

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Thomas Church of England Primary School, Lydiate

Address	Kenyons Lane, Lydiate, Merseyside		
Date of inspection	14 November 2018	Status of school	VA Primary Academy, Liverpool Diocesan Schools Trust
Diocese	Liverpool	URN	104919

Overall Judgement	Grade
How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Excellent
Additional Judgement	Grade
The impact of collective worship	Excellent
The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Excellent

School context

St Thomas is a primary school with 212 pupils on roll. The school has a low level of religious and cultural diversity and no 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. Since the previous inspection the school has joined the Liverpool Diocesan Schools Trust (LDST) and has appointed new head and deputy head teachers.

The school's Christian vision

Our mission statement, Jesus said, "Come, follow me, live your life the way God wants you to", motivates us to look to Jesus as our guiding light. He inspires us to live out our Christian values and to strive for Excellence in all that we do; celebrating life in all its fullness.

Key findings

- The clear and uncompromising vision, drawn from verses 17 and 14 of Mark's gospel, does indeed motivate and inspire everyone in and around the school family.
- The relationships between every member of school, growing from this Christian vision, are exceptionally warm and strong. Pupils are supported, challenged and encouraged to achieve outstanding progress academically, socially and spiritually, regardless of background or innate ability.
- The pupils are generous, kind and loving, demonstrating compassion and determination to help others through various acts of charity and support. They frequently ask themselves, 'What would Jesus do?' and act accordingly.
- Worship is sincere, varied and inclusive, drawing everyone in and enabling exceptional spiritual growth in pupils and adults, including parents. Church links are close, with the vicar's inspirational and friendly leadership a key factor.
- Religious education (RE) is led with passion. Excellent teaching and learning lead to life-enhancing experiences for pupils whose spiritual understanding is remarkable.

Areas for development

- Consolidate and build on the work being done to deepen the pupils' understanding of their 'global neighbours', so as to inform and embed their empathy for others.
- Deepen the impact of the already excellent sung worship by sensitive introduction of a more meditative approach to the singing at appropriate times.

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 distinctive and powerful school vision was developed and is now lived out by the whole school family. The headteacher's Christian faith shines out in all that he does. He has developed an outstanding team who all share the Christian values adopted to support the vision. The teamwork, coaching and shared leadership of this inspiring Christ-centred school is exemplary. The induction processes and the welcome received by newly appointed staff are outstanding. One, who is in her first term, said, 'It feels like home. Everyone's helpful and approachable.' Governors play their part with clarity of purpose and determination to provide the very best for all pupils. The area for development from the previous report has been thoroughly and fully addressed. The vicar and all governors and staff communicate the vision extremely well, above all by example.

School leaders ensure that the vision remains foremost in every meeting, policy and lesson. Strategic planning and evaluation of all the school's work is open and honest. The excellent, innovative practice at St Thomas is frequently shared amongst other schools in the LDST. RE is led with passion and skill, and the subject leader shares these gifts with other local schools to help them to improve. The Diocesan RE syllabus, with units from Understanding Christianity, are used extremely effectively. Staff and church members utilise the materials available to open the pupils' minds to theological debate and exploration. The church and school are seen as 'one family' as a governor put it. St Thomas was the first school in the Liverpool Diocese to be awarded the Church School Partnership Award Level 2, and has been identified within the Diocese as a beacon of best practice.

The school's own self-evaluation states 'We see all children through the eyes of God.' The evidence suggests that this is indeed the case. All pupils exude self-confidence and joy in learning, and their excellent progress academically is confirmed by national data. Sensitive and caring work with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) ensures that they also make outstanding progress. Parents appreciate the breadth and depth of the teaching and experiences available to their children. One commented, 'The faith element is key, and there is a lovely mix of academic rigour with a focus on holistic education.' A Year 6 pupil spoke enthusiastically about the Children's University programme, which offers 'degrees' through a wide range of experiences in and beyond the curriculum. 'We graduate in Year 2 and Year 6!'

