

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Didsbury Church of England Primary School

Address	Elm Grove, Didsbury, Manchester, M20 6RL		
Date of inspection	17 January 2019	Status of school	Academy inspected as VA St James and Emmanuel Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)
Diocese	Manchester	URN	142265

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

School context

Didsbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School has 240 pupils on roll and serves a community that is economically advantaged. The number of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is below national averages as is the percentage who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The level of cultural diversity within the school population is in line with national averages and a small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. Didsbury is the founding school of the St James and Emmanuel MAT. There have been several staff changes, including two amongst the leadership, since the last inspection.

The school's Christian vision

'Belonging, Believing, Becoming.'

Firmly rooted in Jesus' vision of the kingdom of God as described in the parable of the mustard seed, Mark 4v30-32. Our Christian school exists to provide a welcoming environment in which everybody is cherished and challenged to fulfil their potential.

Key findings

- The dynamic Christian vision of the school is intrinsically woven into every area of school life and was the driving force behind the creation of St James and Emmanuel MAT.
- The close relationship between church and school is seamless and significantly contributes significantly to the strong ethos of welcome, inclusivity and community.
- The school provides a broad, balanced curriculum and extra-curricular activities that meet the individual needs of every pupil and leads to exceptional progress and achievement.
- The high quality of the teaching and learning in religious education (RE) makes an impact on the development of the whole child. It also deepens and enhances pupils' understanding about how their actions can influence for good the world in which they live.

Areas for development

- To further enrich their spiritual development extend pupils' experience of and responsibility for planning and creating worship to include the termly church services and review of the 'big questions' used in class worship.

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

At Didsbury Church of England Primary school 'belonging, believing and becoming' are more than just words, they are the guiding principles behind every aspect of school life. Firmly rooted in Jesus' parable of the mustard seed, the Christian vision of the school is deeply embedded and passionately articulated by all members of the school community. The vision underpins policies, drives school development and is regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains relevant and central to school life.

The leadership, staff, pupils and parents are dedicated to ensuring that each member of the school community feels welcome, included and cherished. One pupil commented that school 'welcomes everyone from lots of different countries to be together, to be as one'. Another said that 'we achieve our vision goals because we help and cherish one another so that we fulfil our potential'.

The behaviour and manners of the pupils are exemplary. On a solid foundation of forgiveness and reconciliation pupils follow the school rules that expect them all to be 'ready, safe and respectful'. Friendships cross the age ranges and pupils are proud of their school and each other. Therefore, there is a strong sense of community and parents appreciate the 'village feel' of the school. They attribute this to the personal relationships built on the playground and the dynamic relationship shared between school and church. The school takes an active part in the Didsbury Festival and heritage weekend.

The local parish of St James and Emmanuel and the school consider themselves as one. Under the same banner of 'belong, believe and become' they strive to be the embodiment of what it means to build the kingdom of God on earth. Together they provide an inclusive environment where everyone feels they belong and can thrive, ultimately becoming the people God has created them to be. The clergy team are regular visitors into school, contributing to lessons and leading worship along with the 'Big Question' lunchtime club.

The school and church stepped out together to create the Multi Academy Trust. Using the illustration of the parable of the mustard seed they have 'planted' a new school which is successfully growing and welcomed a third school into the haven of their 'branches' where it has begun to flourish. The ethos and vision of Didsbury Church of England primary school has permeated the other two schools and is recognised as good practice in the Diocese. The influence of the staff and pupils will extend further as the school becomes a pro-active provider of initial teacher training. A group of staff devising strategies to improve mental health and well being has been set up across the three schools and good practice is being shared. A good example is the introduction of worry jars and bugs in every classroom. Staff commented that they feel valued and supported by the leadership and each other both personally and professionally. They are listened to and actively encouraged to continue their own professional development. Several members of staff have moved into positions of leadership within the MAT.

Governors are well informed and minutes from their meetings show them to be very active critical friends, moving the school forward to achieve their goal of enabling all pupils and staff to be the best that they can be. They have made bold financial decisions that have directly impacted upon staffing provision for pupils with additional needs and on the content of the whole curriculum in general.

