

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Whitburn Church of England Academy			
Address	Whitburn, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR6 7EF		
Date of inspection	21-22 May 2019	Status of school	Secondary academy inspected as VA
Diocese	Durham	URN	136386

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	Excellent

School context

Whitburn is a secondary school with 1223 pupils on roll, of whom 225 are in the sixth form. 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 in line with national averages. The principal had been in post for 4 weeks at the time of the inspection. The school is a lead teaching school and added sixth form provision in 2015.

The school's Christian vision

God wants us to excel in all that we are and all that we do. "Excellence for all" means seeking to be the very best we can be in all aspects of our lives.
'But as you excel in everything...' 2 Corinthians 8:7.

Key findings

- Although not recognised as distinctly Christian by all in the school community, the school's Christian vision of 'excellence for all' and associated values guide the direction of the school and inform its policies and practice. They are instrumental in the establishment of highly effective partnerships.
- The taught curriculum and rich extra-curricular offer arising from the school's Christian vision, ensure that the school meets the academic needs of the vast majority of its pupils.
- The school is a community in which reconciliation and the celebration of diversity are lived out daily. As a result relationships are strong and mutually supportive.
- The dignity of all is cherished. The curriculum is thoughtfully planned to enable the exploration of ethical issues and big questions. Pupils are enabled to disagree well.
- Pupils are inspired by religious education (RE). They relish the opportunities the subject offers to explore and hone their own religious and philosophical beliefs. Attainment and progress in RE is a strength at Key Stage 3, GCSE and A Level.

Areas for development

- Ensure that governors have in place a robust, continuous and systematic self-evaluation process involving the whole school community in order to evaluate the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school.
- Develop pupils' understanding of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit so that they understand the significance of this for Christians.
- Ensure that staff at all levels are supported to improve their understanding of the distinctive nature of a church school in order that they are able to make links between vision and practice.

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

'Excellence for all,' rooted in St Paul's injunction to the Corinthians to 'excel in everything,' encapsulates the school's distinctively Christian vision. The recently appointed principal, together with his leadership team, is clear that as a church school the whole life of the school must flow directly from this shared vision. He has been swift to recognise where the working out of the vision can be strengthened. The theological underpinning of the vision is well articulated by senior staff. However, the biblical basis of the vision and associated values is less well understood by all staff, pupils and other stakeholders. Governors have a close involvement with the life of the school. However, they have not fully established robust systems for evaluating the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school. The vision has been the guiding focus for the successful decision made to extend the school's provision to include a sixth form. Similarly it is the driver behind the effective partnerships established with a range of different groups. These include parents, local community, parish church, local school clusters, feeder primary schools and the diocese. The school's role as a teaching school and initial teacher training provider means that it is actively supporting the development of future leaders. Opportunities are not always taken, however, to develop specific knowledge of Church school education.

The school's 'Be Values' such as 'Be Courageous', 'Be Trusting' and 'Be Forgiving' enable the Christian vision to be realised through the curriculum and pupils flourish as mature, confident and well-rounded individuals. They are well prepared for the future as all pupils find a place in further education, work or training. Pupils' academic needs are generally well met, especially in the sixth form where students' performance at A level is in line with schools nationally. Attainment is high and progress is average at GCSE. The school acknowledges this and is taking action to address declining progress measures at GCSE. Internal tracking indicates that this is proving successful and that progress is improving at Key Stage 3. Some adaptations for those who are vulnerable are made because staff have an increasingly detailed knowledge of each child. Staff share a well-defined understanding of spiritual development and there are times for stillness and reflection. These are often enhanced in the context of form tutors' close and nurturing relationships with tutorial groups. Extra-curricular opportunities are abundant and include numerous sports, musical activities and visits. These enable pupils to widen their horizons and, in many cases, ensure potential is realised. As one student remarked when reflecting on taking up a challenging activity, 'I thought about it, and decided to be courageous.' Pupils speak passionately about their learning, are inquisitive and engage readily in thoughtful debate and discussion.

