

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

<b>St Thomas Church of England VA Primary School, Halliwell</b>	
Address	Eskrick Street, Halliwell, Bolton, BL1 3JB
School vision	
<p>Our community united in love and learning where all can shine.          'Let your light shine.'          This is based on Matthew 5:16</p>	
School strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Christian vision is promoted and celebrated relentlessly in this school. It has a clear impact on the confidence, behaviour and achievements of pupils.</li> <li>The broad, rich curriculum is bespoke to the context and needs of pupils. High quality support and guidance are available to pupils who experience barriers to learning. Parents say the result is transformational as they see their children progress and flourish.</li> <li>Collective worship has been highly developed through a mutually beneficial partnership with the local church community. It has a profound effect on spiritual development and pupils lead worship with confidence and pride.</li> <li>The Christian vision and underlying values, have a significant impact on the quality of relationships in school. These are lived out on a daily basis. This is witnessed in the caring manner pupils relate to each other and to those in need.</li> <li>Effective leadership of religious education (RE) and the productive partnership with the diocese, ensure staff competently deliver a well-structured curriculum. This gives pupils a good understanding of Christianity and a range of world religions.</li> </ul>	
Areas for development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To fully embed the new RE syllabus. This is to ensure the RE curriculum allows pupils to deepen their understanding of a range of worldviews.</li> </ul>	
Inspection findings	
<p>St Thomas' Primary School is the hub of the local community. Visitors receive a warm, friendly welcome and feel enveloped by the distinctly Christian ethos. The school's well-established Christian vision is promoted through beautiful artwork and vibrant displays. This ensures it exists as a living reality, which is depicted in images around school of pupils turning words into deeds. The vision is carefully chosen and used to address the needs of this diverse community. The biblical roots underpinning the vision are highly pertinent. Consequently, pupils and adults strive to reach their potential, flourish and 'let their lights shine'. School leaders, including governors, have an impressive knowledge of the families they serve. They care deeply about every member of their school family and go 'above and beyond' to allow them to flourish. As a result, pupils leave St Thomas' well-prepared for the next phase of education. Church youth leaders praise the conduct and positive attitude of past pupils, recognising the impact the vision has on them.</p>	

Curriculum development is driven by the Christian vision. The ‘let your light shine’ curriculum is crafted to ensure learning is rich, purposeful and highly relevant to pupils’ lives. The ‘11 Before 11’ initiative involves pupils designing curriculum content. They choose learning experiences including, studying the stars at night. They visit an observatory and wonder at the night sky on overnight visits to the countryside. Such opportunities weave seamlessly through every curriculum area and allow pupils to soak in the world around them. They contribute to a gradual deepening of spirituality. The vision ensures this is a highly inclusive school. Staff act with determination and compassion to ensure pupils fulfil their potential. High quality support is in place for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders invest in outside expertise where needed, for example, regular speech and language therapy. As a result, pupils progress from individual starting points and succeed.

Collective worship is a clear expression of the Christian vision. It is highly inclusive, while reflecting the school’s Anglican foundation. Worship enables exploration of the vision’s biblical roots and guides pupils in their daily lives. Opportunities for prayer and reflection allow pupils to consider their own beliefs. They discuss how prayer is used to ask for courage for those suffering the effects of war. Pupils take great joy in singing and share worship songs with the church congregation. This provides ongoing opportunities to deepen spirituality. In the Early Years, pupils learn Bible stories through ‘Wiggle Worship’. The strength of the partnership with the local church community is valued. Clergy lead weekly school worship in church and parishioners support the ‘Ethos Group’ to plan and lead their own worship. Consequently, pupils and adults flourish spiritually. The annual ‘let your light shine’ festival is a highlight for the school family. They gather to recognise individual achievements, which evidence the ongoing impact of the vision. Church members help pupils celebrate significant events, such as the King’s coronation, demonstrating the importance of living well together.

Pupils say all are valued in school and everyone is free to make their own choices. The vision and values drive the behaviour policy with high expectations of everyone. As a result, the behaviour of pupils is exemplary. ‘Wellbeing Champions’ look out for those who feel sad or lonely. They approach peers on the ‘buddy bench’ to ask them to play. These caring relationships lead to happy children and harmonious social times. Pastoral systems support pupils with their mental health. This includes access to a trained counsellor and daily check-ins for vulnerable pupils. Several staff are trained in mental health first aid. Pupils feel safe and cared for in school. Staff are happy to work here. They draw on each other’s strengths and offer support during difficult times. They say leaders’ ‘open door’ policy supports them with their wellbeing. They are encouraged to utilise and develop their interests and talents, for example creating art displays, and flourish alongside their pupils.

The vision and values result in an active culture of justice and responsibility. Pupils have a keen sense of injustice and are not afraid to take courageous actions to protect others. They temper this with their considered approach to forgiveness saying, ‘Christians believe, Jesus forgave those who were against him.’ Pupils enjoy taking on leadership roles in school. ‘Agents of Change’ improve the natural environment by litter picking in the local area. They improve the lives of others by donating food parcels to families in need. An established link with a school in South Africa gives pupils an awareness of inequality in the world. Realising some people go hungry, they take action to reduce food waste at lunchtimes. Pupils instigate their own social action projects, raising money for a local charity by baking cakes and making friendship bracelets. This demonstrates how they develop an individual sense of responsibility towards others.

Subject leadership of RE is strong and the RE curriculum is effective. Staff have been well-supported to introduce a new syllabus by the diocese. As a result, staff, including those new to the school, teach RE with confidence, a good subject knowledge and enthusiasm. This means pupils build up a solid

knowledge of the key elements of Christianity. Younger pupils begin to learn about the concept of creation through artwork and water play. The understanding of Christianity deepens as pupils study key events in the New Testament. They link the Easter story to core concept of salvation. They say Christians believe, 'Jesus is their saviour, he was sacrificed on the cross.' The diversity of the RE curriculum gives pupils a wide knowledge of a range of world religions. They explore similarities and differences between faiths with interest and respect, comparing the ways Christians and Muslims pray.

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good. Productive engagement with the local diocese results in a well-structured curriculum. This allows pupils to build up their knowledge sequentially. They relate the school's Christian values to biblical events, recognising the value of courage in 'Daniel in the Lion's Den'. An effective system of monitoring is in place. This is closely linked to improvement priorities and staff development. Professional development opportunities, including sharing good practice with other schools, ensures the subject knowledge of staff is up to date. Clear assessment procedures provide a clear picture of learning and attainment, which demonstrates how well pupils progress over time. Visiting speakers from local faith communities and visits to places of worship contribute to pupils' understanding of world faiths. Teaching around different worldviews is in the early stages of development.

The inspection findings indicate that St Thomas' Primary School is living up to its foundation as a church school.

Information			
Inspection date	24 June 2024	URN	105218
VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary aided	Pupils on roll	369
Diocese	Manchester		
MAT/Federation			
Headteacher	Abigail Fielden		
Chair	Janet Shallaker-Gill		
Inspector	Anne Barker	No.	959