

# Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

## Altham St James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

### Vision

Our children will learn to love themselves and to embrace the differences in our society. Developing the whole child is extremely important to us. We will endeavour to live out the teaching: 'Love each other as I have loved you.' John 15:12

We work closely with family, friends, Governors and members of the church community to embed the love of God through living and learning together. We want our children to be the best they can be and believe they can make a difference because we have faith that: 'Everything is possible with God.' Matthew 19:26

### Strengths

- The school's Christian vision promotes a culture that is loving, inclusive and nurturing for pupils and adults.
- Collective worship is inspiring and joyful. A wealth of opportunities for prayer, stillness and self-expression ensure that adults and pupils flourish spiritually.
- The Christian vision empowers staff to actively support the mental wellbeing of pupils and their families. In turn, leaders ensure that staff are cared for, professionally supported and valued as role models.
- The curriculum inspires pupils to explore issues of justice, make ethical choices and champion change. This encourages them to look beyond their community into the wider world and consider how they can make a difference.
- Religious education (RE) is creative and engaging. The curriculum encourages questioning, building confidence for pupils to clearly express their ideas and opinions.

### Development Points

- Strengthen the monitoring of the school's distinctly Christian vision. This is so that leaders can evidence and evaluate the impact of actions and identify relevant steps for improvement.
- Develop a shared understanding of spirituality throughout the school. This is to ensure that pupils benefit as fully as possible from a shared language and approach to spiritual development.
- Deepen staff knowledge in the implementation of the RE curriculum. This will further build staff confidence and develop pupils' understanding of a diverse range of worldviews and religions.



## Inspection Findings

Altham St James' is a small school where pupils are inspired to live life guided by the teachings of Jesus. At its core is the embedded Christian vision. To 'love each other as I have loved you' is the bedrock that underpins policy and practice. As a result, members of the school's community are nurtured and encouraged to 'be the best they can be.' Leaders resolve to provide education that empowers individuals to make a positive difference in the world is steadfast. This has led to highly effective support and provision enabling pupils, including those with additional needs, to thrive. Leaders have used the vision to drive ambitious strategic developments; prioritising issues relating to staffing and physical provision. New purpose-built classrooms and high-quality outdoor areas greatly enhance the opportunities for pupils to flourish. Leaders plan for the development and encouragement of adults both professionally and personally. Staff access a range of training and are nurtured as individuals. As a result, staff feel highly valued, empowered and ambitious in their care for pupils. Governors are committed and enthusiastic. They understand the vision and provide regular support to ensure that the school is living up to its foundation. However, systems for leaders and governors to routinely monitor and evaluate the impact of the vision have not been established.

The school's vision that 'everything is possible with God' is woven throughout the curriculum. It drives improvements and raises aspirations. Leaders are committed to providing education that enables pupils to respect the world and value diversity. This creates a positive ethos of acceptance throughout the school community. As one pupil rightly said, 'we can be whoever we want to be at Altham, as with God anything is truly possible.' They are supported to be their best through an explicit focus on 'building learning power.' This coupled with the genuine faith that all can achieve, enables pupils to flourish. Provision is further enhanced through a range of inclusive extra-curricular clubs and regular visitors and visits. The curriculum is rich with opportunities to grow spirituality. The regular use of high-quality prayer spaces encourages individuals to explore questions, reflect and respond in age-appropriate ways. Pupils and adults can recognise numerous moments of spiritual growth within daily learning. However, these experiences are limited by the fact that there is no agreed understanding and language of spirituality.

Joy overflows in worship as participants draw together to explore the Bible and the teachings of Jesus. Collective worship is carefully planned incorporating the vision of the school. It has a structure that includes planned opportunities for stillness and reflection. Pupils enthusiastically participate in worship through the sharing of personal prayers. These special spiritual moments evidence the deep thought, compassion and care that is fostered within the school. Well-developed spiritual spaces offer meaningful opportunities to reflect and pray beyond the hall. Worship and the spiritual flourishing of the whole community is significantly enhanced by the support and partnership with the church. Open the Book worship and angel services are joyous events jointly organised and held at the school. These regular occasions enable the school's community to celebrate, learn and flourish together. Pupils show an appreciation and understanding of Bible stories that they have heard. They explain how they relate to the vision and impact on their everyday lives. Individuals are often inspired by worship. Pupils recognise that they can be leaders like Jesus and make a positive difference through their actions and behaviour.

Through living out the teachings of love, the vision helps to create a respectful environment with a deep sense of community. Consequently, positive caring relationships are a significant strength of the school. Parents are warmly welcomed. They appreciate being included within the loving family of Altham St James. Adults in the school go the 'extra mile' for families, providing support and a listening ear whenever it is needed. Pupils enthuse about the care and love shown by adults who listen to them and talk to them. As a result, they have high attendance and behave exceptionally well. A continued focus on loving, forgiving and reconciling, supports pupils so that they resolve disputes and live well together. The vision empowers leaders to prioritise mental



health and wellbeing. Planned opportunities to explore healthy living, mindfulness and yoga contribute to adults and pupils feeling cherished.

A strong culture of justice and fairness is rooted in the school's Christian vision. Pupils are actively taught that they are loved and seen as equal in God's eyes. This is explored further through planned learning on fairness, democracy and equality. Pupils are encouraged to actively champion causes such as women's rights and differences in gender pay. They take the initiative to be courageous advocates for worthy causes. This has included raising funds for Millie's Smile, a local cancer charity, and by making contributions to a foodbank. Learning within science and geography helps pupils to recognise how they can safeguard God's precious world. As a result, they take appropriate social action. They raise awareness about pollution in the seas and regularly pick up litter to protect their local environment. Pupils take responsibilities seriously. They support leaders in a number of ways, including by being reading and prayer ambassadors.

RE is an important area of the curriculum and it is highly valued by pupils and adults in the school. It is a priority subject for leaders, who have ensured that the provision meets the requirements for a Church school. The curriculum is comprehensive with sequenced units enabling pupils to explore big questions in a respectful and thoughtful manner. This was evident in a lesson where pupils identified how values in the book of Corinthians influence how Christians act. Class 'big books' are filled with a range of creative activities that help individuals to express ideas and knowledge. The varied approach to teaching develops pupils' curiosity, which is harnessed to help deepen understanding further. They show a strong understanding of Christianity as a global world faith. Pupils can articulate how the teachings of Jesus impact on the lives of Christians today. However, their depth of knowledge about worldviews and religions other than Christianity is more limited.

As a result of effective teaching, pupils make good progress in RE. Leaders know about the quality of work as they review learning and moderate attainment regularly. Pupils know whether they are successful, through end of unit assessments and written feedback that acknowledges their achievements.

## Information

Address	Burnley Road, Altham, Accrington, BB5 5UH		
Date	07 October 2024	URN	119577
Type of school	Voluntary Aided	No. of pupils	82
Diocese	Blackburn		
Headteacher	Carol Woods		
Chair of Governors	Jill Jones (Acting)		
Inspector	Steven Holmes		