

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Dalton St Mary's Church of England Primary School			
Address	Coronation Drive, Dalton-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA15 8QR		
Date of inspection	12 March 2020	Status of school	Voluntary Aided Primary
Diocese	Carlisle	URN	112412

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	Excellent
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Excellent
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Excellent
School context			
Dalton St Mary's is a primary school with 232 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 is an Apple Distinguished School.			
The school's Christian vision			
'Love your neighbour as yourself.'			
At DSM we celebrate achievements, inspiring each other knowing there is never failure – only opportunities to learn. We respect others' thoughts and beliefs as in the teaching of Jesus. Our well-resourced school allows us to develop the skills to serve others, stretching out into the world as educated global citizens. Mark 12: 30-31			
Key findings			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school is a loving family where all practice and decision making is underpinned by Jesus' command to 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. This vision is evident in the commitment to serving local and global communities. It results in investment to support the mental health and wellbeing of all. Strong and supportive Christian leadership from the headteacher results in the school being a rewarding place to learn and work. The deeply embedded Christian vision is well-understood and drives practice across all aspects of school life. Status as an Apple Distinguished School (ADS) and innovative use of iPads ensure that an exceptionally wide range of stakeholder views inform development planning. Governance is very supportive, but not all fully understand the expectations for their roles in a church school. Highly creative use of technology provides strong support for collective worship, RE and spiritual development. Pupils value the quiet time for reflection provided across the curriculum. The strong, mutually beneficial partnership with the local church enriches collective worship. Vibrant and inspiring worship provides support, comfort and challenge for pupils and adults. Progress in RE is excellent. Teaching and learning are effectively supported by a well-balanced RE curriculum and effective assessment. Pupils explore big questions, use religious vocabulary competently and are enthusiastic about exploring diversity. They learn to respect the thoughts and beliefs of others. 			
Areas for development			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that governors access training in order to gain a full understanding of their roles in a Church school. To share the school's excellent practice in the use of technology even more widely with other Church schools, particularly with regard to support for collective worship, RE, spirituality and self-evaluation. 			

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 biblical basis of the vision, 'Love your neighbour as yourself,' underpins all that the school does. Christian values help pupils to understand what it means to put this command into practice. They explore these values through collective worship and the curriculum, with the result that they apply them to their own relationships. Christian leaders model what it means to show love in action. They highly value the committed and skilled staff team, who are regarded as the school's most precious resource. As a result of these caring, family relationships, behaviour is excellent and pupils love coming to school and enjoy their learning. All, including vulnerable pupils, rise to the aspirational vision and progress well.

The school's use of technology is highly innovative and enriches a wide spectrum of its work as a Christian school. The school has status as an ADS and all pupils and staff have their own personal iPads. Recording learning on iPads supports pupils in structuring their thinking and consequently increases the pace of learning. As a result, more time is available for discussion and deep thinking about big questions in RE and the wider curriculum. Consequently, iPads provide strong support for spiritual development and opportunities for this are planned across the curriculum. Green screens placed around school are often used independently by pupils in expressing awe and wonder or ideas and beliefs. A pupil created a video with herself in front of pictures of the Great Barrier Reef and said, 'We love technology because it takes us to places beyond our wildest dreams.' The iPads facilitate sharing pupils' work with others and quickly collating their ideas for discussion or self-evaluation. The school already regularly shares their excellent practice with others. However, the inspiring use of technology to enhance the Christian ethos is worthy of a wider audience.

Vibrant collective worship is at the heart of school life. It is greatly enriched by the partnership with local churches. Pupils' leadership of worship is a highly valued part of the weekly worship programme. Worship workshops led by staff have contributed to pupils' very strong worship leadership skills. Pupils say that leading worship helps them to think more deeply about the issues and Bible stories they present. A group of Year 4 boys bubbled with excitement about the way they would use their findings about multi-cultural Easter celebrations in preparing for Easter worship. Special services in church are greatly appreciated by parents. Music plays an important part in school life and pupils sing exuberantly. The special choir formed for Christmas services, comprising pupils, parents and staff, is one way in which the wider community is fully involved in worship. One father spoke of the joy of being able to share this activity with his son. Staff say that worship provides them with time to think, reminds them that they are valued and is a source of comfort in times of distress.

Technology is used to ensure all pupils participate fully and think deeply in collective worship and in lessons. The iPads are used to share thinking and ideas are quickly collated on the screen. This helps pupils to disagree well. When views were shared during worship which explored the need to care for God's creation, the ideas collected were sent to the local MP. He shared these at Westminster, with the result that pupils gained a clear picture of the way their views could make a change in the world. The vision for serving others results in the school's outward-looking approach. They seek to serve the local community through activities such as weekly visits to the nearby care home for the elderly. Pupils gain social skills through chatting, making tea and sharing their learning. The link with a school in Uganda helps pupils to gain an understanding of global injustice. It fuels the determination to take action for change in response to the teaching of Jesus.

A range of reflection activities enhance pupils' understanding of prayer, develop their spirituality and contribute to their mental health and wellbeing. Reflective stations in every classroom are used when pupils want to be quiet or pray. Pupils are very well supported in learning to use silence constructively. Prayer warriors are attached to each class. These local Christians get to know their class and pray for them, with the result that pupils gain an understanding of Christian beliefs about the power of prayer. This understanding is deepened further through creative prayer stations on special focus days. A Year 6 pupil explained the importance of prayer, 'It means we are not lonely. We have someone to talk to all the time.'

Jesus' command to love, which includes reference to loving yourself, drives the commitment to mental wellbeing for staff and pupils. The school invests in a care worker who provides support for individuals and groups. Staff have benefitted from a range of training, for example, from the Mind charity and about the use of Growth Mind-set. Self-evaluation from teachers identified the desire for there to be more time for working collaboratively. Consequently, the bold decision has been taken to provide time for teachers and support staff to work in groups regularly on Friday mornings. Staff say time to talk supports their wellbeing, provides space for important training or self-evaluation and means there is capacity for creativity.

The Christian vision is well-understood by all and an exceptionally wide range of stakeholder views feed into development planning. The school has devised ways of using technology to collate and present feedback without an excessive workload. Weekly buddy assemblies provide opportunities for evaluative discussion in mixed age groups. Highly effective leadership of RE and collective worship provides strong support for staff and rigorous monitoring informs plans for improvement. Governors regularly discuss the implementation of the Christian vision. However, not all understand the expectations for their roles in a Church school as not all governors have received relevant training.

The vision for respecting the thoughts and beliefs of others results in the commitment to developing understanding of diversity. RE plays an important part in this. Use of virtual technology, supported by a rich collection of resources including persona dolls and artefacts, means that pupils talk competently about beliefs and practices. The curriculum is well-planned and effectively supports progress in understanding Christian beliefs. For example, younger pupils learn about the Easter story and symbols, whereas older pupils explore the significance of Jesus' sacrifice through the Narnia stories.

The school is well-placed in terms of inspirational leadership, a resilient and committed staff team and a deeply embedded aspirational Christian vision to meet the challenges of the future.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

All pupils, including those with additional needs and disadvantaged pupils, make excellent progress in RE. This results from excellent teaching. High quality teaching is effectively supported by technology. This enables pupils to organise their learning, gain confidence in using complex religious vocabulary and distinguish accurately the diverse beliefs and practices of different faiths.

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