involved in planning and leading but do not yet have a significant enough role in evaluating worship.
- School leaders ensure that pupils make very strong academic progress and also prioritise their spiritual development.
- RE has a high profile and is enjoyed by learners. It contributes positively to pupils' understanding of Christianity and other faiths, and is helping them to express and share their own thoughts and ideas. Pupils are not yet confident in making reference to biblical material.

Areas for development

- Encourage clearer connections between the Christian vision, its associated values and biblical material so that pupils can more easily explain their understanding through reference to Bible stories and events.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to develop their role in evaluating collective worship, so that they can be effective in introducing change.
- Review the use of reflection areas, both in school and outside, to offer clearer opportunities for pupils to choose to engage in spiritual activity.

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

This is a good church school with some features that show excellent practice. The care given to the development and recent revision of its distinctive Christian vision, which is based on love, reflects both the passionate leadership of the headteacher and the driving force of governors. School leaders explain clearly how the words of Jesus in John's gospel both represent and give momentum to the strong family ethos of the school and its community. They have ensured that the vision is accessible to pupils and parents. For instance, the vision and a wide range of associated Christian values have been shared and discussed during weekly family group sessions in which pupils from across the age range meet. The clarity of the vision gives leaders a moral and ethical compass for taking strategic decisions, for example in admitting pupils at short notice regardless of the impact this might have on the school. It has also led to recognition for the school's support for pupils with additional needs. Parents rightly praise the moral and spiritual standpoint of the school and notice that their children are happy to have conversations about faith. Governors are highly involved in school life, not only through their effective input into school improvement planning, but also in practical ways, such as being available for parents during parents' evenings.

Pupils are fully aware of the Christian vision. They say that they 'all pay attention to it' and that it links to values such as 'friendship, love and perseverance'. They do not yet readily make connections between these values and their knowledge and understanding of biblical material, although they demonstrate a growing awareness of Bible stories such as Moses and Samuel and the events leading up to the crucifixion. They say that they enjoy taking part in Open the Book activities led by visitors. In terms of the impact of the vision, pupils strongly agree that behaviour and relationships are excellent and this is evident in the way they conduct themselves. Pupils care for those younger than themselves and are keen to record actions of others on the 'kindness tree'. Parents comment on the respectful manner that teachers and other adults have towards pupils. Teachers encourage pupils to consider spiritual aspects of their learning, not only by referring to the vision and values, but also through class discussions after acts of worship. Classrooms have reflection areas which at times enable pupils to consider big questions, although they say that at the moment these areas are used more for seeking calm rather than for prayer or spiritual reflection.

Collective worship provides a focal point for the school community and is a vehicle for communicating and strengthening school values. Worship in the parish church is well attended by parents and visitors, focusses on values such as courage, and includes learning about the Last Supper and events in the Easter story. Worship is inclusive and offers opportunities for pupils and adults alike to be actively engaged, to pray and sing, and to reflect on spiritual matters. Pupils in the school collective worship group plan and lead worship – for example, on the themes of love and trust. All pupils have opportunities to lead worship based around Christian values and sometimes take responsibility for complete acts of worship. This practice is enabling pupils to express their understanding of the school vision and of spiritual matters in general. Collective worship is well supported by members of the parish church and visitors from other denominations, and this widens pupils' appreciation of different forms of worship. A range of adults, including foundation governors, monitor the practice and impact of worship. Teachers are skilled at talking to pupils about their experience of worship and make connections with the vision and values, as well as with RE. Pupils are not yet given responsibility for evaluating worship in ways that are meaningful to them.

The school's creative approach to the curriculum provides opportunity and freedom to weave school values into areas of learning. For example, geography studies about Belarus was linked to the Samaritan's Purse shoebox appeal and prompted pupils to speak about generosity, compassion and justice. In academic terms, pupils make very good progress in relation to age-related expectations, including those who are more vulnerable. Attainment in core subjects across a range of measures is secure and in some aspects excellent. In keeping with the school vision, leaders provide wider support for learners through interventions such as Socially Speaking and Relax Kids, and targeted programmes such as Ginger Bear. The determination to maintain a broad and balanced curriculum enables pupils to gain a wider perspective on the world, to look beyond their immediate community and to appreciate diversity. This is nowhere more apparent than in the school's exceptional international programme, for which it has achieved three gold awards. There are thriving links with Vietnam, Hungary and Russia through which pupils have communicated with other children, shared ideas about Christmas and developed an understanding of pilgrimage connected to their RE learning. Pupils are encouraged to be actively involved in the

community and to support charities such as Macmillan. Particularly through the school council, they have instigated and participated in social action – for example, their request to the church council to tackle litter problems. In these ways, pupils are learning to be agents of change. School leaders are involved in research with Canterbury Christ Church University around ‘opportunities for children’s exploration of faith and spiritual life in the home’, which demonstrates a capacity to promote church school leadership more widely.

RE is taught through cross-curricular themes and discrete blocks of study such as the unit on pilgrimage. The Understanding Christianity teaching materials have given impetus to pupils’ learning. Teachers say that they themselves ‘feel more enriched by it’ and that ‘children are thinking deeper’. Pupils learn in a wide variety of ways. For instance, they are able to extend their understanding of the parable of the Good Samaritan by researching online for information about Christian charities such as World Vision and Tear Fund. They are encouraged to relate their learning from Jesus’ teaching to life today, for example when studying the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee. RE is on the whole well resourced, as when pupils explore artefacts related to their topic on Judaism and learn about the Shema. Lessons refer to biblical texts but the limited number of Bibles available restricts pupils’ access in some lessons. Whole school planning is well structured on a rolling programme including units that engage pupils in learning about faiths other than Christianity. In particular, pupils and adults enthuse about a recent visitor who shared his Sikh faith.



The effectiveness of RE is good

Standards of learning in RE are comparable to other subjects. Evidence from the school’s monitoring and assessment indicates that most learners are making good progress against unit objectives, and inspection findings support this view. Pupils respond positively to RE lessons and demonstrate a willingness to engage with challenging issues. Teachers are effective in giving pupils verbal and written feedback and a recently introduced system is helping to track the progress of individual pupils more explicitly. The recommendation from the previous inspection encouraging pupils’ understanding of faiths other than Christianity has been acted on.

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