

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Matthias Church of England VA Primary School, London

Vision

At St Matthias, we are committed to empowering our children to become independent life-long learners who:

- know who they are (my identity)
- ask questions about the world around them (my world)
- use their voices to make a difference (my voice)
- aspire to greatness (my future).

Our Christian values nurture a safe, caring and inclusive environment, where together, we 'have faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love'. (1 Corinthians 13:13)

Strengths

- The school's Christian vision is astutely matched to the community that it serves. This strongly influences and effectively guides every aspect of the way St Matthias lives out its purpose. This transforms the lives of its pupils and adults for good.
- The closeness of the parish church to the school, both in physical proximity and in the way that this mutually beneficial relationship between both is seamless. This gives a strong Church foundation to living out the vision. It leads to an active site of Christian mission, serving the community through a deep concern for addressing inequalities.
- Through an unwavering culture of belonging and unconditional love, pupils and adults are recognised as made in the image of God. They are cherished for who they are, helped to overcome difficult situations they face and always given dignity in this.
- Within this very closely connected community, the school knows each pupil and adult exceptionally well. This knowledge directly informs the vision-shaped curriculum, learning and wider school experience. There is an unwavering confidence that pupils can succeed, leading the school to relentlessly help them achieve their God-given potential.
- High priority and care are given to Religious Education (RE) with carefully considered development and innovative practice of the subject. This brings about religiously literate pupils who develop strong knowledge, RE skills and understanding. As a result, pupils can apply their learning thoughtfully and deeply to their own experiences and life.

Development Points

- Develop further and embed opportunities for pupils and adults to reflect on the impact of collective worship. This is to inform, in a deeper way, the evaluation of worship for helping it to become even more impactful.
- Ensure that changes in leadership of collective worship and RE maintain the current highly impactful provision and outcomes of each area.



Inspection Findings

St Matthias is described by stakeholders as a little oasis. This conveys accurately the trusted safe place of learning and support this school is. It gives hope and brings success to lives affected by extremely high disadvantage. The school has developed a clear vision, highly appropriate for its inner-city context, springing out of its federation's vision. Leaders are clear about its Christian underpinning, highlighted by the value of love and other key biblical values. The school ensures that barriers faced by pupils and adults are not insurmountable to the nurturing growth of God-given potential. The vision directly informs all aspects of school life, from strategic decisions to day-to-day interactions. This creates consistency by leaders and staff, specifically meeting needs of pupils. Being part of Primary Advantage provides wider support from working together with other schools. This brings opportunities for development of educational practice. St Matthias also greatly values keeping its own identity, living out its Church foundation and tailoring provision to its community. The Christian dimension of the school is upheld and nourished by the close relationship with the diocese. The local advisory board monitors the impact of the vision. This effectively shapes direction in policy and practice. Across the federation, the outcomes and provisions committee regularly review the school's performance. This wider evaluation enables sharing of best practice across similar schools.

The curriculum has been refocussed for the school's context. This has been influenced closely by the vision. The strong emphasis on developing oracy and fostering curiosity motivates pupils to feel learning is relevant for them. They see their identities valued and reflected. Through it, pupils have opportunities to be prepared well for life in Hackney and the wider world. An enrichment programme brings the curriculum alive with experiences. An example is St Paul's Cathedral choir programme, giving pupils the opportunity to sing in a local church and the cathedral. The school has developed readily expressed understanding of spiritual development. Consequently, intentional opportunities for spiritual reflection abound across school life. These prompt pupils' spiritual curiosity, nurturing that side of their character. The vicar offers the large vicarage garden for regular outdoor learning. This includes events such as the summer fair. The community benefits from this experience of outdoor green space, which many, due to disadvantage, have no access to otherwise. This gives pupils a vision-driven, fuller learning experience. Many specialist services are drawn upon to support high numbers of vulnerable and/or disadvantaged pupils. They contribute to an inclusive approach, facilitating progress. The school has opened a sensory room to meet specific needs of pupils. No effort is too much when it comes to serving pupils and enabling them to succeed.

