

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St George's Church of England School			
Address	Meadow Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 7LS		
Date of inspection	12/13 November 2019	Status of school	All through academy inspected as VA. Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust
Diocese	Rochester	URN	137609

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	Excellent
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Excellent
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Excellent

School context

St George's Church of England School is an all through school with 1146 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. 17% of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is slightly above national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above national averages. The school is non-selective in the secondary phase in a selective area. Since the last inspection the school has become part of the Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust, become an all-through school and had a change of leadership.

The school's Christian vision All Different, All Equal, All Flourishing

At the heart of our vision is the belief in inclusive, educational excellence; the belief that we are called to serve all students, staff, parents and the local community by providing places where all develop and thrive intellectually, socially, culturally and spiritually in order to live life in all its fullness.

Key findings

- The distinctive Christian vision of the school has led to the creation of an inclusive, vibrant, multicultural and multifaith community in which all are nurtured. The school is referred to as a family and the behaviour of the children, pupils and students is impeccable both in lessons and around the site.
- The vision of the school firmly established and embraced by all is strongly rooted in deep theological understanding. The vision is constantly evolving to meet the needs of the school. It infuses all elements of the life of the school and is used in all decision making.
- Pupils and adults cherish collective worship as the heartbeat of the school in which they have time and space to 'breathe and reflect'.
- Religious education is led exceptionally well and taught with skill and focus. The team of subject specialists in the secondary and well-trained teachers in the primary phase, secure excellent understanding at all Key Stages.

Areas for development

- To further develop the shared understanding of spiritual development so that as the school grows there is a clear pathway from Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to Year 13.

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 an excellent Church School; totally built around a distinctive Christian vision that is both established but yet constantly evolving. The strong biblical roots from which the vision gains its essence are referred to by all children, pupils, students and adults. It is a vibrant feature of every element of the life of the school; from a child in the primary phase who explains how everyone is important because "we are all different", to a new member of staff who marvels at the way in which the vision is truly lived out in this school. Leaders at all levels effectively demonstrate the impact of the vision on their work including the many bold ethical decisions taken by governors and senior leaders. A powerful example of this is the fact that the school offers free Punjabi lessons after school, not only to its own students, but to other pupils within the wider community.

After a period of considerable challenge, this non-selective school in a selective area is oversubscribed. Parents cite the ethos and vision of the school and the way that it supports children to develop as individuals as key to their choice.

The vision of the school led to the formation of the Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust to support a church school in need; this now includes 6 additional primary schools. This partnership is highly successful. As a result of their desire to live out the vision the pupils from the secondary phase work in some of the schools aiding the teaching of subjects and supporting younger pupils. The Trust Council is led by the pupils and students from St George's and this has supported the Trust to grow and develop as a community. The partnership with the diocese and the wider structures of Church of England are extremely close and the students talk with pride about their role in the announcement of the new bishop of Tonbridge and celebration events within the cathedral building.

Pupils flourish academically at St George's and for the past 4 years they made progress that is above both national and Kent averages. The most disadvantaged pupils also make good progress. Pupils flourish in RE at GCSE and results are exceptionally strong. Because of their desire to make sure all flourish, the school has developed a variety of teaching styles that give opportunities for all learners to think hard and work in a range of innovative ways. This system is applied with absolute consistency across all phases of the school. This is valued by all and in particular by those with special educational needs and disability or English as an additional language who comment that they feel secure in their learning because of the established routines. Staff also recognise that they are able to flourish in their classrooms because they know that the whole staff team are working together.

The leaders of the school have fully engaged with the Church of England Vision for Education. It is because of this that the 1:1 interviews with Year 11 pupils are based on what 'life in all its fullness' will look like for them as an individual. Parents in all phases express delight in the way that the school nurtures their children as individuals because of the vision of the school.

There are numerous innovative opportunities for all members of the school community to engage in service that challenges injustice and inequality; for example, the pupils started a Stonewall Champions group which actively works to challenge stereotypes and ensure that children and adults can be themselves in school. This led to the popular #weareallone on social media, making the link between the vision of the school and its practical outworking. The impact of this movement has been transformational on the lives of many in the secondary phase. The 'Green Team' has worked with the school caterer to eradicate single use plastic from the canteen.

The vision of the school emphasises inclusion and this is championed by all members of the school. The school is referred to as a family and the vertical tutor groups create this integrated community. Pupils listen carefully to each other and demonstrate a deep respect for the vision and the individuality of all; they talk about the ways in which the vision helps them support each other. The desire to see all flourish has led to the lowest fixed term exclusion rate in Gravesham and the school work closely with the Local Authority to support pupils, at risk of permanent exclusion from other schools.

Since the recommendations of the last inspection, RE has developed into a core academic programme of study for every pupil and student in the school. All pupils and students speak with enthusiasm about the opportunities that RE affords them; to understand the role of faith in the modern world and challenge commonly held misconceptions; particularly about the teachings of Islam.

Leaders have forged an innovative relationship with the parish through the shared chaplain. Ecumenical partnerships have been developed through charitable projects in the town and overseas. Pupils and adults talk with enthusiasm and passion about the value of collective worship in the life of the school and no pupils are withdrawn. All cherish the role of collective worship in allowing them time and space to ‘breathe and reflect’ and the daily tannoy announcements, made by staff, pupils and students, are used to root the worship in the teaching of the Bible. In the secondary phase the innovative use of an agape meal creates a clear understanding of the importance of the Eucharist in the worship of the Church of England. The blossoming of a shared understanding of spiritual development and the use of class scrapbooks to collate growing understanding ensures that these times are valued. Prayer is woven in to every aspect of the school and a child in Year 1 explained how the beads and marbles helped her to remember that, “I can talk to God about anything.”

As a result of the vision and following the example of Jesus in leading his life and seeking sustenance and renewal, the ‘Cycle of Grace’ was implemented. This has revolutionised the working life and wellbeing of all. The changes to the quality assurance and homework systems are but a few examples of the way in which this radical theology of living in sacred balance has transformed the way the whole school works. National staff surveys indicate the positive impact of this approach and senior leaders have been invited to share their work with the Department for Education.

Inspirational senior leaders have created outstanding partnerships and innovative practice that have forged a highly inclusive community deeply rooted in the Christian faith; it is this, and the contribution of all, that makes St George’s an exceptional Church school where the vision ensures all flourish.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

RE is exceptionally well led and taught with skill and focus. The team of subject specialists in the secondary and well-trained teachers in the primary phase, secure excellent understanding through the range of interesting learning opportunities that challenge the understanding of the pupils at all Key Stages. The curriculum is planned with clear intent to develop the vision that all are equal. RE is a safe space in which all flourish because of the high quality teaching of challenging content. Opinions are valued and misconceptions are tackled with sensitivity and exceptional subject knowledge.

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