

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

## Priory Church of England Primary School, Trentham

**Address** Jubilee Road, Trentham, Stoke-on-Trent, United Kingdom, ST4 8EF

How effective is the school’s distinctive Christian vision established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

**Overall grade** **Good**

**The impact of collective worship** **Good**

### School’s vision

As the rainbow appears in the clouds, we are the brightness all around. Together we value uniqueness and rights; growing our knowledge with the Lord as our light.

### Key findings

- The school’s vision, along with its values and mission, are deeply rooted in the Bible. They powerfully inform everything which is done in each area of the life and work of Priory School. This results in a welcoming, highly inclusive, happy school where relationships are strong and in which pupils and adults flourish.
- Leaders are passionate, inspirational, and highly committed to the success and wellbeing of every member of the school and its extended community. They are determined to ensure that each person’s wellbeing and individual needs are met in full. This enables everyone to understand the Christian belief that they are valued children of God, able to live life in all its fullness. The relatively new governing body has prioritised the development of a robust, formal approach to the monitoring and evaluation of the school’s Christian distinctiveness. This now needs to be rigorously implemented.
- Character development is given a high priority in the school. As a Rights Respecting School, pupils are enabled to develop very good attitudes to dignity and diversity. This has significant impact in promoting positive relationships, resilience, hope and confidence. Opportunities to explore and develop a deeper understanding of spirituality are limited.
- Pupils and adults enjoy collective worship which is at the heart of the life of the school. It is strong in underscoring and affirming the vision and values. Pupils and adults have opportunities to reflect and are invited to engage with God through Bible stories, prayer and joyful singing.
- Religious education (RE) follows the locally agreed syllabus and there is access to relevant resources. Pupils enjoy lessons. At present, however, the subject lacks sufficient status in the school. This often results in insufficient depth and challenge in lessons and limits pupils’ learning.

## Areas for development

- Further develop and embed a formal approach for governors to monitor and evaluate all aspects of the impact of the school's vision and Christian distinctiveness. This is in order for governors to be clear about their priorities for future developments.
- Strengthen RE to secure an ambitious and stimulating curriculum so that pupils can have a greater understanding of theological and philosophical concepts in relation to Christianity and world faiths.
- Extend and deepen pupils' understanding of spirituality to enable them to fluently articulate its meaning and impact on themselves and others.

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

The whole community of Priory School is passionate about living and breathing every element of its deeply embedded vision and values. Its highly committed co-headteachers, leaders and staff promote the vision and values at every opportunity. This creates a safe, happy and joyful school. Everyone loves to belong and they are proud of their school and its Christian distinctiveness. The vision, values and mission are firmly rooted in the Bible and are passionately articulated by everyone. They have been carefully crafted and make a confident expression of the school's commitment to ensuring that each person can live life in all its fullness. The vision creates a generous and highly inclusive culture at the school which ensures that everyone is known, nurtured and inspired. Through this, a positive, inclusive environment is characterised by strong relationships, respect, and a focus on being the best one can be.

The vision motivates leaders and governors to make courageous financial decisions which positively affect the school community. One of many examples is the investment of funding to provide a private Educational Psychologist. This clearly has significant impact on individuals, promoting their ability to fully engage in their learning. Investment in developing leaders is also given high priority. This benefits all staff and deepens their understanding and awareness of the distinctiveness of church schools. A robust, formal programme for governors to fully monitor and evaluate the school's Christian distinctiveness is not yet embedded.

The vision, values and mission have driven decisions which shape the school's curriculum, ensuring that it meets the needs of every individual. This results in pupils enjoying their studies, being motivated in their learning and making good progress. Support and provision for those with additional learning or personal needs or vulnerabilities is strong. Any required interventions are quickly and effectively identified and addressed by specialist staff and the highly effective Inclusion Hub. Because of this, barriers to learning are removed and pupils feel confident to grow and flourish in their studies. Through opportunities to challenge injustice and consider the exploitation of God's creation, pupils are able to think critically beyond themselves and their own experience. A broad and expanding provision for extracurricular activities enables pupils to develop skills and pursue a range of sporting and other opportunities. Whilst there are various opportunities for spiritual development, this does not richly infuse the curriculum. This means that pupils' deeper understanding of spirituality, and their ability to speak about it, is limited.

