

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Royston St John Baptist Church of England Primary School

Address	Vicarage Lane, Royston, Barnsley S71 4QY		
Date of inspection	2 April 2019	Status of school	St Mary's Academy Trust Inspected as voluntary aided
Diocese	Leeds	URN	142556

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	Requires Improvement
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Requires Improvement
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Good

School context

This is a primary school with 221 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is generally in line with national averages. Since the previous inspection there has been a period of instability, with significant changes in staffing. The school is part of the St Mary's Academy Trust and the executive headteacher also leads another church school within the Trust.

The school's Christian vision

'The three most important things to have are faith, hope and love. But the greatest of them all is love.'
(1 Corinthians 13v13)

Big Hearts: with love, we show kindness to others.
Big Minds: through faith, we become resilient learners.
Big Changes: with hope, we strive to make a positive impact on the world.

Key findings

- The recently developed Christian vision is supported by all members of the school community and is evident in positive relationships and attitudes. Evaluation of the effectiveness of this vision is at an early stage.
- 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 do not yet have a significant enough role in planning, leading and evaluating worship.
- Leaders have initiated a clear strategy for tackling inconsistencies in academic progress whilst also prioritising pupils' spiritual development.
- RE has a growing 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 thoughts and ideas.

Areas for development

- Embed the Christian vision and monitor its effectiveness, so that its impact on standards of learning and whole-school ethos can be clearly seen.
- Provide opportunities to develop and increase pupils' role in planning, leading and evaluating collective worship, so that they become leaders in promoting the school's Christian vision.
- Engage fully with the wider community, including the church and parents, so that pupils can become advocates for change.
- Enhance the provision for spiritual development across the curriculum in order to raise it to the standard already seen in RE.

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

Following a period of transition, this school has set out on a journey and is rapidly making progress in promoting and establishing its distinctive Christian vision. School leaders have recently worked with children from the pupil council to develop the 'big hearts, big minds, big changes' motto, which is directly linked to the new testament passage about faith, hope and love. This vision has the full support of all those in leadership, including representatives from the academy trust, and teachers say that they are inspired by it. Pupils are beginning to see the motto as a framework for guiding their relationships and activities. Members of the pupil council have taken a lead in presenting it to other children and also have some awareness of biblical links, such as how the story of the Good Samaritan teaches them about having a big heart. It is too early to evaluate the wider impact of the new vision on pupils' spiritual development although there are signs, particularly in the context of RE, that pupils are willing to engage in debate of spiritual matters. Also, the commendable behaviour and relationships demonstrated by pupils point to a more long-standing school ethos, as expressed in the comment that 'we are a Christian school'. Parents are less aware of the significance of the school vision, despite innovative use of technology for communication, but are supportive of the school's links with the parish church.

The school development plan includes strategies for promoting the Christian values, engaging pupils in collective worship and raising the profile of RE. Progress is monitored by school leaders and, in terms of governance, by the performance and standards committee as to whether planned changes have been carried through. For instance, they have ensured that teaching staff have taken part in diocesan led training on the use of the Understanding Christianity materials. However, at the moment, leaders have not fully evaluated the impact of these strategic changes on all members of the school community. For example, pupils are keen to show the prayer stations that have been placed around the school relating to the three elements of the vision, but they do not yet comment on the extent to which these are being used or how the stations encourage them to use personal prayer.

Collective worship is valued as an important time of the school day through which the school vision and its Christian values are both acted out and strengthened. Pupils speak most enthusiastically about acts of worship when they have been involved in the process of planning and delivery, such as when the worship council presented the new vision. Adults and pupils alike respond to the invitation to pray and reflect, to engage with Bible stories and teaching, to praise through contemporary songs and to participate in the major Christian festivals. For instance, while learning about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, some pupils were able to write and use thoughtful prayers to enhance the worship experience of others. The vicar regularly leads worship both in school and in the church and has on occasions met with the worship council. Despite their growing spiritual awareness, pupils are not typically given a more prominent role in planning and leading worship, nor are they offered opportunities to evaluate worship in ways that are meaningful to them. This restricts their ability to influence worship formats or to take a greater role in its delivery. In this regard, the recommendation from the previous inspection has not yet been fully addressed. Parents speak positively of special services held in the church, including the regular Eucharist services, but are not currently invited to participate in worship in school. This limits the impact of the Christian vision on the wider community. Members of the parish church occasionally support worship and school activities, although their involvement has lessened since the school adopted academy status. However, pupils experience the diversity of Christian practice through the involvement of the Bethel Church and Salvation Army. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship is largely informal through observation and conversations with pupils. More formal evaluation, which would indicate aspects to improve, is not well developed.

Instabilities in leadership and staffing have resulted in weaknesses in pupils' academic progress. Pupil outcomes in reading and writing are below national averages and progress in phonics is inconsistent. School leaders, including the performance and standards committee, are now monitoring pupils' academic progress more rigorously and have an accurate understanding of strengths and areas for development. Leaders have taken appropriate steps to raise expectations such as setting ambitious targets, eliminating lost learning time, improving attendance and developing teachers' skills, for instance through training for the phonics leader. Expert support has been brought in from within the academy trust. As a result, there are indications that pupils, including the more vulnerable through the Thrive programme, are making better progress. Leaders have rightly persisted in maintaining a broad curriculum and this enables pupils to develop a wider perspective on the world and to look beyond themselves

and their immediate community. For instance, pupils' studies have been linked to activities for Remembrance Day. Pupils have been proactive in their support for a range of charitable organisations, including for Asthma UK resulting from the tragic loss of one pupil. They have also initiated a non-uniform day to raise funds for the school's Thrive display and have organised, with the parents' group, a book sale from which some books were offered to charities. In this way, pupils are becoming agents of change.

Pupils' learning in RE has been significantly improved through the introduction across the school of the Understanding Christianity teaching resource. In following the unit on salvation, pupils are gaining a deeper understanding of different aspects of the Easter story through a range of activities at levels appropriate to pupils' age and ability. For example, pupils learn by acting out the story, by identifying and discussing relevant artefacts, by studying Jesus' words about the Kingdom of God and by sequencing the stations of the Cross. At all levels, teachers encourage discussion and debate, for instance about who was to blame for Jesus' death, and pupils are happy to share their opinions about moral and spiritual matters even when they disagree with others. All class teachers now teach RE and this raises its importance and helps to embed the school vision through the curriculum. Pupils have opportunities to engage with biblical texts although the relatively small number of Bibles available limits pupils' access in lessons. Teachers are effective in giving pupils immediate verbal feedback and the progress of individual pupils is tracked effectively and regularly through a whole-school assessment programme matched to that used in other curriculum areas. Pupils are encouraged to self-evaluate their learning and this helps teachers to judge the impact of lessons. Whole school planning for RE is well-structured and includes units that engage pupils in learning about faiths other than Christianity. This has been enriched by visits to the Bradford Interfaith Centre and to places of worship such as a Sikh Temple. These studies and activities give pupils insight into a range of beliefs, helping them to respect diversity.



The effectiveness of RE is good

Standards in RE, in terms of how well pupils engage with their learning, are comparable to other core subjects. However, observations of lessons and pupils' learning in books suggest that progress in knowledge and understanding is better and more consistent than in some other areas of learning. Most learners are making at least good progress against unit objectives. This is partly due to decisions school leaders have taken to implement the diocesan syllabus and the Understanding Christianity materials. As a result, pupils' spiritual development is good and they are benefitting from effective and regular RE teaching. Monitoring by school leaders supports this view.

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