Hopes and Dreams Week underlines the remarkably positive approach taken by St Thomas to the development of pupils' character. They embrace the chance to tackle 'big questions' in the outdoor prayer spaces. Christian compassion is clearly motivating many acts of support for charities and vulnerable people. Many of these stem from the pupils themselves. Both the pupils' council and the worship committee devise and carry through ideas to stimulate generosity in giving of time, talent and money. For example, to support a pupil who has diabetes, the council decided to raise money for the children's hospital that helps her. Well over a thousand pounds was raised. A pupil commented, 'We show compassion – it's what Jesus would have done.' A Year 6 pupil spoke with pride of his role as a weekly collector of 'loose change' for their link school in Kenya. Over 400 second hand uniforms and a set of football kits have been sent to a school in Zambia. The school is working towards Christian Aid's 'Global Neighbours Award'.

Christian love and generosity inspire close relationships throughout the school family. All are welcomed as they are and all respond with gratitude. Parents, carers and pupils are greeted by the headteacher and the vicar at the school gate, and are thereby reassured about the caring and supportive family atmosphere every day. One parent said that the school is 'growing something beautiful, inwardly and outwardly. It adds value to the community.' The vision is foremost in guiding everyday life in and around school. 'What would Jesus do?' is used as a guide to behaviour and an aid to living life 'the way God wants you to'. Respect, care and love for one another are hallmarks of this strikingly Christian community. Everyone is treated with dignity, and mental health for all is a high priority. Staff spoke of real concern to keep a healthy work/life balance, and the school has its own fully qualified counsellor.

Worship is inclusive and inspirational. The variety of styles and leadership gives it freshness and potency that

yield frequent life-enhancing and life-changing experiences. Every child has an opportunity to lead class worship at least annually, as they make up teams of 'worship warriors' in every class. Those on the worship committee are involved in planning, leading and evaluation. Anglican greetings and responses, lively and sometimes thought-provoking worship songs and hymns and vivid Bible stories feature regularly. Drama and prayer, often spontaneous, with excellent use of information technology are other key elements. All teaching staff lead worship, and pupils and adults are fully engaged. Teaching and learning about the ways in which Christians worship God is excellent. There is a clear understanding about the Holy Trinity, with detailed learning about the Holy Spirit. One parent commented, 'My five year old embraces Christianity, and comes home talking about the Holy Spirit!'

Prayer is seen as a normal part of life. Gentle encouragement has led to the development of spontaneous prayer when appropriate, in lessons as well as during collective worship. Spiritual growth is a priority, and staff have the courage and freedom to use prayer as a guide and support for pupils. A striking example is the prayer in class for a pupil who was very upset about a difficult issue at home. This gave comfort and showed the importance of offering our worries to God.

The vicar leads worship regularly, and also teaches about the Eucharist and Baptism. Church members give confirmation classes in Year 5, and about 50% of the pupils each year are keen to participate. The celebration services with Communion are full of significance and relevance to the whole school family. A Year 6 pupil said that confirmation and Communion made him feel 'closer to God', and a Reception child told the vicar that the bread represents 'Jesus' skin!'

This school is indeed a beacon of excellence and love in the local community and in the diocese. A governor commented with understandable pride, 'Love runs through the school. Seeing them grow physically and spiritually is wonderful.'



The effectiveness of RE is excellent.

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Achievement is as good if not better than that in other core subjects, as demonstrated by the rigorous and detailed co-operative monitoring of the pupils' work. The vision statement drives teaching and learning. One pupil explained 'The Bible means love and respect and it teaches me how to show compassion.' World Faith Day and Faith Encounters bring increasing breadth to the pupils' understanding of other faiths and cultures. Lessons such as a study of Mary's song after the angel's visit, Jesus as the 'light of the world' and Jesus fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies demonstrate great teacher skill and sensitivity. The pupils in turn show remarkable depths of understanding. They also appreciate and comment on the value of RE for them, and the safe place to discuss religious and spiritual issues. One said 'I like how we can always express our feelings about anything and not be afraid to.'

Headteacher

Mark Ward

Inspector's name and number

Mike Graham 286