

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

<b>Alnwick St Michael's Church of England VA Primary School</b>	
Address	Howling Lane, Alnwick, NE66 1DJ
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
'Achieving and growing together', based on the parable of the sower: "And some seed fell on good ground. This seed grew and made 100 times more grain." (Luke 8:8)
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Michael's is a caring Christian community, with its vision of achieving and growing at the heart of decision making. Leaders ensure that pupils and adults are nurtured to achieve their full potential.</li> <li>• Deeply embedded values of respect and perseverance inspire everyone to go the extra mile. Consequently, there is a clear commitment to inclusion when meeting the needs of pupils.</li> <li>• Pupils are sensitive to the needs of each other, as well as the local and global community. They act as courageous advocates for individuals, communities and the environment. However, spiritual development opportunities are less well developed.</li> <li>• Collective worship offers the whole school community a special time of reflection and unity. Pupils value formal prayers, however, informal opportunities are underdeveloped.</li> <li>• Pupils experience thought provoking, creative and appropriate programmes of learning in religious education (RE). Leaders recognise the need to enhance their planning to ensure all pupils flourish.</li> </ul>
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine the school's understanding of, and approach to, spirituality. This will enable more effective spiritual development opportunities for the pupils to benefit from.</li> <li>• Enhance the rich learning experiences provided to the children, so pupils can develop a greater understanding of religious diversity.</li> <li>• Develop a deeper understanding of formal and informal prayer. This will ensure that it becomes a natural and valued culture of the school, further enhancing pupils' spirituality.</li> </ul>

## Inspection findings

St Michael's is an inclusive Church of England primary school that works hard each day to transform lives. At its heart, is its Christian vision of 'Achieving and Growing Together'. This is underpinned by the parable of the sower, Luke 8:4-16. Governors, staff, pupils and parents all refer to the school as the 'good soil' that enables everyone to grow and flourish. Leaders make decisions with compassion, humility and integrity. This is supported by committed governors and colleagues who are passionate about the wellbeing of all in the extended school family. Consequently, leaders make careful and courageous decisions, in the best interests of all and faithful to the vision. Governors are passionate about the school and have an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development. This is due to their regular involvement in the school. The board are aware of the need to further develop the way they monitor and evaluate church school distinctiveness. Leaders are supported through a range of partnerships. Access to Diocesan training and networks is regular and impactful.

The school vision inspires curriculum innovation, with its focus on achieving and growing the whole child. Receipt of the Music Mark and Artsmark Gold Awards are a testament to this success. Opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are keenly planned for within the taught curriculum. This highlights the leader's belief in their value to pupils, alongside academic achievement. However, their understanding of spirituality across the curriculum could be further enhanced. The myriad of visits and visitors offered are educational and accessible to all. These effectively broaden horizons and raise aspirations. Pupils, including the disadvantaged and vulnerable, progress well because they are known as individuals. Pastoral care is a strength. It ensures that all are nurtured and valued equally. Additional support and provision ensure barriers to learning are successfully addressed. Leaders have a wealth of experience, expertise and knowledge of the community. This is well used in overcoming barriers for pupils and their families. Parents are grateful for the school's sensitive and personal approach to wellbeing and progress.

Pupils' character and moral development are impressive. They behave well, are welcoming to all and are polite. They speak of the importance of empathy and acceptance. Following work on Anti-Bullying week, one pupil said, 'we would look after the bully too, there will be a reason they behave like that'. Engagement in projects such as the Young Leaders Award and Global Neighbours provides the framework for courageous advocacy. Pupils are actively involved in making positive changes for themselves and the world. As a result, they grow into well informed and caring citizens. Support for climate change initiatives and the local foodbank reflects the determination of all to challenge injustice and inequality. Attainment of the Fairtrade Fair Aware School and the John Muir awards, recognise the sustainability of pupils' actions. This is the positive impact of the school's vision.

Relationships are a palpable strength of this school community. Deeply respectful and affirming, they encourage and enable adults and pupils to 'achieve and grow together'. Older pupils show daily interest in the wellbeing of younger pupils. They play together and care for one another at break times. Pupils know how to be safe and happy because adults act as strong role models. Staff feel cared for and able to contribute to decision making. Pupils report that friendships sometimes break down, however, adults model forgiveness and compassion to enable effective resolution. Parents appreciate the accessibility of leaders and the positive impact of the vision and values of the school. A monthly coffee morning provides parents and carers with a window into the school as a valued worshipping community.


Rich, inspiring collective worship is a central part of each school day and reflects the vision. Pupils value it as a time to grow and be together. One Year 6 boy added, 'it is also a time



when we get to know God better'. Worship in school is carefully and creatively planned and evaluated by adults and pupils. It reflects the cycle of the Christian calendar, using prayers and traditions of the Anglican Church. Drama and music bring the word of God to life and make the messages meaningful and accessible. Pupils talk of how they are encouraged to reflect on Biblical stories and what they mean in their daily lives. The school prayer and Lord's Prayer are known and understood well by pupils. However, opportunities for informal prayer are underdeveloped. As a result, pupils have a limited understanding of the value and meaning of prayer. Themes for worship are based on agreed Christian values. These are explored and celebrated throughout the week and captured through star awards and certificates. Allowing pupils to lead worship every week fosters enthusiasm and develops their wider leadership skills. There is a rich partnership with St Michael's church. Pupils visit regularly to celebrate key festivals and there are also strong links with Mini-Michaels.

Pupils' enjoyment of RE fully reflects the school's vision for pupils to achieve together. The thoughtful approach to teaching is well sequenced. This enables pupils to explore their understanding of complex questions. Regular quizzes check on pupils' knowledge retention. More challenging 'gold' questions encourage a deeper, personal interpretation of their learning. Year 6 pupils explained how the parable of the great banquet had encouraged deep reflection. This led them to consider and discuss the needs of the poor in today's world. Leaders ensure that RE is treated as a core subject and follows the Diocesan syllabus. This is further supported by a resource called Understanding Christianity. The RE leader attends diocesan training and benefits from their advice. Consequently, it is in line with the Church of England Statement of Entitlement. Visits and visitors enrich RE. For example, pupils explored Islam through a visit to a mosque and on a Zoom call with Muslim children in Qatar.

St Michael's is a school where there is a tangible sense of hope for the future. This is because the vision of achieving and growing together is lived out daily. There is a relentless focus on aspiration and achievement, underpinned by Christian care for every individual within the community.

	The effectiveness of RE is		Good
	<p>The carefully planned RE curriculum is well taught. Most pupils, including those deemed to be disadvantaged, make good progress. A sharper focus on diversity between and within faiths and worldviews would improve progress further. Careful monitoring ensures that leaders have a clear picture of the strengths and areas for development. The cascading of this information has secured effective improvement.</p>		
Information			
School	Alnwick St Michael's Church of England VA Primary School	Inspection date	22 November 2022
URN	122280	VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary aided
Diocese/District	Durham;Newcastle	Pupils on roll	121
Headteacher	Gavin Johnston		
Chair of Governors	Katja Purvis		
Inspector	Darren Dudman	No.	2101