Through the vision, leaders are motivated to an unswerving determination to develop and protect the emotional and mental health and wellbeing of all. This lives out the theological foundation of the vision's roots and values which reference trust, optimism and enjoyment. This focus is championed by the wellbeing steering group and Mental Health First Aiders. The strong impact of this provision ensures that each person feels valued and supported. No one who is struggling will go unnoticed or unsupported. Its success and effectiveness is recognised through the Carnegie Mental Health Award.

The vision is further reinforced through the school's status as a UNICEF Rights Respecting School. The resulting affirmative ethos permeates the school through character development, relationships, behaviour and attitudes. It ensures that pupils adopt a clear understanding of right and wrong and the impact of everyone's choices. Consequently, pupils unfailingly behave calmly, courteously and with dignity. They show

their immense loyalty to each other and the school. Difference in any form is treated positively and with equity and equality, whatever anyone's background, culture or way of living,. Forgiveness and reconciliation come naturally and are well-established in the environment of deep mutual respect. Bullying of any type is very rare, but when disagreements do arise, relationships are swiftly and effectively restored.

The school vision, and its underpinning theology, frequently refers to bringing the light of God into the world. The outworking of this is very much in evidence in the community's extensive and varied charitable work. In addition, opportunities are developing which enable pupils to understand the importance of becoming courageous advocates against disadvantage and deprivation. A longstanding, effective relationship with a school in Uganda is becoming re-established after a gap due to COVID. This promotes pupils' understanding of the different contexts and life-experiences of children in diverse settings.

The generous, highly valued ministry of the local vicar has a transformational impact on the lives of pupils, staff and parents. As a significant channel of the school vision, he is effective in demonstrating that Christianity is a living, relevant faith. The school's close partnerships with the vicar and church are beneficial and result in welcomed pastoral care, spiritual nurture and practical support.

During COVID lockdowns, the vision prompted leaders to make carefully targeted, generous responses for pupils, their families and the wider community. This included food parcels, home visits, online worship and interventions for those struggling. At Christmas the school shared baubles declaring 'When the world needed to stay apart, we stayed together #TeamPriory'. This brought appreciated positivity in dark times. Through these actions, the vision's '...we are the brightness all around ...with the Lord as our light' was lived out.

Inclusive, invitational collective worship is at the heart of life at Priory School. It expresses the brightness and optimism of the vision that is felt and experienced throughout the community. Bible stories, The Lord's Prayer, enthusiastic singing, and interactive engagement help to create meaningful and uplifting worship experiences for pupils, staff and parents. Through this, everyone can reflect, grow spiritually and is invited to experience and encounter God. Following the cycle of the Church year, worship is very strongly supported by the vicar, Open the Book and other visitors. The school family goes to the parish Church for services where they are able to experience and celebrate key festivals. A steering group and an enthusiastic group of pupil worship ambassadors, plan, monitor and evaluate worship ensuring that it is relevant, varied and engaging.

Pupils look forward to and enjoy RE lessons which give some opportunities for reflection and the exploration of ideas. In an Early Years Foundation Stage class, pupils were enthusiastic in their learning and were skilled in recalling detail about stories that they were exploring. For a number of these pupils, teaching had led to a strong grasp of key religious vocabulary. In later years, pupils' learning in the subject is less well-developed, limiting opportunities for critical thinking, deep questioning and analysis. This is because training for staff is not sufficient to give teachers the required knowledge and understanding to provide appropriately challenging lessons. Curriculum plans for RE cover Christianity and world faiths, but do not do so in adequate depth. This means that there is not enough scope for pupils' exploration of theological concepts and the development of philosophical ideas.

### Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	16 June 2022	URN	132240
Date of previous inspection	11 June 2015		
School status	VC	NOR	416
Diocese	Lichfield		
Co-Headteachers	Pam Keen and Jenny Cunliffe		
Proportion of pupils deemed to be disadvantaged	Below National Average		
Proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Above National Average		
Inspector's name	Peter Coates	No.	0937