



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Preston St Matthew’s Church of England Primary Academy

Address New Hall Lane, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 5XB

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**

The effectiveness of religious education (RE) **Good**

School’s vision

Inspired by Jesus’ words (Matthew 5: 1-12), we strive to promote academic, emotional and spiritual growth in a Christian environment for all members of our school family. We can all ‘**be blessed by God, be happy and aspire to be...**’

Key findings

- School leaders have developed a clear Christian vision, firmly rooting its biblical basis in the unique context of this diverse and vibrant school. It shapes some, but not all, written policies and development plans.
- The aspirational Christian vision drives a whole school culture of high hopes and expectations for all pupils across the curriculum. As a result, all pupils are flourishing. Opportunities for spiritual development are less developed.
- The school’s Christian vision underpins highly supportive personal relationships at all levels. Pupils and adults feel safe to express their thoughts and ideas, leading to a significant impact on wellbeing and self-worth.
- In this multi-faith community, collective worship is invitational and inclusive. It has a notable impact on pupils’ character development. Opportunities for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate worship are in the early stages of development.
- The religious education (RE) curriculum is well planned, enabling all pupils to develop a growing understanding of Christianity and other major world faiths and beliefs.

Areas for development

- Ensure the school’s Christian vision clearly shapes all written policies and development plans so that leaders at all levels can articulate how it specifically underpins their work.
- Develop a shared understanding of spirituality and use this to plan a range of rich and relevant opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum.
- Enable pupils to take more responsibility for planning, leading and evaluating worship to deepen their engagement and inspire creativity.

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

Inspired by a renewed and clear Christian vision, pupils and adults now flourish at St Matthew's. Following a significant period of instability, the appointment of the current headteacher marks a recent turnaround for the school. A highly skilled deputy head strengthens the senior team. With staff and governors, the headteacher has quickly developed a cohesive Christian vision, designed to serve a diverse local community. Taken from the Sermon on the Mount in St Matthew's Gospel, the vision, 'be blessed by God, be happy and aspire to be...', inspires leaders' actions. Despite challenging circumstances, leaders have made bold, ethical decisions to raise expectations and life chances. To secure its future as a Church school, St Matthew's recently joined the local diocesan multi-academy trust. Partnerships with the trust and local diocese are strong and mutually supportive. School governors have a secure and deepening understanding of their monitoring role. A current major building project is designed to improve significantly the school's learning and social environment. It symbolises the positive and aspirational changes taking place at St Matthew's.

Leaders put personal relationships at the heart of decision making, promoting a deep commitment to hopefulness and mutual support. This is a thread of excellence woven through school life. It has sustained the school community during challenging times, enabling pupils and adults to thrive with confidence and creativity. The vision now shapes several school policies. For example, based on Christian virtues of redemption and forgiveness, the school's behaviour policy has changed radically. Pupils now use school values to reflect wisely upon their actions towards others and behaviour in school is good. However, the vision does not yet shape all written policies and development plans, especially those driven by middle leaders.

In line with its vision, school partnerships with St Matthew's church are strong. The vicar and curate regularly contribute to school life. Staff worked with the local church during lockdown to support the community, delivering food parcels to local families. In recognition, the school was awarded the Mayor's City Hero Award in September 2021. Parents value compassion within school. 'Staff teach my child to be a good person,' said one parent.

The school's aspirational vision drives courageous curriculum decisions. School leaders, supported by an increasingly confident staff, identified an historic culture of low academic expectations. To address this, leaders wisely prioritised personal, social and health education (PSHE). Leaders wrote a bespoke PSHE curriculum, strongly focused on promoting positive life choices and study skills. This tailored approach plays a significant role in raising pupil expectations and resilience, resulting in pupils flourishing in their learning. Parents speak movingly about the impact of staff in developing the confidence of their children. Enthusiastic middle leaders take an active role in curriculum development. However, leaders have not yet secured a collective understanding of spirituality and how to plan opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum.

