

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Barlaston CE(C) First School

Address Broughton Crescent, Barlaston, Stoke-on-Trent, United Kingdom, ST12 9DB

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Overall grade **Good**

The impact of collective worship **Good**

School's vision

Let your light shine through family, friendship and faith. 'Let your light shine' Matthew 5:16

Key findings

- The exceptionally committed leadership and staff team are key to raising pupils' hopes and aspirations, enabling them to make good progress. The vision and its biblical underpinning are well-known and inform decision-making for the whole school community. God and sharing his love are at the heart of this school.
- Sensitive support is very generously provided to all children and families, especially those that are more vulnerable. Adults flourish as they support each other and let their light shine in this Christian community. Monitoring of the vision does not effectively focus on impact.
- Pupils are engaged in a rich and effectively led religious education curriculum which supports pupils' character development and enables them to flourish. This includes a commitment to global partnerships, but equipping pupils to act as agents of change is an area for further development.
- Collective worship is enriched by the support of the clergy team and the pupils, parents and staff greatly value this. Many pupils lead prayers for their peers, but are less confident at leading worship.
- Pupils behave very well and relationships between all members of this school community are extremely supportive. Pupils talk about how they resolve conflict by letting their light shine and being kind to others.

Areas for development

- Enhance systems for monitoring of the vision in all aspects of the improvement journey to ensure that the vision more explicitly drives the strategic direction of the school.
- Further extend pupils' understanding of global issues. This is to enhance character development and equip pupils to act as courageous advocates for social justice.
- Enable pupils, as well as adults, to engage in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship in order to further improve 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

Barlaston Church of England First School is a vibrant, caring community where pupils are well known and supported by every member of the staff team. The school's vision as an inclusive Church school values everyone and allows all to let their light shine. The vision and values are communicated in various forms and the pupils understand the importance of the distinctly Christian values as they live each day in school. Adults consistently flourish as part of this community as they live out the vision on a daily basis. Family, friendship and faith are evident in all aspects of the school. Current monitoring systems do not effectively evaluate the impact of the vision on this school community.

Leaders put the Christian vision at the heart of this Church school in all decisions. This ensures that all pupils make good progress and achieve their aspirations. The staff team, led by the passionate headteacher, is extremely strong in their support and love for each other. Staff and pupils appreciate the depth of pastoral support offered as part of their partnership with the Church, which supports wellbeing and promotes flourishing. The parents spoke very highly of the staff team and commented that this is 'their second family'. Parents fully understand the vision. They have written to the school, thanking the staff for the way they live out the vision and let their light shine through their kindness. They led the school response to the Ukraine crisis and raised funds for the British Red Cross. During the pandemic a number of pupils, supported by their families, demonstrated compassionate action. One pupil collected over a thousand teddy bears that she labelled and left around the village. Other pupils then found the teddies, which spread light and hope during the lockdown period. Parents praised the compassionate and practical support given for those who found themselves in vulnerable situations during the pandemic, stating that 'the school could not have done any more to help.' Staff and pupil wellbeing and spirituality are high on the leadership agenda. Through close working and good communications, the school family is supported and flourishing.

Prayer and reflection are central to school life. Examples include the lighting of candles which allows pupils to pray in silence at various times of the day or children regularly leading prayers at the end of collective worship. Opportunities for spiritual development are carefully planned in the curriculum. Reflection areas are well-used. For example, pupils respond creatively to a reflective space which focuses on the words of the vision, 'Let your light shine.' Pupils benefit from a rich and well-planned curriculum. Staff approach class teaching, supported by the vision, with a 'can do' attitude. They share subject knowledge regularly and this collegiate approach ensures that staff feel valued and are able to flourish professionally. The school garden is used by pupils to consider the wonders of God's creation and reflect on this. Learning and meeting in the outdoor classroom makes a rich contribution to spiritual development. Pupils say that they are looking forward to developing this further.

Pupils gain a strong understanding of global issues. Before the pandemic, leaders of the school and Church visited Kibera in Kenya as part of a project, with the Lichfield Diocese, to support the charity Feed the Hungry. Pupils and their families spent time gathering stationary to take out on their visit. The staff had the pleasure of teaching in Kibera and there was also a live video link between the two schools. This enabled pupils to see each other and form a bond to build upon as they developed their partnership. Further visits have been limited by the pandemic. However, during Lent this year, pupils have created 'Kindness Kits' that have been sent to Kibera to support the children and their families. The school is very keen to develop this link further to support pupils in understanding their position in the wider world as global citizens.

Behaviour of pupils is good, with mutual respect for others evident at social times as well as in lessons. One pupil commented, 'This is a kind school, children encourage me, and I encourage them.' Pupils apply what they have understood from the values of the school to their daily lives. Each classroom has a pet that pupils care for, including guinea pigs, rabbits and a snake. This, along with growing plants, helps them understand beliefs about caring for God's creation.

RE has a prominent place within the curriculum. The school has created their own integrated scheme of work, based upon the local agreed syllabus, which also reflects the school vision. The RE curriculum is very effectively led by a passionate teacher. Pupils consider key religious concepts from multiple perspectives, they compare religions and answer the big questions. Pupils are generally enthused by RE. They talk about how it helps them to think about people of other faiths and to consider divergence of religious thought. As a result, pupils speak about different cultures and traditions and how their knowledge of these promotes understanding, acceptance and respect of others. Pupils are also able to make their own life choices and to find their place in the world in the safe and non-judgmental space provided.

Collective worship is inclusive and invitational. It plays a central role in deepening pupils' understanding of the vision and what this looks like in daily life. Pupils explain that exploring Christian values helps them to see what letting their light shine looks like. Key themes developed at the start of the week are explored in worship. This leads to pupils taking action or changing how they might do something. They also have an age-appropriate understanding of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They enjoy worship and are keen to be more involved in planning, evaluating and leading it for the whole school. The very strong relationships with the Church and their involvement in leading worship regularly are also contributing to the success of the vision in supporting all to flourish. Pupils are inspired by the teachings of Jesus and are encouraged to reflect on what the parables and stories of Jesus teach them. They said that the parable of the Good Samaritan encourages them to look after each other in the playground. Parents spoke about how much they enjoy family worship on Fridays where everyone celebrates how they have let their light shine during the past week.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	20 June 2022	URN	124233
Date of previous inspection	07 May 2015		
School status	VC	NOR	141
Name of Multi Academy Trust or Federation			
Diocese or Methodist Circuit	Lichfield		
Headteacher	Mandy Clarey		
Proportion of pupils deemed to be disadvantaged	Below National Average		
Proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	In Line with National Average		
Additional significant information (if needed)			
Inspector's name	Sara Goddard	No.	0976