

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St George's Church of England Academy			
Address	Neasham Road, Middleton St George, Darlington, DL2 1LD		
Date of inspection	16 January 2020	Status of school	Primary academy inspected as VA Striving Ahead Generating Excellence MAT
Diocese	Durham	URN	138000

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Good
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Excellent
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Good

School context

St George's Church of England Academy is a primary school with 369 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national averages. St George's is part of the Striving Ahead Generating Excellence Multi Academy Trust (MAT). The pupil admissions number has recently increased from 315 to 420 to accommodate an anticipated growth in pupils.

The school's Christian vision

'Many Hearts Make a School'

Our vision is to provide an excellent, well-rounded education which celebrates academic, emotional and spiritual achievement and prepares everyone to fulfil their full potential in an inclusive environment in God's World.

Key findings

- St George's distinctively Christian vision is at the heart of all its work. It is rooted in God's love and compassion for all. The vision is lived out on a daily basis through very strong relationships. This creates a true sense of 'family'. All members of the St George's family feel nurtured, valued and cared for.
- The partnership between the local church community and the school is recognised by all to be unique and special. It provides support and sustainability, which are mutually beneficial for both the pupils and the congregation. It feels like the school is the church and the church is the school.
- Collective worship is central to the life of the school. Members of the church and staff work tirelessly together to ensure worship reflects the vision. Worship is inclusive, engaging and inspirational. Both adults and pupils talk enthusiastically about how it has impacted on, and at times, transformed their lives.
- Leaders, including directors, are committed to doing all that they can to ensure that all pupils can be the best they can be. The school provides a well-rounded education. It develops the whole child, enabling all to flourish both academically and spiritually, including in religious education (RE). The strategic role of directors is not sufficiently embedded to fully evaluate the work of St George's as a church school.

Areas for development

- Build on directors' strong knowledge and understanding of the school to ensure there is a coherent self-evaluation process in place, in order to lead to further school improvement.
- Enable pupils to engage in and initiate global partnerships, and social action projects, which challenge injustice and inequality in 'God's World'.

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

St George's is a good school with pockets of excellence as a Church school. The school's distinctively Christian vision is understood by all and runs throughout the work of the school. Leaders are focused on creating 'wonderful citizens ready for their journey in life' in God's world. A distinctive feature of the school is its approach to partnership working. Leaders see their vision at work in coming together as one to offer mutual support and guidance. This has involved working with neighbouring schools who are experiencing difficulties, growing the MAT to include another church school and developing the knowledge and skills of student teachers. The partnership between the school and the local church community is excellent. Key members of the church are instrumental in supporting the school to grow and develop as a deeply Christian school. They lead a wide range of projects which support the spiritual development of pupils. These include developing prayer space activities. They also work alongside pupils from the faith team to plan and deliver family worship. The headteacher walks the walk of the vision in her daily work. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher and leaders at all levels across the school. Directors are committed to their role and have a very good working knowledge of the school. They have, however, not fully monitored or evaluated the specific work of the school as a church school. Some policies and practices do reflect the school vision, however this not always made explicit enough.

Leaders are passionate about providing a well-rounded curriculum which allows pupils to flourish academically, emotionally and spiritually. The school's vision shapes the approach to teaching and learning so that all children are seen as unique individuals created in the image of God. Staff go over and above to ensure individual needs are met so that all can flourish. This is reflected in the high standards of achievement and progress pupils make across the whole curriculum. There are a wide range of opportunities for pupils to consider big questions and debate and discuss issues in depth. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of spirituality. They talk about 'knowing the spirit of God' as well as having time 'to remind yourself of good things'.

Pupils at St George's see themselves as important members of their own community and beyond. The school's vision is clear that this starts with pupils valuing themselves. Leaders promote self-confidence, aspiration, resilience and perseverance for all. Pupils value these traits being 'spotted and appreciated' by staff. Pupils want to make a difference and they are actively engaged in supporting charities and taking actions, such as raising money for local charities and visiting the local home for the elderly. They also support children globally, for example through the shoebox appeal which collects toys for children in Eastern Europe. Pupils have formed an eco-team to raise awareness of environmental issues. They have recently considered the bushfires in Australia and asked, 'what Jesus would do?' Some pupils were convinced he would offer refuge to those who had lost their homes or be a firefighter. Leaders have identified that global links and partnerships are less well developed across school. They recognise the importance of pupils developing a deeper understanding of global disadvantage, deprivation and exploitation of God's world.

Relationships are a strength of the school. There is a real sense of everyone coming together as a family. Pupils' behaviour, from Early Years onwards, is exemplary. They are a credit to the school, reflecting the high expectations modelled by all staff and directors. Leaders recognise vulnerability in all its forms. The school prides itself in providing deep personal care and support for all vulnerable pupils and their families. Parents talk about the high level of support, including from the family support worker, no matter how big or small the issues.

All are welcome into the 'inclusive environment of God's world' at St George's. Leaders and staff embrace and value all God's children. This is lived out in the way adults and pupils treat each other with respect, compassion and love. Staff use the personal, social and health education curriculum well to promote equality. The curriculum provides safe spaces to explore a range of views and ways of living. Diversity and differences are respected and bullying is not tolerated.

Leaders' prioritisation of the development of authentic and inspirational collective worship has resulted in it being at the heart of the work of the school. Each school day starts with everyone coming together as 'many hearts', creating a real sense of belonging, togetherness and joy. Worship brings the messages from God 'alive'. It inspires pupils and adults in the community to live out these messages and transform how they live. The school and

church work hand in hand to deliver inclusive and meaningful worship for the whole community. Members of the church support the worship team to lead whole school worship with enthusiasm and commitment. Pupils understand and appreciate the elements of Christian worship, including the Christian belief of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Pupils relate this to the Bible, the cross and a lit candle. Anglican traditions and responses are like second nature to everyone in worship. There is a real sense of praising God through the pupils' wonderful singing, and also during the times when everyone is still. Staff and pupils value the power of prayer and reflection. Church members and staff have worked as one to develop innovative and creative prayer spaces which pupils say they find useful. Collective worship is excellent and a living expression of the vision.

RE is central within the curriculum. Leaders give priority to developing the RE curriculum. The curriculum is well-resourced and enables pupils to explore key concepts through questioning, enquiry and interpretation of religious texts. Pupils say they enjoy RE. Their work shows their personal engagement. They have regular opportunities within the subject to reflect on their own thoughts and beliefs. Pupils understand that Christianity is a living faith. Staff expertise is good and there is a continuous engagement in training to develop staff subject knowledge further. The RE team is passionate about their subject. They are constantly reflecting, making improvements and building on good practise, particularly in the Early Years.

St George's is a place where there are 'many hearts' working as one. God's love is evident on a day to day basis throughout the school. The distinctively Christian vision drives the work of leaders. The school is on its way to deliver its ambition for excellence, so that all can flourish and 'fulfil their potential'.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

The RE team work well together to ensure the quality of RE is consistently good across the school. They regularly monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning. This leads to continuous improvements in the subject. The Early Years provision offers rich and creative learning experiences in RE. They provide the right foundation for good future progress in the subject. The school enables all pupils to flourish so that they can 'reach their full potential' in RE.

Headteacher	Janine Gleeson
Inspector's name and number	Jo Warner 950