



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Chester Blue Coat Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Address Walpole Street, Chester, CH1 4HG

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

We are Chester Blue Coat; our Christian family encourages those of all faiths and none to value and celebrate our diversity. We grow together as a community of unique individuals, doing everything in love. Our vision is underpinned by the verses from Luke 10:25-37
“Go and do likewise.”

Key findings

- Leaders have developed a clear and strong Christian vision which recognises and values diversity. It is deeply rooted in theology and is understood by all. The vision is beginning to drive leaders' actions and school development plans, but this is not yet fully embedded.
- The school lives out its vision for all to flourish through the exemplary pastoral care and support it provides to adults and pupils. As a result, there is a climate of mutual acceptance.
- The creative, enquiry based curriculum is shaped around the school’s Christian vision and provides opportunities for all to succeed. Pupils ask big questions and reflect on global issues but opportunities for spiritual growth are less well developed.
- Religious education (RE) is well led and resourced. Pupils learn about Christianity and other faiths in a way that reflects the context of the school and its Christian vision, encouraging respect and tolerance. Pupils are encouraged to think deeply, to question and to reflect.
- Collective worship is rooted in the school’s Christian vision and values and respects the diverse nature of the school. Pupil involvement in planning, leading and monitoring worship is in the early stages.

Areas for development

- Monitor and evaluate the impact of the vision on all aspects of the leadership and management of the school. This will help to secure the on-going improvement of Church school distinctiveness.
- Increase the opportunities that pupils have to plan, deliver, monitor and evaluate worship so that they have a positive impact on worship.
- Develop a shared understanding of spirituality both through the taught and wider curriculum, including the use of the outdoor environment. This is so that pupils experience a sense of awe and wonder and are provided with a language to articulate spiritual and ethical issues.

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

Chester Blue Coat is an inclusive school serving families from many different nationalities, faiths and backgrounds. It is led by a headteacher determined to create a community where everyone feels welcome. Alongside a dynamic leadership team, and with support from the Diocese of Chester, the headteacher has worked tirelessly to develop and embed a refreshed Christian vision. As a result, it now fully reflects the context of the school and focuses on growing together whilst retaining individual worth. The vision and underlying theology are fully understood by adults and pupils. This has created a deep sense of community where everyone is seen as a unique child of God, feeling valued and respected. Actions are linked to the vision, underpinned by the Good Samaritan Bible story, where a traveller is attacked. For example, the behaviour policy has been revised to reflect this story, alongside current thinking about trauma and restorative justice. Leaders have a clear focus on developing Church school distinctiveness. However, systems for monitoring the impact of the Christian vision on the life of the school are not yet fully embedded.

A culture of love and hope means that the worth and individual needs of adults and pupils are paramount. The school has a high proportion of pupils with English as an additional language. A plethora of bespoke support, tailored to meet specific needs, is available for these pupils and their families. Examples, such as the translation of the school prayer into over 20 languages and the creation of support networks for families of the same nationality, highlight the school's thirst to 'go the extra mile to help'. Language Afternoons and Food Festivals further embrace the school community's diversity.

Care and nurture permeate relationships in school and pastoral support for adults and pupils is exceptional. Adults provide examples of how leaders have supported them through challenging times. They feel valued, and because professional development is highly prioritised, there is exceptionally low staff turnover.

Many opportunities exist to support pupils' wellbeing and mental health. These include My Happy Mind, Play Therapy and Art Therapy. Financial support is offered, so all pupils can access a range of extra-curricular clubs and visits. These include breakfast and holiday clubs for vulnerable or disadvantaged pupils, enabling all to participate and flourish.

All staff are committed to identifying the needs of pupils and their families. They recognise the positive impact of this, with one staff member explaining, 'this school is like no other in the way it supports families. Families have left to go to other schools but have later returned because they did not receive the support they needed.' Parents describe the wealth of support received during the pandemic, citing examples such as the receipt of food parcels, the loan of laptops for remote learning and regular phone calls. They praise the way the school supports them, explaining how 'nobody

judges you. They just want to help.’ The school is a dedicated School of Sanctuary, providing a safe space for families in crisis. This exemplifies the positive outworking of the school’s Christian vision to ‘go and do likewise’.

Pupils are encouraged to have hope and ambition for the future through activities such as Aspirations Week, when they meet adults representing a range of occupations. Pupils draw on Jesus’ teachings and other positive role models to describe how they overcome adversity.

Pupils’ concerns for social justice are reflected through their behaviour and actions. They are involved in a wide range of activities focused on positive change, often initiated by the pupils themselves. Furthermore, pupils are able to link their actions to the school’s Christian vision, explaining their desire to be a good Samaritan by ‘going and doing likewise’. These actions often focus on school or the local community. Pupils are, however, developing an understanding of global issues, through activities such as Walk My Journey, which develops understanding about the plight of refugees.

The enquiry based curriculum is designed to express the school’s vision, allowing pupils to ask questions and consider different viewpoints. The outdoor environment is used well in the early years to encourage a sense of awe and wonder. However, opportunities for older children are less developed. Areas have been designated for prayer spaces, including a Muslim prayer space, but these are not used consistently by all classes. In addition, limited intentional opportunities to develop spirituality through the curriculum means that a shared understanding of spirituality is not yet secure. In RE, pupils talk in depth about what they understand about Christianity and different faiths. They describe lessons as ‘exciting’ with opportunities for visiting places of worship, art, drama and debate enhancing learning. Everyone is encouraged to listen to one another, with one Muslim pupil explaining how they ‘always get the chance to share what we believe ourselves.’ Leaders skilfully use the pupils’ lived experiences to enhance the intentional teaching of RE and to celebrate difference. Examples include pupils creating Identity Boxes, which provide valuable opportunities to explain what is important to them. Parents and visitors are invited into school to act as experts. Displays recognise the world faiths that make up the school community and celebrate pupil achievement.

Collective worship is inclusive, invitational and centred around mutual respect. It is led by a range of staff and visitors from different faiths and denominations. This contributes to pupils experiencing worship from a range of traditions. Opportunities to discuss topical events encourage questions and reflection. The diversity of the school community is reflected in the Faith Team Leaders and Worship Ambassadors, with pupils of all faiths and none keen to become members. Leaders are beginning to develop more opportunities to involve pupils in all aspects of worship to develop their knowledge and understanding.

Chester Blue Coat is a genuine place of sanctuary where diversity is not only recognised, but celebrated. To this end, the Christian vision of ‘doing everything in love’ is lived out in the way adults and pupils work together and behave compassionately towards one another. The school is a place where everyone is enabled to flourish, and therefore able to enjoy ‘life in all its fullness’.



The effectiveness of RE is

Good

The RE curriculum uses the diocesan syllabus alongside Understanding Christianity. Pupils achieve well. Their knowledge and understanding of Christianity, world religions and alternative beliefs is strong because teaching is never less than good. RE is well led and managed. There is a detailed action plan in place, which together with a robust and effective system of monitoring means that leaders are clear about how to further develop and improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	21 March 2022	URN	136806
Date of previous inspection	10 December 2015		
School status	Voluntary aided primary school	NOR	402

Name of MAT/Federation	n/a		
Diocese	Chester		
Headteacher	Matthew Hover		
Pupil profile	The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is above averages.		
	The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)	The school was formed by two schools amalgamating in 2013; a church school and a community school. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Almost half of the pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), with over twenty different languages spoken throughout the school.		
Inspector's name	Joanne Hyslop	No.	972