Parents feel confident that their children are safe and happy in school, one said that the 'teachers really know our children and are genuinely concerned for their well-being'. A parent of a child with additional needs commented that 'the staff know my child, not the diagnosis, she has found her voice and personality'. Pupils are actively encouraged to value themselves and become self-aware, illustrated by one pupil who said that 'when I arrived at this school, I felt that I was not very clever but the support they have given me has changed me'. Motivated by

their Christian vision that every pupil must feel they ‘belong, believe and become’, staff work tirelessly to remove any possible barriers to learning. They creatively go the extra mile to make sure vulnerable pupils experience every element of the curriculum including access to extra-curricular activities. The thorough record keeping and effective intervention strategies put in place by the schools special needs and/or disabilities coordinator (SENDCO) have ensured that every child flourishes academically. The school leadership and staff firmly believe that the exceptional academic achievement of all pupils is an outcome of the rich, broad and balanced curriculum that focusses on the personal development of each child as an individual. The topic work generated by the ‘There but not There’ Armistice Day project is a good example of the ways in which teachers respond to the curiosity of pupils, allowing them to drive their own learning. The impact of the school’s commitment to holistic education is revealed in the vibrant environment and pupils’ enthusiastic attitude to learning. Pupils are determined to succeed and have high expectations and aspirations for the future, one pupil stated confidently that ‘we help everyone to have a better future’. They feel free to ask questions and express opinions, confident that they can trust their teachers, who will always listen to them.

Considerable attention is given to prepare pupils for high school and future life in this complex world. Through initiatives such as Enterprise Week, the Every Colour Choir, links to a school in Uganda and connections with a local primary school, pupils have their eyes opened to a horizon well beyond Didsbury. Pupils show genuine empathy with the disadvantaged and a concern for justice. They write letters to members of parliament and initiate raising funds that support research projects, believing that ‘prevention is better than cure’. The school council democratically chose to support a local Down’s Syndrome group feeling that they could make a bigger difference by assisting a small charity that helps members of the school family. Pupils in Year 6 are pen pals with elderly members of the church congregation and they look forward to meeting up for a ‘coffee and chat’.

Collective worship is inspirational and inclusive, it is central to the life of the school and its impact infuses the whole day. Worship is an expression of the school’s Christian vision and although very much focussed on an exploration of Christian values and the teachings of Jesus, worship leaders plan a variety of content that connects to the pupil’s own life experiences and today’s world. Therefore, it is a real and relevant encounter with the Christian faith that engages everyone. The worship in school contains elements of Anglican worship and as a result, several pupils commented that ‘when we go to church it feels familiar’. Pupils’ have a good understanding of the trinitarian nature of God. Prayer is a natural part of the school day, reflective areas in each classroom are also inclusive and support the spiritual journey of every member of the school family. The pupil worship group plan and deliver collective worship on Monday mornings. They particularly enjoy preparing dramatic presentations of Bible stories. Working with the head of school they are involved in planning and evaluating the content of worship in school and are keen to increase their responsibility to include the preparation of church services.

RE fulfils all statutory requirements and is a priority subject in the curriculum. The RE subject leader is dedicated and works very effectively. During the last year she has enabled and equipped staff to successfully embed a new curriculum. She regularly attends local network groups and shares good practice across several schools therefore Didsbury is well resourced and up to date with current thinking in this subject. The issues raised by the previous SIAMS inspection have been addressed in full.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

The standard of teaching and learning in RE is outstanding. The question-rich curriculum has made a noticeable impact. One pupil commented that ‘RE gets harder in Year 6 you really have to think about the questions’. A rigorous and purposeful system of assessment and monitoring ensures that the progress made by pupils across the school is remarkable. Lessons are creative, vibrant and challenging. Pupils have a good understanding of Christianity as a diverse and living world faith. Following the comment from one Year 6 pupil that ‘learning in RE helps you to know what is right and makes a difference in other lessons,’ pupils spoke confidently about their increasing knowledge of world religions which is contributing to their ability to be respectful global citizens. From Nursery through to Year 6 pupils develop and use a high level of religious literacy.

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Inspector’s name and number	Lisa Horobin 900