

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Stephen's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Address Gaythorne Road, West Bowling, Bradford, BD5 7HU

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Overall grade

Good

The impact of collective worship

Good

The effectiveness of religious education (RE)

Good

School's vision

Nurture, Grow, Flourish
'A tree is known by the kind of fruit it bears' (Matthew 12:33)
We want our school to be known by the children we nurture, who grow and flourish.

Key findings

- The school is the hub of the community it serves. The excellent and far-reaching support it provides is transformational and enables pupils and their families to flourish.
- Decisions taken by leaders reflect the biblically based vision for the school to be 'known by its fruits'. However, whilst the motto is frequently cited as the motivation for the school's actions, the important link between the Christian vision and the motto is not made explicit and understood. This means the distinctiveness of St Stephen's as a church school is not fully appreciated.
- Collective worship is invitational and inclusive. Pupils and staff of different faiths and world views can take part with integrity. Pupils lead on a regular basis and have some input into planning. The role of the collective worship council in monitoring and evaluating collective worship is developing.
- Pupils enjoy religious education (RE). It has a high profile within the school and is well resourced. Coverage, including learning about some world faiths, is incomplete due to interruptions in curriculum delivery caused by the pandemic. Consequently, knowledge and understanding developed by the spiral curriculum is not fully embedded.
- The curriculum is designed around the needs of pupils. All flourish in their learning as a result. Personal, health and social education (PHSE) is sensitively planned. There are no explicitly planned opportunities for spiritual development within the curriculum.

Areas for development

- Promote the links between the motto and biblically based vision so that the importance of both to the life of the school is consistently known and understood by all. The positive action taken within the school and beyond can then be explicitly recognised, and attributed to, the distinctive Christian vision of St Stephen's as a church school.
- Continue to implement the RE curriculum so that pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity, Islam and selected religions and worldviews, are equally strong. Develop staff understanding of the spiral nature of the curriculum so that coverage is cohesive.
- Create opportunities for pupils to explore their spiritual development across the curriculum including in RE, and also within collective worship.

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 Stephen's is recognized and celebrated as a powerful and courageous advocate for positive change in the local area. Led by the dynamic and dedicated headteacher, committed staff work hard to deliver transformational support of many kinds, including practical and emotional, to pupils and their families. The extent to which this is offered unconditionally, and sometimes at personal cost, is an example of excellence in providing aspiration, dignity and hope. Even if some families do not stay at the school for long, the impact it has had stays with them. Parents appreciate the care they receive, and share examples of how they were helped, particularly in times of crisis. The school has the trust of the community, because it is known by the kind of fruit it bears. The school is the first point of contact for many seeking help or advice. As a result, staff have developed expertise in a range of areas, including housing and bereavement arrangements, in order to provide appropriate assistance or signpost to other agencies. Links with St Stephen's Church are strong. School and church are co-partners in working to improve the life of the community.

The school's vision for all 'to be known by the kind of fruit they bear' is lived out through its actions. This distinctly Christian basis of the vision is not widely known, however. The associated motto is more often used, understood and visible. The imagery of trees and leaves around the school are visual reminders that the intention of all staff is for pupils to be nurtured so that they can grow and flourish. Alongside the vision and motto, 12 gospel values and eight learning behaviours reinforce the high expectations held for behaviour and learning. The important links between the four key elements of the vision, motto, gospel values and learning behaviours, and how they define St Stephen's as a church school, are not fully understood.

The school is split over two sites, which presents difficulties for staff and pupils. Leaders have worked hard to overcome these, so that all can live well together. In line with the vision for all to 'bear fruit', buildings have been refurbished to a high standard. This provides an attractive physical environment where all can grow and flourish.

Staff feel supported and know they are valued professionally and personally. They appreciate that they are known and supported as individuals. The many training opportunities offered to develop their professional skills are welcomed. Mental health and well-being are a priority. Spending is allocated for counselling, for example.

The curriculum has been planned so that all pupils, including those with additional needs, flourish. Pupils are eager to learn and proud to attend school in the uniform style chosen by their parents. A range of extra-curricular activities, trips and visits enrich their experiences, including the Rock Club held at the church. The 'make a difference club' (the MAD club) explores ways in which the school can be more environmentally aware. As a result of their involvement, the school community has reduced the amount of plastic used. Big questions are planned across the curriculum, including in RE, enabling pupils to respectfully discuss ethical and theological ideas. Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

aspects are also covered across the curriculum. Pupils respond to the social and moral issues raised. Opportunities for pupils to explore a spiritual response to learning, which are discernibly different from those presented by PSHE, are not explicit.

Collective worship is invitational and inclusive. It is structured so those of all religions and world views can take part with integrity. The Lord's Prayer has been reshaped for all to pray regardless of their beliefs, for example. The gospel values become a focus in turn and their importance and relevance explored. Responses are recorded in a reflection diary for each class. These are often personal to the pupil and include examples of how the value applies to their own life and the lives of others. Spiritual responses to collective worship are less evident.

Bible stories form the basis of collective worship, but the Qur'an is also used to inspire action. Comparisons between Islam and Christianity are highlighted to enable pupils and adults to appreciate the relevance of faith in today's world. The words use at the start of collective worship include an Arabic greeting, whilst the final prayer is Trinitarian. Pupils explain this represents the three parts of God. A weekly celebration assembly is held where pupils are acknowledged for living out the gospel values and learning behaviours, as well as for academic achievement. Pupils are pleased to receive this recognition, although the gospel values are sometimes confused with the learning behaviours.

Prayer boxes are provided in each classroom. These are opened weekly and referred to during class collective worship. Opportunities to experience prayer and reflection through the day, other than in collective worship, are not established.

Pupil voice is important and developing. Through the collective worship council, pupils expressed a wish to have greater involvement in worship. They are now working with the vicar of St Stephen's Church to increase opportunities for independently planning, monitoring and evaluating it. The school council puts forward suggestions which are acted on by adults. Lunch menus have been changed as a result of their input. Governors receive reports from the collective worship and school councils. They invite representatives to attend meetings, confirming their importance to the school.

Pupils enjoy RE. They understand the importance of learning about religions and world views. Similarities and connections are made between Christianity and Islam to generate mutual respect and understanding. RE has a high profile in the school and governors take financial decisions to ensure it is well resourced. Governors monitor through reports from the RE lead, and regularly discuss it at governor meetings. Leaders ensure that all staff have access to training in RE and collective worship. Links with the Diocese of Leeds are strong and mutually beneficial. As an outward facing school, St Stephen's hosts and contributes to diocesan events.



The effectiveness of RE is

Good

Monitoring by leaders and regular pupil assessment evidences that teaching and learning in RE is never less than good. As a result, pupils make effective progress. Although RE continued to be taught during school closures, there has not been a balanced coverage of religions and world views. As a result, leaders are addressing the pupils' gaps in learning.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	6 May 2022	URN	107323
Date of previous inspection	15 January 2015		
School status	Voluntary aided primary school	NOR	450
Name of MAT/Federation	n/a		
Diocese	Leeds		
Headteacher	Paul Urry		
Pupil profile	The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is above national averages.		

	The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)			
Inspector's name	Rachel Beeson	No.	952