

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Lowton Church of England High School			
Address	Newton Road, Lowton, Wigan. WA3 1DU		
Date of inspection	5 February 2020	Status of school	Foundation
Dioceses	Liverpool and Manchester	URN	137783

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	Good
Additional Judgement	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good

School context

Lowton Church of England High School has 707 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 in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national averages. In June 2019, the school was judged by Ofsted to require improvement. The school is undergoing changes in its senior leadership team.

The school's Christian vision

We live our ethos of Caring, Learning and Succeeding in a Christian context. At the heart of the commitment is the notion of the uniqueness and infinite worth of the individual, that every person is valuable in the eyes of God and we are **the lights of the world** (based on Matthew 5:14-16).

Key findings

- The school's clear and deeply embedded Christian vision and values impact all areas of the school's life, community and work. This positively influences relationships, decision-making, policy and practice throughout the school.
- Through its vision and values, the school works tirelessly to ensure that vulnerable pupils and families are fully supported and included. This enables them to engage with and make progress in their education and learning.
- Governors and leaders effectively monitor and evaluate the school's Christian distinctiveness to ensure that it is developing and responding to the needs of its community.
- Collective worship is a focal point for the whole school community. It strongly reflects the school's vision and values, and provides opportunities for celebration, reflection and inspiration in a clearly Christian context.
- Religious education (RE) is skilfully led and enables a thorough appreciation of Christianity and different faiths and the importance of belief in today's world. There are many worthwhile opportunities for pupils to safely explore and respond to religious themes and questions.

Areas for development

- At all levels throughout the school, continue to develop and embed strategies which are making a positive impact on meeting the academic needs of pupils.
- Deepen pupils' understanding of spirituality to enable them to fluently articulate its meaning and impact on themselves and others.
- Provide further opportunities for pupils to develop and engage with a deeper sense of courageous advocacy and so equip them to challenge injustice at local, national and global levels.

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

Lowton Church of England High School is a warm, happy and caring place which radiates Christian distinctiveness. The school vision is founded upon deeply embedded Christian values and is firmly rooted in gospel teaching. This creates a highly inclusive, welcoming school. There is a determination that pupils make the most of their uniqueness and infinite worth in the eyes of God. Each member of this community is valued, known and nurtured and staff, pupils and parents often speak of the school as a close-knit family. The effective leadership of the acting headteacher is forward-looking and focussed on a determination for improvement and success. Her strong commitment is driven by the school vision and is shared by a loyal and hardworking staff. Because of this, the school is moving forward with a relentless focus on effective strategies to improve the academic outcomes for all pupils. Governors strongly support the development of the school's Christian distinctiveness and robustly monitor and evaluate its effectiveness. Leaders and governors access local and national training and resources relating to Church school distinctiveness. This results in a sound awareness and implementation of current thinking in relation to Church school education.

Because of its location, the school is served by two dioceses, Liverpool and Manchester. Both are proactive in the school through beneficial, supportive relationships which are widely acknowledged and valued by the school community. Several additional resources and projects, which have been accessed through the dioceses, have significant influence on enhancing the pupils' learning and development. The positive impact of one such project, Unlocking Gifts, is through innovative training for pupils in overcoming obstacles. This is clearly developing and improving participants' resilience and communication and gives them a more positive outlook. A diocesan tutoring scheme for disadvantaged pupils is successful in helping pupils to be more aspirational in their personal vision and engagement.

The school curriculum is broad and balanced and carefully structured to meet the needs of all pupils. Great care is taken to ensure that all staff are aware of the needs of each individual. A dedicated SEN team ensures that adaptations to the curriculum and effective additional support are provided. Work with families ensures that any barriers to progress are removed. Thus, through their care and vigilance, staff enable pupils to engage fully with their learning and to flourish. One parent said, 'Staff here really do go the extra mile and are totally committed to doing the best for our children. We are confident that our children are in very safe hands'. A wide programme of clubs and extra-curricular activities means that pupils have the opportunity to explore areas within and beyond the curriculum. A vibrant International Club brings together and supports pupils from different countries and enables them to share experiences and to celebrate the richness of cultural diversity. The school vision to be 'the lights of the world', is demonstrated as pupils look beyond their own community. This is done through learning about and supporting local, national and international charities. At present the school provides only limited opportunities for pupils to develop this experience into an understanding of how they can challenge injustice and engage in social action.

Because lessons are interesting, relevant and varied, pupils' attendance is good and there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere throughout the school. Behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent and relationships are strong and respectful. In a discussion, one pupil said, 'I look forward to school each day. It's a happy place and I like how everyone works and gets along together'. On occasions when pupils fall short of the school's high expectations, forgiveness and reconciliation are quickly offered and relationships restored. The pastoral team generously and successfully supports pupils particularly when they are at their most vulnerable. Pupils are helped in various ways to develop their spirituality. However, as yet, there is not a shared language and vocabulary in the school to take their understanding of spirituality to a greater depth. Many pupils and staff place a high value on the minimum of five minutes spent in prayer and reflection each day. They say that this space gives them a sense of peace as they prepare for the tasks and experiences which each day brings.

Important work to promote and sustain good mental health and wellbeing for all permeates the school. Ranging from planned opportunities in the curriculum, it also includes targeted support for those who need it. This helps to ensure that no one who may be struggling goes unnoticed.

Collective worship is focal to the life of the school and is highly valued and respected throughout the school community. The leadership and ministry of the chaplain are highly regarded and he is very effective in his role with staff, pupils and governors. He is a channel of the school vision, and uses lively and imaginative ways to demonstrate that Christianity is a living, relevant faith. Planning for worship is very thorough. 'Worship Walls' depicting each half-term's worship theme and pupils' responses to it, are proudly prepared and displayed by forms in all year groups. Visitors including clergy and groups such as a Ugandan choir add to the vibrancy of worship. Stillness and reflection are also used and appreciated. One member of staff said, 'I find prayer time in briefings a very rewarding and calming way to start the day.' A pupil reported that she found daily times of reflection very welcome points in the day. They helped her, not only to be calm and refocus, but to remember to be thankful to God. Liturgy and the Lord's Prayer are not yet part of the school's collective worship.

RE is skilfully and enthusiastically led and is well taught by specialist teachers. The carefully planned curriculum, is in line with the national expectations of the Church of England. It enables pupils to gain a clear understanding of the importance of faith. Pupils talk about their enjoyment of the variety of activities in lessons and say that they can express their views and opinions confidently, safely and respectfully. They develop a clear understanding of Christianity as a living faith. Different world faiths are taught, helping pupils to compare, contrast and evaluate their own understanding of faith and spiritual matters. All pupils in Year 10 take Religious Studies GCSE and show strength in their academic achievement in the subject. They value the year 11 curriculum which provides opportunities for relevant, extended exploration of religious perspectives on contemporary themes and issues.

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