

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Chester-le-street Church of England Primary School	
Address	Hilda Park, Chester-le-Street, DH2 2JT

School vision

Let all that you do be done in Love - Corinthians 16:14

School strengths

- Pupils are known and loved as the unique person they are within this warmly welcoming school. Pupils and families are supported to flourish through the positive way the vision is lived out.
- The Christian vision, centred on love, enhances relationships and creates a culture where pupils and adults actively care for one another.
- Positive partnerships with the local church, diocese and local community, enhance the flourishing of all within the school.
- Worship is a valued space for both pupils and adults to worship together as one. This enhances opportunities for spiritual development.
- Leaders are enthusiastic about religious education (RE). Thoughtful planning and connectivity within the curriculum enables pupils to strengthen their understanding of world faiths.

Areas for development

- Develop the way leaders, including governors monitor the extent to which the vision is rooted in the Christian story. This is to ensure that the vision drives all decisions and actions, enabling pupils and adults to flourish.
- Strengthen opportunities for pupils to challenge injustice within, and beyond, their local community. This is to further develop opportunities to be agents of change.
- Enhance the way that spirituality is an implicit part of the curriculum. This is to enrich opportunities for spiritual flourishing.

Inspection findings

Chester-le-Street’s Christian vision is rooted in love and permeates throughout the school. This creates a welcoming, inclusive and nurturing environment where families and staff share heart-warming experiences of belonging, support and fresh starts. The school has been on a journey of improvement and change over recent years. Strong partnerships with the local church, diocese and local authority have provided valuable support for leaders’ ambitious drive for the school.

There is a passionate, vision-led, determination by all leaders to meet the needs of their pupils and community. This vision, grounded in leaders’ understanding of God’s love, guides decision and actions, such as the creation of an additional support base and school nursery. Leaders seek to support the whole family as well as individual pupils. Parents appreciate the open door policy and how they feel support is readily

available and unconditional. The school's commitment to the nurture and support for the community they serve is ever-present. Governors are active in school, creating a shared approach to school improvement and the flourishing of the wider school community. However, systems to robustly monitor the impact of the rooting of the vision in the Christian story are less developed.

Leaders' understanding of the centrality of God's love is exemplified by the positive culture and caring relationships which are at the school's heart. This culture results in high standards of behaviour. Everyone feels valued and capable of seeking help when needed. Their 'one size does not fit all' approach is core to this. Leaders ensure those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those deemed to be vulnerable have opportunities to flourish alongside their peers. Each pupil is known and loved for who they are. As a result pupils with SEND engage meaningfully in their learning and with the wider school offer.

Collective worship is a highly valued and uplifting part of the day which invites those gathered to learn, reflect and respond. Partnership work with the diocese has enhanced the planning of collective worship and developed teacher confidence. Each week is carefully planned in collaboration with local clergy and pupils. Within the regular pattern of worship, a different value is covered each week. This further enhances pupils' understanding of the school vision and its associated values. The familiarity of routine within worship and the sensitive support of staff, provides a climate of warmth and inclusivity. Opportunities for spiritual development are present through careful questioning, the sharing of thoughts and moments for reflection and prayer. Pupils put the values discussed in worship into practice. 'Values in Practice' (VIPs) celebrate pupils' actions which are directly linked to the school's Christian foundation. This strengthens the way that the vision and its associated values are lived out.

Moments of spirituality are present within different aspects of school life. 'Big questions' are present across the curriculum and act as springboards for discussion and to encourage a sense of awe and wonder. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about the reflection areas within each classroom which are both engaging and thought provoking. Leaders accurately evaluate that they are 'on a journey' to further develop a shared understanding of spirituality. Consequently, opportunities for the spiritual flourishing of staff and pupils are less developed.

Leaders prioritise the positive mental health and wellbeing of both pupils and staff. They talk about the 'need to love yourself to be able to love others as well'. This sentiment is reflected in the introduction of several complementary initiatives to promote mental health. These build upon the already strong relationships present across school. Leaders actively seek to support staff workload, fostering a culture of respect and feeling valued. Parents talk about how the mental health support provided and the school's vision and values impact positively on pupil's behaviour.

The school has a clear vision-led connection with their community. This means that charities supported by the school often have contextual importance and resonate with the school, deepening their significance. The schools 'eco committee' work with local partners to become an environmentally friendly school. They organise different events such as litter picks. The curriculum offers opportunities for pupils to encounter role models as advocates for change such as Martin Luther King. The recent introduction of a weekly collective worship based on current events in the world supports pupils' developing understanding of justice. Currently, pupils' understanding of the concept of justice is at an early stage. As a result they have an awareness of injustice however they have less understanding of how they can be agents of change.

Staff and pupils value RE which is enthusiastically led. Partnership work with the diocese to develop the RE curriculum enhances the way it meets pupils' needs. Carefully planned training and development opportunities reflect leaders' strategic priorities and feedback from teaches. This enhances staff knowledge in areas such as teachings in the Bible. Alongside this, teachers are proactive in seeking individual support and guidance from the diocese, local church and school leaders. These opportunities have increased teacher confidence and expertise in the delivery of RE.

Creative elements such as art and drama enrich the RE curriculum. Pupils talk about the importance of creativity within RE and how it supports them to understand the beliefs and views of others. Invited visitors to the school provide opportunities for pupils to encounter and discuss different world religions as a living faith. This strengthens their understanding. RE is enriched through meaningful connections with other subjects. For instance in Year 3 pupils learn about world religions as part of their ‘a world of difference’ topic. The RE curriculum is carefully planned and pupils have the opportunity to explore texts and consider challenging questions. As this is at an early stage, impact is not yet clear.

The inspection findings indicate that Chester-le-Street Church of England Primary School is living up to its foundations as a Church school.

Information

Inspection date	09 February 2024	URN	114213	
VA/VC/Academy	VC	Pupils on roll	279	
Diocese	Durham			
MAT/Federation				
Headteacher	Rachel Butler			
Chair	Barbara Wells			
Inspector	Alice Hassall		No.	C.23/24