

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Witton Church Walk Church of England Nursery and Primary School				
Address	Church Walk, Northwich CW9 5QQ			
Date of inspection	24 October 2019	Status of school	VA primary	
Diocese	Chester	URN	111389	
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

Witton Church Walk is a primary school with 282 pupils on roll. The school has a low level of religious and cultural diversity and few pupils speak English as an additional language. 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 (SEND) is above national averages. The leadership of the school is well established and stable but the parish is currently in an inter-regnum.

The school's Christian vision

Where every door is open and every gift unlocked.

We are a partnership of school, church, home, the Diocese and community. We create a stimulating and caring environment, grounded in Christian belief and practice, enabling all members of our school community to flourish.

Key findings

- Creative approaches to the Christian vision statement keep it fresh and meaningful to the whole school community. This inspires a deep commitment to each individual as uniquely precious as a child of God.
- Leadership at all levels is of the highest quality. Through a combination of rigour and imagination it makes the school a place where people want to be and where they are nurtured to become the people God intends them to be. The servant leadership of the headteacher and the work of the pupil ethos group are exceptional.
- The school's commitment to 'opening doors' and 'unlocking gifts' leads to learning opportunities of outstanding breadth and quality, enabling pupils to taste 'life in all its fulness' (John 10:10).
- The life of the school is rooted and grounded in worship which is thoughtful and inclusive. The school environment resonates with effective opportunities to think, reflect and respond.
- RE is a strength of the school. Highly skilled leadership has developed resources which promote high levels of engagement and progressive learning amongst pupils and increasingly deep subject competence amongst staff.

Areas for development

- At a time of transition in the parish, continue to work with the local church to ensure that the momentum of partnership is maintained in ways which benefit the school, the wider school community and the parish itself.
- Increase pupils' experience of the diversity of Christianity within Anglicanism, inter-denominationally and in the sense of Christianity as a world faith.

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

Witton Church Walk is a school confident in and shaped by its Christian identity. There is a strong, shared belief in the infinite value and potential of pupils as children of God. This is reflected in the strapline, 'Where every door is open and every gift unlocked'. The Christian vision is further developed in a rich multi-layered approach with staff, governors and class groups expanding it through a jigsaw of different perspectives and scriptural teachings. One member of staff movingly described Witton as like the biblical well, a meeting place brimming with abundant life which can enrich pupils, their families and the wider community. For another the vision drew out 'a Christian life of service, commitment and transformation'. Each year the school refreshes the vision, considering it in a different context. This year, the focus has been the local community. One class, studying the verse 'let your light shine' (Matthew 5:16), decided to hand out flowers to passers-by, while another took biscuits to thank the staff in a local charity shop. Through these positive encounters, members of the school community come to understand that they can make a difference in the world, contributing positively to the lives of others and being agents of change.

Worship is not just the beating heart of the school. It infuses the very fabric of the building. Through exceptionally creative use of the school environment, work on prayer and reflection sets the context for the school's daily life. A strongly liturgical and seasonal framework underpins worship at whole school and class level. Pupil voice, the thinking of the ethos group and the evaluation of leaders have built around this with increasing imagination so that the spiritual journey of the week is expressed with increasing variety and depth of meaning. The school's recent focus on strengthening reflection throughout the curriculum is shown in pupils' statements such as 'God doesn't want us to go round with a stone in our pockets because it is heavy' and their responses to big questions such as, 'If I were lost I would want God to find me because...'. Witton's strength in worship is recognised as exemplary amongst local Church schools and this is testimony to the dedication of leaders and governors to quality training, planning and evaluation.

In living out its vision of opening doors and unlocking gifts, the school has given particular attention to creating a memorable learning journey of significant breadth and depth. The school's motto of 'everyday excellent' drives an expectation of quality across the school curriculum. This includes the work done to raise pupil achievement, although this has not yet been consistently successful. However, the number of curriculum awards achieved, the programme of activities and the lively school environment all demonstrate the desire to engender a love of learning. The support for vulnerable pupils is of the highest calibre, particularly in its approach to each individual as a unique child of God. Because of its vision of the value and potential of every pupil, the school adopts a dedicated personalised approach to pupils whatever their needs, difficulties or strengths. One parent commented that, although his two children were quite different, the school had been equally imaginative in finding ways for each of them to flourish.

RE is a strength of the school. High quality diocesan resources have been combined with *Understanding Christianity* to offer bespoke provision which has justifiably won the gold RE Quality Mark and is used regionally as a model of good practice. The model of assessment, which tracks both concepts and progress, is exemplary. Pupils are engaged and energised in lessons, examining texts and thinking deeply about questions of theology and meaning. Work in classrooms shows a penetrating analysis of the concept of the Trinity and reflective responses to the writings of the prophet Nehemiah. Learning about Christianity is strong and there is a lively programme of visits to places of worship including those of other world faiths. However, there are fewer opportunities in either RE or worship to encounter the breadth of Christianity in Britain or as a world faith. The school is in the process of refreshing its international reach. The relationships with the parish enrich the school and this link has been well sustained during the inter-regnum.

Building on the belief that each person in the school is uniquely treasured by God, relationships are gracious and behaviour very good. Attendance is high because children enjoy the opportunities of being part of the school. The well-being of all is carefully attended to through strong, personalised pastoral care for pupils and good support for staff. Resilience and professional confidence are now high and statistics for staff attendance are exceptional. There is a very strong ethos of participation which enhances the sense of community. Pupils undertake many responsibilities around the school, shaping school life by their contribution to its different committees. Their work on ethos, eco-school and through the curriculum group is strongly evident and they

speak about their contribution with measured confidence. Families value joining in with family learning and school breakfast. Staff training is often approached through shared creative activity, such as developing the *Understanding Christianity* frieze. Because of the depth of the vision of 'open doors', the school embraces each issue of diversity through its commitment to valuing every individual. This focus on good relationships based on strong Christian values underpins the re-development of the school's policies for both behaviour and relationships and sex education.

The many strengths of the school are all testimony to its exceptional Christian leadership. Leaders together have created a culture which supports everyone to give of their best. The headteacher's passion for the school and its pupils coupled with an inclusive, servant-leader approach to her role, have brought the school on a sustained journey of improvement. Others in the school community have caught the vision and bring to it their own commitments: 'What can I do more, more as a teacher, more as a Christian?'. Robust evaluation and detailed, yet imaginative, future planning support the school's continued drive forward. There is a strong culture of nurture and high-quality leadership has been grown from within the school. This strengthens every aspect of its work but is particularly evident in worship and RE. Governors know their school well and are closely engaged in its oversight. Their Christian vision and commitment add to the rich texture of the school. Because of this strength, Witton is able to give generously in leading beyond the school. For example, senior leaders are much in demand to model good practice, mentor new headteachers and contribute to the Church of England Christian Leadership course. The pupil ethos group takes a remarkable role in working with partner schools planning joint Church school events and has recently addressed a room full of adults on the Christian Leadership course. This is an achievement worthy of particular celebration.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

Pupils of all ages and abilities demonstrate particularly high levels of knowledge and understanding in RE. They have good recall of stories and concepts previously studied and relate their prior learning thoughtfully to the new topics and ideas they encounter. Intelligent monitoring and evaluation give leaders a highly effective grasp of subject development. The sophisticated use of tracking systems and a searching framework for moderation ensure that pupils' learning is progressive and increasingly deep. These processes, combined with high quality schemes of work, support the professional understanding of teachers so that teaching is consistently of the highest quality.

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