

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| St Alphege Church of England Infant and Nursery School | | | |
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| Address | New Road, Solihull, B91 3DW | | |
| Date of inspection | 12 February 2020 | Status of school | Voluntary aided infant and nursery |
| Diocese | Birmingham | URN | 104090 |

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| 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 Alphege is an infant school with 285 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. 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 below with national averages. The school is in a federation with St Alphege C of E Junior School with which it shares a governing body. The executive headteacher serves both schools and was appointed just under three years ago.

The school's Christian vision

Jesus said, 'Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.' Matthew 19 v 14

Key findings

- The school's highly distinctive Christian vision, founded on inclusivity and doing the best for every child, inspires and informs decision-making at all levels. As a result, the school is transforming lives and breaking down barriers to academic success and wellbeing.
- Highly effective partnerships with the local church and the federated junior school are helping to build a vibrant community founded on strong Christian values.
- Deeply Christian, yet inclusive collective worship inspires and enriches the lives of all members of the school community and builds a sense of mutual respect. At regular celebrations of the Eucharist, people of many faiths feel able to respond with integrity to the invitation to approach the altar for a blessing.
- The teaching of religious education (RE) is innovative and inspiring. This means that pupils develop an exceptional understanding of a range of faiths and a deep respect for difference and diversity.

Areas for development

- Share the school's excellent practice in RE to support and develop provision in other schools.
- Further develop pupils' leadership of collective worship, so that they have more ownership of the planning process.

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

Leaders at St Alphege Church of England Infant and Nursery School have developed a highly effective Christian vision based on Jesus's instruction to let the children come to him. For all those at St Alphege, this means creating a genuinely inclusive community which puts children firmly at the centre of all that they do, and of removing anything which stands in the way of pupils and adults experiencing 'life in all its fullness'. The power of the vision is that it is a living force in the school, shaping long-term strategy and inspiring day-to-day decision-making. Pupils interpret the vision at a level appropriate to their age. One pupil said that for her it means 'God is never too busy to see people in the world'. Another said that for him it means 'Don't exclude other children if they need help'. The school has developed key Christian values of love, co-operation, honesty, forgiveness, responsibility and valuing difference, which help members of the school community to live out the vision. Parents welcome these values and say that they have a powerful influence at home, providing their children with a moral compass to guide them in life. Governors monitor the impact of the vision and values effectively. They challenge school leaders and are diligent in following up their monitoring to see how the school has responded.

Through its mission to build the kingdom of heaven on earth, this school transforms the lives of adults and pupils so that all may flourish. Parents are glowing in their appreciation of ways in which the school quickly identifies any academic or emotional problem their child may be having and then subtly puts in place well-targeted support. Governors say that staff constantly reflect on 'what more they can do and what they can do better'. As a result, all pupils, including the vulnerable, make excellent progress, and results at St Alphege are consistently high. Inspired by the vision to do the best for all, the curriculum is carefully constructed to meet the needs of all pupils, to challenge their thinking and to help them aspire to do their best. The school is seen as a safe refuge and pupils who have struggled with behaviour systems elsewhere thrive at St Alphege. The school has adopted innovative practices to support the wellbeing of its pupils such as 'Zones of Regulation' to help pupils understand and be comfortable with their emotions. As a result, behaviour is excellent and relationships between all members of the school community are warm and loving. Provision for spiritual development is thoughtfully planned across the curriculum. This means that pupils' spirituality grows and deepens as they progress through the school. Staff are empowered by school leaders to develop professionally, and consequently, they have high aspirations. A particularly effective system enables small groups of staff to work across the infant and junior schools as a team to develop a subject area together. Leadership of the group rotates so that all staff receive the experience of leading others and they grow professionally as a result. Members of staff also know that they will be well-supported if they have emotional or mental health issues.

The school is highly successful in its mission to build an inclusive community both within its walls and beyond the school gates. Central to this is the partnership with the federated junior school. The headteacher and his team are tireless in ensuring that links between the schools focus on creating the best possible learning experiences for their pupils. This sense of common purpose is a significant development for the schools and has been achieved through strong and highly principled leadership. As a result of the close partnership with the local church, this collaboration also extends to the pre-school provision. Parents comment that approaches used at the Praise and Play pre-school group run by the church echo those adopted by the two schools. In these ways, a seamless learning experience is being created from before formal schooling begins to the end of Year 6. The partnership with the church is vibrant, mutually beneficial and outward-looking. Clergy and members of the congregation offer strong support to the school as governors and leaders of worship, and in a pastoral capacity. The school supports the church's mission in a variety of ways, for example in being part of the 800 acts of kindness project. The headteacher offers professional support to other schools with the result that the school's Christian vision is having an impact in the wider community. Pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of injustice and unfairness and their part as citizens of a global community. For example, they have shown concern for homeless people in the local area and for the plight of animals in the bush fires in Australia.

Inspired by the school vision, the aim for collective worship is to be a means of teaching pupils and adults about the kingdom of heaven, and of all learning how they might live on earth. Through worship, pupils learn about Christian values in the context of the Bible and develop an impressive understanding of Bible stories and their meaning. One child described how from the story of Daniel, he learnt to 'Trust in God and learn to face your

fears'. Pupils talk about feeling calm, happy and relaxed when they pray and they make good use of the reflection areas in each classroom. Staff also welcome times of prayer. One new teacher commented that for her, 'The time to sit and reflect has become important'. The school benefits greatly from worship led by the clergy and the Open the Book team, and pupils also enjoy taking part in worship. They plan certain elements but would welcome being given a fuller role in the planning process. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of the Church's year and understand the significance of Holy Communion to Christians. This is because the school attends a celebration of the Eucharist each half term as one of its Wednesday acts of worship in the church. The spoken parts of the service are made as simple as possible so that children can join in easily, and pupils act out a Bible story which becomes the focus for teaching in the service. All are very welcome at these Eucharists and as a result they are well attended by parents of a variety of faiths and beliefs. Many parents and staff choose to receive Holy Communion or a blessing during the service. This is an outstanding example of school and church coming together to build a vibrant sense of community and mutual respect.

The curriculum team who lead RE are inspired by the vision of removing anything which gets in the way of learning. To this end, they are passionate about ensuring that RE is made accessible to all. Lessons are planned to be highly creative and imaginative with an emphasis on thinking, questioning and reasoning. Faith is brought to life by visits to a variety of places of worship. Pupils who find written tasks difficult, not least because of their early stage of schooling, benefit from the practical, experiential approaches used in RE. As a result of this outstanding practice, pupils develop a remarkable level of understanding for their age. They have excellent knowledge of a range of faiths and can talk about similarities and differences between them. Pupils appreciate how important it is to learn about people from different faiths and RE contributes considerably to the excellent respect for difference and diversity shown across the school.

Through their vision of placing children at the heart of all that they do, leaders and staff at St Alphege are building a supportive, inclusive and loving community, which is transforming lives well beyond the school's doors and enabling all to flourish.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

The RE curriculum team carry out useful monitoring of their subject which helps inform future improvements. They have devised an assessment system using the best features of good Early Years practice. This ensures that work is well-matched to the pupils' needs. As a result, standards in RE are very high, and pupils make excellent progress.

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| Executive Headteacher | Rob Morrissey |
| Inspector's name and number | Duncan Jones 813 |