St Paul's challenge to 'excel in everything' is realised in many aspects of school life. Pupils are proud of what they achieve when the 'Be' values are put into practice. They possess a well-developed understanding of how the values, resulting from the vision, influence their choices. Pupils are proud of the communities in which they live. They articulate with an infectious enthusiasm the ways in which they can make a difference, challenge injustice and be the change they desire. These include environmental work to promote sustainability and reduce the use of plastic and international relief work. Pupils readily link these decisions to the school's Christian vision and 'Be' values. Failure never has the final say at Whitburn because pupils are equipped to persevere and overcome challenges when they arise. A strong international curriculum and links means that pupils' understanding of global issues is very well-developed.

Pupils and adults live well together in a nurturing community. This is because the working out of the school's vision is a joint endeavour. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and exclusions are low. They value greatly the benefits of forgiveness and reconciliation and these are consciously practised. Attendance for the vast majority of pupils is good because the school is nurturing and welcoming. Leaders value wellbeing so support for pupils and their families is strong. Highly effective systems have been developed to support good mental health. Pupils value, for example, the opportunities for mindfulness. The school is aware of the mono-cultural composition of the community it serves and so has taken steps to ensure that the curriculum reflects diversity. Consequently, pupils readily celebrate difference as a way of discovering excellence in both self and others. Leaders are determined that, as a result of the Christian vision, all are treated with dignity and respect. Bullying is exceptionally rare and there are robust processes to deal with any incidents. The school's approach to relationships education engenders respect for all and actively promotes equality. Pupils develop healthy and respectful relationships and cherish themselves as wonderfully made.

Worship, in whole school and form groupings, reinforces the school's Christian vision and 'Be' values. Well-planned and resourced opportunities provide a focus for the spiritual growth of all. Worship is invitational and inclusive and includes a variety of styles. Pupils and staff engage well during worship. Worship is resourced using biblical material that enables pupils to develop their understanding of the teachings of Jesus and elements of Christian belief and practice. Pupils' understanding of the Christian belief in the Holy Trinity is not secure. Pupils help to lead, plan and evaluate worship and, as a result, are able to influence improvements. For example, if pupils have a concern involving an ethical issue they are able to lead an act of worship to highlight this. The quality of worship is improving over time as a result of actions arising from evaluations and the strong support from the parish community.

RE has a very high priority within the life of the school as a direct result of the importance placed on it by leaders. The curriculum creatively reflects the Christian vision. It enables pupils to understand the global character of Christianity as well as providing rich opportunities to learn about a range of religions and worldviews. Pupils relish the opportunities RE offers to explore their own convictions and views. This is a direct result of the effective support and challenge offered by teachers. Skilled questioning and the effective use of high quality resources enable pupils to demonstrate a deep understanding of religious and philosophical concepts. In turn they are able to apply this knowledge both within and beyond RE. Systems of assessment are highly effective and enable pupils to make significant gains in their understanding over time. RE is very well led with a high priority given to staff development. This, in turn, leads to strong and improving practice across the school. Staff are involved in leading training and development in RE across the region. The support given to other schools, and in the development of future teachers of RE, is innovative. This includes including delivering staff training and leading trainee teacher professional development in partnership with the Hild-Bede Trust.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

Over time and across all age groups, the quality of teaching and learning in RE is consistently good and a significant proportion is excellent. As a result, outcomes in terms of both attainment and progress in Key Stage 3 and GCSE RE are consistently high and compare favourably with other core subjects in school. All pupils take GCSE RE and a significant number continue their studies at A level. The requirements of the *Statement of Entitlement for RE* are successfully met. Those with special educational needs, the disadvantaged and the more able are enabled to flourish in RE. The school's systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in RE are well-developed and enable targeted support to be given in order to sustain and further develop effective practice.

Principal	John Crowe
Inspector's name and number	David Tait 887