

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Margaret's Church of England Primary School, Toppesfield	
Address	Church Lane, Toppesfield, Halstead, CO9 4DS
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
<p>At St. Margaret's Church of England Primary School we seek to develop wisdom, encourage aspiration and promote dignity and acceptance enabling our respectful children to live a life giving back to the community.</p> <p>John 10:10: 'Live life in all its fullness.'</p> <p>Aspiration Wisdom Endurance</p>
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Christian vision is carefully crafted, well-known and understood by all. It permeates the life of the school and drives improvement. • Leaders are passionately committed to creating a strong learning community, which raises aspirations and where all can flourish. • Well planned collective worship, supported by a strong relationship with the local church, is inclusive and engaging. Pupils are highly involved, but leadership is in the early stages of development. • Spirituality is well-defined and pupils have many occasions for reflective experiences throughout the school day. • The schools vision inspires pupils to give to charities and act with kindness to others. However, further opportunities for courageous advocacy are underdeveloped.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop opportunities for pupils to independently plan and lead worship to enhance their spiritual development. • Further empower pupils to engage in social actions in order to become courageous advocates for change locally, nationally and globally.



Inspection findings

This good Church school has a well-established Christian vision which is integral to its strategic direction and daily work. It is prominently displayed to make it meaningful and well-known by all. Principles of aspiration, wisdom and endurance are understood by everyone in the community. The whole school is motivated to live life in all its fullness. Consequently, pupils are confident and supported in their learning, growth and development.

Informed by the vision, leaders are driven to provide excellent direction. Their well considered choices are supported by governors. They rightly explain that 'the vision is who we are, what we do and why we do it'. Leaders are aware of the isolation of this rural, village school and this has informed their decisions. These include a bespoke curriculum based on big questions, an inspiring religious education (RE) scheme and opportunities to broaden cultural awareness. Professional development is a priority, resulting in staff accessing many opportunities as their skills are nurtured. Partnerships are strong, including exceptional links with the local village church. Imaginative services for festivals and inclusive holiday activities enable pupils to feel part of the wider Christian community. Membership of the Colne Valley Consortium enables the sharing of professional development, resources and moderation activities. It supports staff and leaders, therefore enhancing wellbeing. Parents, families and the community are very supportive of the work of the school. Relationships throughout are welcoming, kind and respectful. Each person understands they are valued.

The Christian vision drives aspiration so wisdom, knowledge and skills are developed for life. Learning experiences encourage curiosity and determination, challenging all, including the most confident. Pupils are inquisitive and make good progress. The vision is at the heart of planning, teaching and subsequent learning. Staff support and enhance experiences so pupils are challenged and thrive. The encouragement of curiosity and ambition, enables those of all abilities to respond positively and flourish. Big questions inspire pupils to be curious about the wider world and begin their role as global citizens. Those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are supported to achieve their best and succeed. A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, often provided by pupils themselves, are well supported and valued highly.

Spiritual flourishing is central to learning and development, with the aim of living life to its fullest. A beautiful reflection garden was recently opened by the bishop. It features Christian symbols, thoughtful activities and opportunities to work with nature. Gardening activities encourage connection to the environment and opportunities to experience moments of mindfulness. Pupils value the chance to use this area as well as the nurture room for thought and contemplation. Collective worship offers all special experiences to pray, think and reflect. Opportunities for spiritual development occur across the wider curriculum. Quality time to experience wonder and awe is provided, including at regular off-site forest school lessons.

Pastoral care is a strength. The friendly atmosphere is treasured. Parents quite rightly praise the caring family feel and 'phenomenal' pro-active support given. Close ties to the local church, as well as great communication between school and home, are also valued. Indeed, careful consideration is given to all aspects of their work including catering specifically for individual needs. Christian values including aspiration, wisdom and endurance arise from the vision which permeates school life. During the pandemic, leaders offered practical and emotional support. This ranged from providing equipment and academic advice to virtual worship. Staff promote good mental health and encourage the development of helpful coping strategies. The positive behaviour policy is built on consistency and emphasises respect. Consequently, behaviour is extremely good. Pupils are considerate and caring. They are allowed opportunities to nurture and encourage the youngest students. Good transition

arrangements result in newcomers being quickly welcomed and becoming independent and confident members of the school community. They know how to reconcile after disagreements and stay safe on and off line. They understand that bullying in all forms is unacceptable.

Pupils have a sense of social justice. They want to bring hope and make a difference to the world. As enthusiastic supporters of charities, their knowledge of topical events inspire their own fundraising activities such as 'Jumpers for Java'. The experience of welcoming Ukrainian children moved pupils to make and despatch personalised bags at Christmas. Specific opportunities are designed to develop an appreciation of diversity in society, through big questions such as 'Refugee or Evacuee?' Adults compassionately support all, accepting and embracing difference.

Collective worship is invitational and inclusive, supported by pupil leaders. It is meticulously planned, using the vision and following the church year. It is understood and relevant to the lives of pupils. There is clear structure and routine, with opportunities for prayer and thought. Carefully considered displays and Christian symbols such as candles are prominent. Pupils are positively involved with worship but their opportunities to lead are in the early stages of development. Visiting the local church for seasonal celebrations as well as special services create a sense of awe and wonder. This close association is highly valued, with effective links made between school and church. Links are made between learning and Christian traditions. Adults lead collective worship that is creative and memorable. Pupils are respectful and reflective. It inspires personal responses, including the writing of bespoke prayers.

RE is well planned, engaging and given sufficient curriculum time. It balances the teaching of Christianity with world faiths. Dedicated leaders facilitate staff development to ensure effective practice is widely shared. The new scheme is engaging and demands a range of responses which means all can succeed. Individual and class books demonstrate thoughtfulness about learning. They rightly display thoughtfulness when explaining their views behind the words 'Peace be upon you'. Assessment and feedback ensure new ideas are understood and progress is made. Pupils are proud of their work. They consider RE an important subject and enjoy the opportunities for creativity and discussion. Christianity is recognised as a global faith and pupils are encouraged to discover more about different world religions.

Information			
School	St Margaret's Church of England Primary School, Toppesfield	Inspection date	14 July 2023
URN	115071	VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary controlled
Diocese/District	Chelmsford	Pupils on roll	71
Headteacher	Stephanie Newland		
Chair of Governors	Helen Kent-Jackson		
Inspector	Lynne Golding	No.	2124