

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

The District Church of England Primary School	
Address	Patterson Street, Newton-le-Willows, WA12 9PZ
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	Excellent

School's vision
<p>"I am the vine; you are the branches." John 15:5. Just as the branches need the vine to grow and bear good fruits, so we need each other. Within the District family, each person is valued and loved, reaching out throughout our school, homes, families and the wider community for a stronger future.</p>
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated Christian leadership empowers pupils to flourish and 'bear good fruits' in this inclusive Church school. How the school's vision shapes school policies and development planning is not consistently reflected in documentation. • The school's aspirational Christian vision inspires an ambitious curriculum that is exceptional in meeting the needs and widening horizons for all pupils. As a result, pupils learn with hope and resilience, confident of a future full of possibilities. • Spurred by the Christian vision of loving and valuing all, adults ensure pupils feel cherished, showing compassion for each other and their community. There are some opportunities for pupils to challenge injustice and act as advocates for change. • The school vision is powerfully woven through collective worship. Imaginative and highly inclusive, it nourishes deep reflection throughout school life. Active pupil involvement leads to rich spiritual flourishing. • The religious education (RE) curriculum is skilfully planned to meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils have a growing understanding of a range of world faiths and worldviews, though first-hand enrichment experiences have been limited following the pandemic.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the school's Christian vision is clearly reflected in written policies and development planning so that the whole school community understands how it underpins school priorities. • Extend pupils' opportunities to challenge injustice and act as advocates for change on a wider scale. • Deepen pupils' understanding of a range of world faiths by increasing opportunities to experience a variety of religious practices.



Inspection findings

The District CE Primary School is a vibrant, compassionate and aspirational Church school, where all pupils are loved and valued. The school's Christian vision, particularly the symbolism of the vine and branches from John 15:5, is deeply cherished by the whole school community. Enchanting displays, showing school Christian values entwined with vines, detail how the vision permeates school life. Leaders passionately explain how the vision underpins school improvement. However, the vision-led practices evident in the daily life of the school are not yet fully reflected in key policies, development plans and curriculum rationale. This means the school community is not entirely clear on how the vision drives school priorities. A fruitful partnership with the diocese actively enhances staff understanding of their role in a Church school. Dedicated governors have a secure knowledge of their monitoring role and are effective in their strategic support for the school.

The Christian vision for building a stronger future inspires leaders to craft an inclusive and ambitious curriculum. It is creatively designed, meeting the needs of a school community where opportunities to experience life beyond the local area are limited. An exciting range of tailored schemes of work broaden pupils' horizons and open possibilities for their future. A rich and popular programme of extra-curricular activities, including an active school choir, effectively contributes to raising pupils' aspirations. Leaders take bold curriculum decisions, dedicating additional lesson time to build pupils' understanding of the wider world. As a result, pupils are curious and excited learners, joyfully exploring life's big questions with hope for a bright future. Opportunities for spiritual development are imaginatively built into every subject area. Pupils reflect thoughtfully on life. They value other's opinions and grow in confidence about their place in the world. 'It's a good thing to have different views on life,' said one pupil. 'People need to express themselves.'

Spurred by the Christian vision of the vine bearing good fruits, adults foster high expectations for all pupils. Skilful support for vulnerable pupils, from the earliest age, nurtures their full inclusion into school life. So that each pupil can thrive, leaders ensure the school environment provides a calm and uplifting atmosphere. Recent building work has created learning spaces that instil peace and motivation. All leadership decisions are made to meet pupils' needs. For example, families arrive at school in the morning within a time window and are welcomed personally by staff. This relaxed start to the day ensures pupils are happy and ready to learn. Parents and carers appreciate the commitment of staff. They give many examples of how staff reach out with love to ensure their children blossom, linking support to the school's Christian values. 'I trust this school with my child,' said one parent. 'I know he's safe and happy here. Staff always meet his needs. It's an amazing place.' The school's tireless dedication to the needs of every child ensures all pupils flourish in their learning.

The Christian vision of the school as a family, needing each other to build a better future, inspires a culture of strong mutual support. Leaders prioritise the wellbeing of adults and pupils. A bespoke framework of mental health support quickly addresses need. Staff feel valued and work well together, promoting hopefulness and love for pupils and families. Pupils champion school values and are compassionate, loving and friendly. They enthusiastically engage in a wealth of responsibilities that contribute to school life, building their confidence and social skills. Older pupils relish helping younger pupils around school, for example in reading and playground activities. As a result, pupils love school, feeling valued and safe. The school actively supports many charities. Pupils contribute generously to their local community, for example building caring friendships with residents of a local retirement village. Pupil groups, like the school council, eco council and ethos group, actively promote pupil voice. Like vines, they nourish a developing range of social action projects. These



mainly focus on making changes that support the environment, such as improving recycling in school. Opportunities for pupils to be advocates for change on a wider scale are less developed.

Collective worship is exceptional in bringing to life the transforming power of the school's Christian vision. Proactive and knowledgeable, the coordinator works highly collaboratively, making worship relevant, inclusive and inspirational. Led confidently by staff, pupils and local clergy, enriching encounters with stillness, prayer and song lead to deep spiritual flourishing. Profoundly meaningful and engaging themes prompt pupils to act, bearing the good fruits of Jesus' teachings. 'I think about how Jesus showed compassion by healing the blind man,' said one pupil. 'This helps me think of other people before myself.' The whole school community cherishes the regular cycle of vibrant pupil-led services in the local church that mark the liturgical year, such as Easter and Christmas. An innovative pupil ethos group plays a significant role in planning, leading and evaluating worship. Group members oversee highly engaging class worship areas that provide deeply treasured spiritual spaces. They recently incorporated class prayer trees, bearing pupils' poignant spontaneous reflections. Pupils routinely raise important issues which are woven inspiringly into worship, reflected through the lens of the school's vision and values. For example, moved to raise awareness of autism, one pupil planned and led worship linked to the school's vision of love. This sparked deep reflection, with pupils championing active acceptance of neurodiversity, upholding hope for a stronger future for everyone.

RE has a high status in school and is well-led and resourced. The carefully planned, challenging curriculum weaves together two complementary recommended schemes of work, effectively meeting the needs of pupils. Experienced teachers actively support newer staff in developing subject expertise, leading to confident and knowledgeable teaching. Grounded in the Christian vision for valuing all, pupils are encouraged to respond in a range of imaginative ways, including through art and drama. As a result, pupils engage and reflect well in RE and demonstrate good understanding, particularly of Christianity. Teaching of other world faiths and worldviews is carefully sequenced. Pupils show an understanding of the impact of world religions on society. As a result, pupils of all ages respect and uphold diversity. Enriching opportunities for pupils to encounter religious practices and places of worship of a range of world faiths is limited.

The District passionately upholds its Christian vision of Jesus as the vine, weaving love and care into the whole school community to build a stronger future. Highly committed leaders and staff work tirelessly to build aspirations and widen horizons for pupils and their families. This enables all to flourish and grow in this highly inclusive Church school, nourished by love and faith.



Information			
School	The District Church of England Primary School	Inspection date	16 January 2023
URN	104792	VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary controlled
Diocese/District	Liverpool	Pupils on roll	365
headteacher	Lavern Shelford		
Chair of Governors	Frank Maguire		
Inspector	Sue Mawdsley	No.	930