

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Nash Mills Church of England Primary School

Address Belswains Lane, Nash Mills, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP3 9XB

Christian vision

We are a family, defined by our core Christian values;
Wisdom, Hope, Dignity, Forgiveness and Community.

Every member of our school is supported in love to flourish as unique human beings, made in God's image. Together, we navigate life's journey, in the safety of love and with compassion for others. This is underpinned by the story of The Good Samaritan.

But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.

Luke 10: 25-37

School strengths

- A wholehearted commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion has fostered a deep sense of acceptance for all and a celebration of difference. This has resulted in a welcoming and flourishing community.
- The school's vision drives its priority to support and enable all pupils, and especially pupils who have Special Educational Needs (SEND) and the most vulnerable, to fully access the curriculum.
- Pupils know they are listened to and have the confidence to express their views.
- Positive health and wellbeing are a priority for adults and pupils alike. New working practices have been implemented to address workload.
- The school has strong, reciprocal partnerships with the local community, families, church, and diocese.

Areas for development

- To improve the rigour of the monitoring and evaluation of the Christian aspects of the school, including collective worship so that these continue to improve.
- To embed the excellent work begun in increasing pupils' ability to articulate their knowledge in religious education (RE) in order to enhance their understanding.
- To further explore the shared language of spirituality in the school so that this more fully reflects the Christian vision.

Inspection findings

This is a happy school where differences are celebrated, and relationships are key. Staff have a genuine love for their pupils and work closely with their families. This contributes to the wellbeing and flourishing of pupils in their care, including those with special educational needs.

The headteacher and deputy lead a committed and united staff. They are ably supported by the expert work of the school's inclusion coordinator as they champion the cause of pupils who need additional help. This ensures that pupils can access the full curriculum offer. The school's chosen vision focuses on the story of the Good Samaritan. Kindness and compassion are the watchwords in this caring community. The servant-hearted headteacher, and his staff, model the values that they are instilling in their pupils. They prioritise both character development and academic progress within school. Parents are well supported, and the school staff work hard to create a nurturing environment for pupils and their families.

Careful thought has been given to the most effective support for pupils as an outworking of the vision. The school has adapted its offer to pupils in response to levels of need in early years. All pupils experience a less formal start to the school day, including a free breakfast offer for all. This provides teachers and support staff with opportunities to check in with pupils and prepare them for learning. The introduction of forest school, and the addition of a dedicated pastoral worker, supports pupils to learn team-building and collaborative skills. Pupils care passionately about ecology and lead the way in their collective sense of stewardship and responsibility for the natural world.

The governing body visits the school termly to monitor the curriculum and ask challenging questions to ensure that standards continue to improve. Links with the local church and diocese are strong and reciprocal. Visits each month from the vicar of St Mary's are warmly welcomed and valued by the staff and the pupils. The new incumbent has already made valued contributions to school life. This includes taking part in RE lessons with older pupils and planning collective worship with the headteacher and reflection councillors. These promising beginnings, mean that pupils are now ready to deepen their understanding of what it means to be agents for change in the local community and further afield.

The school's vision was born out of the original trust deed and commitment to the local community, through the work of its founder. There is an ongoing sense of pride in this history and legacy which is very evident within school. Pupils have opportunities to serve the local community from their reception year onwards. Visits to the local nursing home happen regularly and, at Christmas, pupils nominate and deliver thank-you gifts to local residents. Pupils worked with the local council to lower the speed limit on the road outside the school. Governors and senior leaders value and foster the school's deep involvement in the local community and parish. The school's Christian vision drives its deep commitment to families in its care, and staff work diligently to support and affect positive change for families in need.

This sense of community collaboration, which is so foundational to the school's vision, extends to their partnership with other local schools. For example, Nash Mills School joined with three other local schools to develop their use of the 'windows, mirrors, doors' model that pupils use for reflection. This work is important as the basis for the beginnings of a shared language of spirituality within school. Pupils are starting to use it as a tool to explain and reflect upon their daily lived experiences and spiritual development.

School collective worship is led by the headteacher and follows the church calendar. It is carefully planned and contains many important elements of Christian teaching and traditions. It is currently less effective in engaging all pupils fully from the oldest to the youngest participant. Pupils evaluate and give regular feedback on the daily worship. This feedback is reviewed by the reflection council as they meet to plan and evaluate the collective worship with the headteacher and vicar. The counsellors suggest reflection activities for the Christian values explored in class worship which improves that experience. The responsibility of being part of the council is very important within the school and gives younger pupils something to aspire to. The school has recently introduced a program based upon the 'Ubuntu' philosophy which stresses the importance of a collective bond which joins us all. These principles have yet to be fully embedded.

Pupils value opportunities to pray or reflect together both formally and informally. They are familiar with the Lord's prayer and can explain the meaning and importance of the daily prayers they use in class and in

collective worship. Pupils at Nash Mills feel free to be themselves and are empowered to speak about their beliefs and feelings. The underlying vision encourages a compassionate acceptance of all, regardless of background or belief. This results in an ethos of equality and diversity that enables pupils to consider the needs of others.

The new RE curriculum, which uses both ‘Understanding Christianity’ and ‘Emmanuel Project’ schemes of work, is enabling pupils to grow in their understanding of the world. Pupils are becoming articulate in their use of religious vocabulary and can explain key beliefs and vocabulary within Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism. Their ability to speak confidently about major theological concepts within Christianity is less consistent. Teachers use an enquiry-based curriculum, that revisits key beliefs and worldviews during the pupils’ school journey. Teacher questioning and partner talk move learning on effectively. RE lessons provide a range of lenses to consider topics through. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their learning and the opportunities it gives them to think deeply. The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good. Ongoing staff training from the diocese has developed teacher expertise. Pupils are empowered to share their own lived experiences of different faiths and worldviews and encouraged to consider the big questions of life. The school vision, with its emphasis on kindness and receiving strangers, has resulted in pupils confidently exploring their own identity and expressing ideas freely without fear.

The senior leadership team have reimagined the whole curriculum, ensuring clear progression in each subject, including RE. There has been a conscious emphasis on staff wellbeing and workload. New working patterns have contributed to the sense of care and commitment that has allowed adults as well as pupils to flourish. This initiative has been well received, as there has been a move away from continuous formal assessment. Careful monitoring and evaluation of the Christian aspects of school life, are an ongoing priority for the senior leadership team, as they seek to ensure the delivery of a consistently high-quality RE curriculum and collective worship experience.

The inspection findings indicate that Nash Mills Church of England Primary School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information					
School	Nash Mills Church of England Primary School				
URN	117418	Pupils on roll	234	VA/VC/Academy	VA
Diocese/Circuit	St Albans Diocese				
Headteacher	Allan Maher				
Chair of governors	Sylvia Low				
Inspector	Ruth Williams			No.	2215
Date of Inspection	14 February 2024.				