

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Michael's Church of England Middle School

Address	Colehill Lane, Colehill, Wimborne, Dorset, BH21 7AB		
Date of inspection	27 June 2019	Status of school	Academy inspected as VA. Wimborne Academy Trust (WAT)
Diocese	Salisbury	URN	141829

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	Good

School context

St Michael's is a middle school with 570 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very 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 national averages. Since the previous denominational inspection, the school has become part of Wimborne Academy Trust (WAT).

The school's Christian vision

Each person, uniquely made in God's image, merits the best we can give.
(Genesis 1:27, Colossians 3:22)

Key findings

- Dedicated and collaborative leadership at all levels ensures the school's vision and values are the driving force which shape all school life.
- Excellent senior leadership has empowered strong team work which is inclusive of everyone's gifts.
- Exceptional and outward facing pastoral care passionately keeps the aspirations of each member of the school community at its heart. Belief and creativity, which staff model for pupils, ensures high academic standards for all, including vulnerable pupils.
- The reciprocal and transforming relationship with the church is innovative and extends beyond worship in church and school to extra-curricular clubs and activities.
- Creativity at St Michaels' is highly prized. This ensures the wider curriculum, including such areas as music, the arts and sport, enables all pupils to successfully explore their talents and achieve well.

Areas for development

- Deepen the community's understanding of the Christian narrative that underpins the vision and values of this school.
- Embed the 'Understanding Christianity' resource as a key approach to teaching and learning in religious education (RE) so that pupils can analyse and articulate their reflections on the wider Christian story.
- Enable pupils to meet people of diverse faiths and beliefs more frequently to nurture their spiritual and cultural development.

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

'God is at the heart of this school.' This comment from a member of staff captures the excellent spirit which envelops St Michael's. Staff testify to 'being led by a man guided by God's love. This flows freely down to each one of us and enables all to flourish and be the best we can be.' Such love extends to the pupils and families so that, 'with love, support and a safe environment, we can all celebrate our uniqueness'. This means that the school's vision and values truly encompass every person, uniquely created by God in this Christian family. This is very empowering and enables St Michael's 'ABC' of aspiration, belief and creativity to be lived out daily within an extremely supportive environment. The vision pervades everything, with its huge responsibility for the school to ensure that its 570 pupils and all associated adults flourish. However, not all pupils and their families can always explain the Bible passages from which the school's vision and values take their origin. Dedicated and collaborative leadership drives strategic decisions, policy and practice within the school and across the trust. Senior leadership nurtures teamwork, which is a hallmark at St Michael's with its 'camaraderie and inclusive ethos'. This stems from a shared understanding of spirituality, which pupils describe as 'something inside themselves'. This ensures, 'Everyone looks out for you and you feel really involved and cared for.' The school is well supported by the diocese, with staff and academy committee members (ACMs) greatly benefitting from training. ACMs are actively involved, including with the monitoring of RE and collective worship. There is a healthy flow of staff, with some going on to positions of responsibility in other church schools and newly qualified staff well supported. Some heads of department work across the trust, effectively leading their subject and supporting other schools. Parents are particularly effusive of the way music is led in the school, citing the annual carol service, which engages everyone.

At St Michael's the holistic focus is very much on the individual so all can aspire to achieve well. Staff are relentless in ensuring that pupils enjoy school, any barriers to learning are analysed and there are clear goals for next steps. They are passionate about meeting pupils' social needs and wellbeing first before their learning needs, as well as enabling pupils' talents to shape the community. This extensive pastoral support enriches all learning and enables year on year progress and academic standards which are significantly above average for all pupils, including the most vulnerable. This reflects well on the challenges middle schools can face. As one pupil put it, 'At St Michael's I can be the best me.' Teachers work together to ensure that more able pupils achieve high attainment. As one pupil endorses, 'Teachers always encourage us to persevere through the hardest times.' Staff model belief and creativity for their pupils. A wide range of achievement is celebrated, which includes music, the arts and sport, where pupils' talents and gifts are explored and creatively developed. For example, collective worship often includes music improvisation from the worship band. All pupils thrive here, whatever their starting points.

Learning at St Michael's is outward facing. This extends beyond the exemplary and highly regarded pastoral care to the wider community. Challenging injustice and creating time for courageous advocacy is an integral part of the school action plan. Staff and pupils actively support the local foodbank, including throughout the school holidays. Whilst there has been a link with a school in southern Sudan, the school's energies are invested in needs closer to home. For example, the school has been supporting Routes to Roots, a charity working with the homeless in partnership with the parish church. Pupils' strong appreciation of caring for God's creation is a shared expression of faith. As a Dorset eco award winner last year, the school uses its allotments to promote healthy eating as well as the importance of recycling.

Faith in action is also evident in intergenerational projects, which include Year 8 pupils serving lunches for the elderly at the church centre. The school orchestra has supported the local community choir. An effective and inclusive approach to mental health and wellbeing includes a well-embedded peer mentoring system. As a rights respecting school, positive and healthy relationships are at the forefront of everything the school does, where forgiveness is pivotal. Difference and diversity are celebrated, especially in RE. Every pupil is on a journey within an environment where a broad and balanced curriculum reflects the changing world in which they are growing up.

Insightful reflection and thinking time accompanied by music is integral to collective worship at St Michael's. For example, turning a spiritual moment into helping the community is explored through asking how Jesus changes

people to make a difference in the world. Through music, adults and pupils reflect on how an atheist and a believer approach the Nativity differently. One pupil feels 'spiritual when playing the piano' as he uplifts others with his particular talent. Worship is rich and varied, led by adults and pupils alike. The excellent partnership with St Michael's and All Angels extends well beyond worship and RE to extra-curricular Christian clubs and activities. Whilst pupils name St Michael as a protector, their knowledge about their founding saint is limited. The pupil worship team plan, lead and evaluate worship half termly in creative ways, such as gathering thoughts in a collective worship sketch book. For example, one pupil wrote about how one might 'breathe in God and breathe out frustrations'. Tutor groups and class groups capture their evaluations after weekly worship in reflection journals which link strongly to Bible passages and Christian values. Pupils quote the Holy Spirit as one who 'inspires and empowers'. Holiness and the choice of music, such as 'My Lighthouse' are seen as a successful part of worship. Pupils cite Bible stories, such as David and Goliath or Zacchaeus as well as the poem, 'Footprints in the Sand' which inspires them in daily life.

RE lessons always set a challenge and link to other areas of the curriculum. RE is well led and good practice is shared, effectively supporting other staff, and benefitting from local networks. Whilst Key Stage 3 pupils regularly experience visitors in school, encountering people of diverse faiths and beliefs is limited throughout the school. Embedding the 'Understanding Christianity' resource so pupils can readily analyse and articulate their reflections on the Christian story is currently limited.

At St Michael's there is 'amazing support, empathy, friendship, everything a family should be'. Pupils and adults are proud to be part of this school. It is true to its vision that, 'each person is made in God's own image' and is a very special place to work.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

Pupils enjoy RE, exploring faith and 'seeing what other people think', not just within Christianity. The school's vision of being uniquely made in God's image is very much part of the discussions which take place in RE lessons. Standards have risen over the last four years. Monitoring is accurate, with teaching consistently good and pupils achieving well, in line with other core subjects. Pupils make good progress and all groups of pupils flourish. Embedding the RE curriculum is ongoing.

Headteacher	Ron Jenkinson
Inspector's name and number	Lizzie McWhirter 244