Collective worship brings the school together, relating the vision to the Christian calendar and biblical themes. From linking these to life in St Matthias and beyond, people are invited to reflect on the Christian message. This is inclusive for those with or without faith. The worship in church is valued by many. It is also open weekly at lunchtime as a quiet space. Shaped by the school's understanding of spiritual development, these times provide space for enabling spiritual flourishing. Collective worship ambassadors are an inclusive pupil group drawn from Years 5 and 6. They currently act as stewards, giving a chance to develop responsibility skills. There is some evaluation of collective worship. However, this does not give a clear picture as to the impact of worship on pupils and adults.

The school has numerous partnerships, supporting the successful realisation of the vision. One example is a local youth club who offer their service to pupils. The social opportunities available continue the development of life skills. The school and church are adjacent, the church forms one side of the playground. This physical closeness mirrors how the two together serve the community and enable the vision to be a lived reality. The vicar is a trusted friend, giving pastoral care and support. This brings the church's presence to be felt by many. The school and church attribute to the Holy Spirit the transformative work that is happening. Pupil leadership opportunities such as the school parliament are offered. These equip pupils with skills to draw upon in the future.



Pupils learn the importance of justice and responsibility. There is an innovative, school-wide learning programme about inspirational people who have used their voice for change. In Early Years, pupils learn about being an activist from the story of a campaigner. He challenged successfully for people from ethnic minority backgrounds to be allowed to work on buses in Bristol. This learning stimulates many pupil-initiated projects such as whole school campaigning to make women's football boots widely available. These experiences empower pupils so that they can make a difference.

RE is thoughtfully developed by a committed subject leader. This brings strong foundation to provision. The subject has high profile through protected curriculum time, shared purpose and recognisable value. This status contributes to the subject developing religiously literate pupils. The school adapts the diocesan RE syllabus for its community, helping pupils see its relevance. Sequential learning about a range of religions develops strong religious knowledge and understanding. The subject leader is part of the diocesan RE working party. This mutually beneficial partnership impacts RE within this and other Church schools. One way this happens is through continuous professional development (CPD) which the subject leader cascades to staff. This increases their RE knowledge and further develops their subject teaching.

Assessment informs teaching and learning, carefully building future learning on that already grasped. As a result of the curriculum and effective CPD, teaching is consistently good or better. This leads to pupils making expected or higher progress in learning. Through a balanced RE approach, pupils build up a wide range of RE-specific skills. The ability to reflect was shown by a Key Stage 1 pupil. He talked personally about how RE learning affected his actions and choices.

This diverse school has built inclusive and cohesive community where people are valued for who they are. A wide-ranging programme of pupil and adult activities is provided. This focus on equipping what people need delivers the school's concern of equity and wellbeing for all. Success comes from strong relationships between staff, pupils and their families. Giving or receiving practical help brings families together socially as well. This caring environment, nurtured by the vision, contributes to overcoming isolation that some face. Support is given with utmost dignity, so people do not feel stigmatised. Many pupils and their families face mobility and trauma issues. A culture of family and belonging embraces 'unconditional regard' for pupils and adults. This approach directly springs from the vision, with love transforming lives. One parent, amongst others, expressed emotionally about the difference the school had made to her child who had severe learning difficulties. She expressed how all the school had done for her child was now enabling them to flourish in secondary school. The support she had experienced led her to become a strong advocate for children and families in her professional life. Faith is bringing hope and giving love to the pupils and adults of St Matthias.

Information

Address	Wordsworth Road, Hackney, London N16 8DD		
Date	25 October 2024	URN	100267
Type of school	Voluntary Aided	No. of pupils	151
Diocese	London		
Federation	Primary Advantage		
Headteacher	Lucy Blewett		
Executive Principal	Sian Davies		
Chair of Governors	John Clark		
Inspector	Shaun Burns		