In line with the vision of promoting academic and emotional growth, support for vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties is focused and inclusive. The 'inclusion team' of school staff effectively supports pupils and families. Leaders take bold funding decisions and target support successfully. Initiatives, such as resourcing a school nurture base and effective speech and language programmes, make a significant contribution to pupil achievement. Pupil language ambassadors translate and support pupils and families new to English. They are one example of how the school builds pupil confidence and promotes inclusion. Explicitly linking attendance with aspiration, leaders proactively challenge historic issues of high pupil absence. They welcome families at the school gates every morning and approach issues with honesty and compassion. As a result, pupil attendance is improving.

Inspired by the Christian vision of emotional growth, leaders prioritise mental health and wellbeing. Pupils trust school adults and know whom to approach if they are worried or sad. Staff feel they have a voice. Motivated by school values of hope and respect, pupils have opportunities to engage in global issues such as fair trade. A pupil ethos group leads the school in social action projects such as toilet twinning. As a result, pupils understand they can challenge injustice. The school is particularly passionate about making changes that support diversity. For example, following a national issue raised by a pupil, the school signed up to the Halo Code, upholding cultural identity in school. School policies

endorse the latest Church school guidance in valuing loving relationships and respecting others. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic about their caring and diverse school family. ‘It would be boring if we were all the same,’ said one pupil.

Firmly rooted in the Christian vision, collective worship is central to school life. In this school community, where a large majority of pupils are from faiths other than Christianity, collective worship is invitational and inclusive. No parents choose to withdraw their child. Pupils routinely encounter a variety of Anglican traditions and respond enthusiastically to elements of prayer, song and reflection. Collective worship is led well by a variety of adults from school, church and the wider Christian community. During the pandemic, leaders moved their worship online, committed to keep alive the spiritual and prayer life of the school. Collective worship themes have a strong biblical basis, linked to school values. As a result, pupils describe how Jesus’ teachings shape their actions in showing care and respect for others. Pupils value opportunities to reflect spiritually in the classroom and within school prayer spaces. They actively take part in collective worship, though routine opportunities for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate worship are not yet in place.

RE has a high priority in school and is well led, resulting in a thoughtfully constructed and sequenced curriculum. Enhanced by regular diocesan training, the experienced RE lead offers knowledgeable support for colleagues. Curriculum planning upholds the Church of England Statement of Entitlement, though the latest guidance is not yet fully reflected in the RE policy. Whilst maintaining the central role of Christianity, the school vision inspires teachers to plan meaningful opportunities to explore the range of faiths in school. As a result, pupils say they enjoy RE and feel valued. Effective teaching leads to good pupil knowledge and engagement with religious texts. For example, whilst studying significant women in the Old Testament, pupils show a mature understanding of the actions of Moses’s mother.

St Matthew’s is a place of hope and compassion. Throughout the school community there is a tangible sense of renewed purpose and excitement for the future. St Matthew’s passionately lives out its vision: ‘Be blessed by God, be happy and aspire to be...’.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

Teaching and learning in RE is good across the school. A rich and engaging curriculum stimulates creative teaching and pupils respond enthusiastically. All pupils, including those from vulnerable groups and with learning difficulties, are well supported and show their learning in a variety of imaginative ways. Whole school assessment processes are embedded and a portfolio of work supports teacher judgements. As a result, pupils flourish in RE and make good progress.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	16 June 2022	URN	148904
Date of previous inspection	23 April 2015		
School status	Primary academy with nursery, inspected as VA	NOR	462
Name of MAT/Federation	Cidari Multi-Academy Trust		
Diocese	Blackburn		
Headteacher	Mark Mackley		
Pupil profile	The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is above national averages.		
	The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)	The school has experienced significant difficulties and several changes in leadership since the last SIAMS inspection. The current headteacher was appointed in 2019 and the school joined a diocesan multi-academy trust in February 2022.		
Inspector’s name	Sue Mawdsley	No.	930