

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Balderstone St. Leonard's Church of England Primary School			
Address	Commons Lane, Balderstone, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 7LL		
Date of inspection	21 March 2019	Status of school	VA primary
Diocese	Blackburn	URN	119415

Overall Judgement	Grade	Excellent
How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?		
Additional Judgements		
The impact of collective worship	Grade	Excellent
The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Excellent

School context

Balderstone St. Leonard's is a primary school with 114 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of Asian heritage with a significant proportion of White British heritage. Many 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 in line with national averages. Significant numbers of pupils are from families who are of the Islamic faith. The school has been without an incumbent since December 2018 and has had two vicars since the last denominational inspection.

The school's Christian vision

Our school family is a strong, vibrant Christian community, with a mission to inspire a love of God, each other and learning. This helps us all grow in faith, wisdom and compassion. Once 'rooted in love', we flourish living fruitfully, branching out and sharing God's love in Balderstone and beyond.

Key findings

- The exemplary behaviour of the pupils is attributed by the school community to the inclusive and distinctive Christian vision.
- The school provides a bespoke curriculum firmly underpinned by Christian theology. Religious education (RE) permeates each area of this curriculum, leading to a deepening of pupils' understanding of the subject.
- Pupils are inspired by the school's Christian vision to challenge injustice and inequality. They are excellent ambassadors of social action and charitable works.
- The school is recognised by parents and the wider community as an exemplary centre of compassionate care. Diversity is welcomed and celebrated, with everyone seen as precious to God.
- Pupils play a considerable part in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship. This contributes very well to their spiritual development.

Areas for development

- Increase the input of parish members through the 'Open the Book' project for whole school worship, thereby enriching parish involvement.
- Embed mutually beneficial partnerships with schools in urban areas in order to 'share God's love in Balderstone and beyond'.

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

Balderstone St. Leonard's is passionately committed to sharing 'God's love in Balderstone and beyond'. School leaders explain that the biblically rooted Christian vision is at the heart of school life. It ensures that all pupils are made welcome and that the diversity of the school is celebrated. A governor commented, 'The vision is lived out making us an inclusive family.' The inspirational school leaders effectively ensure the vision shapes policy and strategic direction. The vision leads to incisive self-evaluation and exemplary practice. This creates a culture where pupils can thrive and 'grow in faith'. Whilst there is no vicar at present, the school and parish have continued to grow in strength together. This relationship is called the 'Balderstone Bridge'. This unity ensures strong fellowship. A parishioner shared, 'We enjoy a fantastic relationship.'

The school enjoys many partnerships including those with the diocese and a local cluster of schools. The school's 'outward facing' vision has led to the receipt of the bronze Global Citizenship Award. There are developing partnerships with schools in Uganda and schools in contrasting settings, such as an urban school in Skelmersdale. The school is focused on strengthening these beneficial relationships. Speaking of these links, a pupil enthused, 'We love making new friends as we all belong to God'. The school has led other schools through puppet ministry training, Remembrance day workshops and a project exploring cultural roots. As a result, the school 'branches out' and is seen as a hub of excellent practice. Supportive training, induction and sharing of excellent practice ensures that staff 'grow in wisdom'.

The vision, rooted in love, ensures that pupils and staff tirelessly drive social action. Each class has supported a variety of causes, such as a local homeless charity in Blackburn and a refugee centre. Linked to this, the school teddy bears have just welcomed a Syrian refugee bear into the school family. As a result, pupils are able to demonstrate compassion and empathy in their everyday. The school collaborates with the parish in supporting joint projects, such as Fair Trade. A parent commented, 'My child has taught me so much about how to improve the world.' Many individual pupils have instigated social action, such as a sponsored swim to raise money for the toilet twinning project. Pupils have inspired the school community to 'make good choices'. Products tested on animals are now avoided as is the unnecessary use of plastics. The pupils watch 'Newsround' in 'family groups' each lunchtime. As a result, they are well informed and keen to live the vision by tackling social injustice.

The innovative curriculum of the school, inspired by the vision, ensures that relevant Bible quotes are at its foundation. Individual pupil needs are catered for. Consequently, progress of the pupils, including those most vulnerable, is in line with national standards. Termly topics are linked to a biblical theme and RE permeates the whole curriculum. This allows for excellent cross-curricular RE experiences, such as the topic 'Walk in the light' in Years 5 and 6. The curriculum nurtures life skills and these are supported by the impressive range of extra-curricular activities offered. Big questions are woven into the curriculum, especially through thoughtfully planned RE provision. The pupils enjoy reflecting on questions such as, 'Why is the death of Aslan like that of Jesus in the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe?' The provision for pupils' spiritual development is impressive and includes outdoor spaces. Particularly popular is the worship related outdoor prayer box. A Year 6 pupil stated, 'Outside learning helps me to appreciate the wonder of God's creation.'

The school is a hub of support and reconciliation allowing a 'growth in compassion'. A pupil shared that God still loves you 'when you make mistakes'. The behaviour policy reflects the importance of second chances and forgiveness mirroring the compassion and inclusivity of the vision. As a result, pupil behaviour is exemplary and they are keen to attend school. Pupils listen to others' views and understand that people don't always agree. Adults feel greatly supported by the church school community. Wellbeing and mental health provision are key priorities. One member of staff reported, 'School leaders have given me a shoulder to cry on. I feel valued and loved here.' Staff often visit the homes of school families, offering love and support. A parent shared, 'The staff live the vision, showing lives rooted in love.' Pupils are confident that any prejudicial behaviour or bullying will be challenged by staff and, therefore, they feel safe and respected. A pupil stated, 'We are all friends and a family made by God.'

Uplifting and inspirational collective worship, true to its vision, is at the heart of school life. Pupils say it helps them 'to live their lives as God would want'. It is innovative as shown in the 'Balderstone to Bethlehem' outdoor worship, involving the whole school community. The Salt and Light pupil group play a crucial part in the planning, delivery and evaluation of worship. They confidently explain that they 'produce whole acts of worship'

independently. They report to the parish church council annually and then produce an action plan. Collective worship is pivotal in maintaining excellent bonds between the school and the parish. Once per month, the school supports church 'all age' worship and has begun the 'Open the Book' project. This welcomes parishioners into school to lead worship. This project is currently in its early stages but is already increasing parish involvement in school worship. Pupils are made welcome in worship and share that it is 'the most special time of the school day'. It is inclusive and this is seen in the way pupils use signing to make worship accessible to all. A pupil of Muslim faith reported, 'I like it when my Christian friends and I can pray together to our God.' The prayer space is well used by pupils and adults of differing faiths. As a result, pupils feel supported and that their beliefs are respected. The school welcomes clergy from inside and outside the parish, including a Methodist minister and a variety of inspirational Christian speakers. Consequently, worship is varied and dynamic. Prayer is spontaneous and personal and the pupils refer to the Trinity during worship. Eucharist, held in church and outside, is a key part of the worship calendar and has involved other schools. Consequently, pupils have an impressive understanding of Eucharist and its central importance in Christianity. A Year 6 child explained, 'I can see how learning about the Passover can help us to understand Eucharist.'



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

The quality of RE teaching and learning is excellent. Exemplary monitoring and assessment systems are accurate and there is a highly effective monitoring schedule in place. The valuable information gathered leads to improvement in the subject. Pupils are tracked over the course of the year by the highly effective subject leader. Driven by the school's vision to inspire learning and wisdom, standards are at least in line with other core subjects. The school ensures that all groups of pupils flourish academically in RE. This includes disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils, who make good progress against expected standards.

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