

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Tolleshunt D'Arcy St. Nicholas Church of England Primary Academy			
Address	Tollesbury Road, Tolleshunt D'Arcy, Maldon, Essex, CM9 8UB		
Date of inspection	20 November 2019	Status of school	Academy inspected as VA. Canonium Learning Trust
Diocese / Methodist District	Chelmsford	URN	147403

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

School context

Tolleshunt D'Arcy St. Nicholas is a primary academy with 103 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages. Since the previous denominational inspection a new headteacher is in post. The school became an academy in September 2019 when it joined the Canonium Learning Trust.

The school's Christian vision

Believe Belong Achieve

Developing beliefs and aspirations within a strong community.

Jesus said "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19.14)

Key findings

- A new Christian vision has recently been agreed and established which fits the school context well. Whilst it has clear theological underpinning it is not fully embedded in all aspects of school life.
- The members of the school have a clear sense of belonging which flows from the school's vision and this is seen in the quality of their relationships and in their inclusivity.
- Whilst the school enjoys good and supportive links with the local churches and nearby villages, opportunities to think about issues more globally are less developed.
- The recently appointed headteacher has given significant priority to developing the school community and its distinctive Christian vision following a period of instability in staffing.
- The school has developed a coherent plan for the teaching and assessment of religious education (RE). Regular monitoring is not in place to ensure that teaching and learning is consistently good.

Areas for development

- Ensure all members of the school community deepen their knowledge and understanding of the new vision and its theological underpinning and ensure this vision drives all aspects of school life.
- Develop the RE curriculum, monitoring its effectiveness, to ensure there are greater opportunities for critical engagement of the biblical text and more opportunities to explore a wider range of world faiths.
- Extend opportunities for pupils to explore issues of deprivation, disadvantage and exploitation of the natural world and to think globally.

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 school's vision 'Believe Belong Achieve - developing beliefs and aspirations within a strong community' has recently been established after consultation with stakeholders. It fits a school that feels called to be 'here for the community'. The way in which their chosen biblical teaching serves to root the vision is clearly articulated by leaders who speak passionately about 'being like the text' when the children belong at the centre of a community which is aspirational for all. The vision is beginning to shape policies and development planning. Whilst governor monitoring visits occur, there is no rigorous system to measure the impact of the vision and ensure it drives all aspects of school life. The school enjoys very supportive and mutually beneficial relationships with the local churches. One church member spoke of feeling 'part of the family collaborating with school in worship'. The school is now part of the Canonium Learning Trust. There is a positive working partnership developing. This is allowing the school to maintain and develop its own identity whilst benefitting from being part of the Trust. RE and collective worship have a high profile and staff are now supported in their understanding of what it means to work in a church school through regular diocesan support.

A broad and balanced curriculum is in place where all pupils, including the most vulnerable, experience a nurturing learning environment. The school, in line with their vision, is aspirational for all pupils and this is reflected in progress which is mostly in line with national averages in recent years. The school's action plan to address the dip in progress in maths is further evidence of their aspirational commitment. Spiritual development is nurtured through the promotion of a deep sense of belonging to one another and to God. Wednesdays provide key moments for pupils to reflect and develop spiritually in response to collective worship earlier in the week. One class was challenged to consider 'who is it our job to help?' in response to the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

In line with their vision, the school encourages pupils to aspire by playing an active role in their learning and to make positive choices. Evidence for the development of resilience and perseverance are seen in pupils who spoke of having done 'your best try'. Self-assessment 'blob trees' in class help pupils to gauge their academic progress. Similarly, the school's use of 'learning pits' help pupils chart progress and the steps required to overcome learning obstacles to 'get out of the pit'. The impact of pupil's learning is recognised by parents, one of whom said she was impressed that her child was able to pick appropriate challenges to aid her own learning. Some opportunities are in place to ask 'big questions' and the school is committed in its activities for local and international charities. The school's awareness of disadvantage and deprivation more globally is, however, underdeveloped.

The school vision is clearly seen in the quality of the relationships both within the school and more broadly. The school lives out its vision of a strong community. Pupils feel 'as important as the adults' and staff speak of 'my school family'. Parents, equally, praise the communication they receive and are clear that their child was a 'member of the class and not just a name'. This deep sense of belonging lies at the heart of this school's vision and the inclusive culture is seen in pupil and staff behaviour and in conversations with one another. Expectations are high and the establishment of 'thinking time' for pupils to reflect upon their actions helps them to make positive choices and to develop empathy. Restorative justice operates and pupils experience a genuine sense of forgiveness and are helped to see that 'tomorrow is another day'. In line with the school vision, the school is proactive in tackling attendance which is steadily improving. The headteacher is clear that parental conversations about attendance are no longer seen as 'a taboo', but rather part of the school's expectation, based on its aspirational vision.

Wellbeing and mental health for pupils and staff are taken seriously. The school's deep sense of belonging and inclusion has created an atmosphere where pupils and staff feel able to discuss how they feel and express the level of help they may require. Trained emotional support is available for the pupils and opportunities to share concerns through a 'worry box' is one example of the way in which support is provided. Parents feel confident with the school's approach and speak of their comfort that they 'know my child'. School support was 'better than expected' for one parent who had concerns over the wellbeing of their child.

The school's personal social and health care education (PSHCE) programme and the sex and relationship education (SRE) curriculum are age appropriate and reflect the school vision. Prejudicial behaviour is challenged,

as reflected in the low incidence of bullying. Parents praised a school where their children feel 'safe and secure' and valued. One member of staff, responding through a questionnaire, spoke of the 'acceptance of all regardless of culture, ability of background'.

Collective worship is central to school life. It is inclusive, invitational and inspires the community to be aspirational for themselves. Worship is well supported by local churches who commented on the warmth of 'welcome at the door'. Pupils, through the work of the Holy Council, are now involved in planning, leading and evaluating worship. Weekly themes are explored together and in class time. Pupils encounter the teachings of Jesus and the Bible and are invited to reflect upon the relevance of faith today. Close links with local churches provide rich opportunities to appreciate the breadth of Christian traditions and an understanding of key festivals and the meaning of the Eucharist. Prayer is natural in worship and recent use of temporary prayer spaces provided opportunities to experience stillness and reflection.

Curriculum planning and assessment for RE is in place. The RE lead shares good practice within school and is developing links locally. Opportunities to see Christianity as a living world faith is in place, for example as pupils are asked to consider, 'what makes a good disciple?' There are opportunities for pupils to engage with biblical text and develop enquiry skills but this is underdeveloped. Pupils have a respectful understanding of a range of world religions as evidenced, such as Buddhism and Hinduism. Although learning is not enriched through visits to places of worship. Statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are fully met.



The effectiveness of RE is Requires Improvement

Based on the data available at inspection, all pupils are making progress in line with expectations in other curriculum areas. The school does not have a rigorous process for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in RE. This means that there is no accurate insight into its quality and so improvement planning is unfocused. Whilst teacher assessment is developing, it is not precise enough against specifically RE learning objectives. These two factors mean that pupils are currently not fully flourishing in their RE learning.

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