

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Giles' Church of England Primary School

Vision

Our Christian vision is to “Do everything in Love” (1 Corinthians 16:14) where the apostle Paul explains the nature of love as patient, kind, always protects and always perseveres. Love never fails. To “Do everything in Love” means to let love guide our thoughts, actions and words so that all can thrive. God’s call to live a life marked by love is a consistent message found throughout Scriptures. This is the golden thread that weaves through our work and is exemplified by our values – Love, Respect, Trust and Forgiveness - with our Chorus Schools Federation and beyond.

St Giles' Church of England Primary School is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. It has the following notable strengths.

Strengths

- School leaders collaborate innovatively with The Chorus Schools Federation, living out their unified Christian vision together. The federation skilfully retains the distinctiveness of each school setting whilst using carefully honed processes to benefit each. This results in love being shown through key decisions, actions and relationships.
- Relationships in St Giles' school community are extremely positive. Staff have a deep compassion for pupils. They take time and effort to get to know individual needs and family contexts well. The wellbeing of pupils is a priority. This provides an inclusive atmosphere where harmony pervades daily life in school.
- The creative approach to the curriculum enables pupils to explore learning in imaginative ways. Spiritual development is threaded intrinsically through curriculum subjects. As a result, pupils thrive on the learning opportunities given to them, both inside and outside of the classroom.
- Collective worship unites the school with its wider federation community. This is done through the clever use of technology. The vision and values are woven into daily acts of worship and seamlessly flow into the school day. This enables the community to flourish spiritually.
- The partnerships formed by school include connections with the local parishes and farmlands. As a consequence, pupils have enriching experiences in their education.

Development Points

- Embed the religious education (RE) curriculum in ways which deepen knowledge of how beliefs relate to each other within and across religions. This is so that pupils can explain how their understanding develops as they move through the school.
- Provide more opportunities for governors to monitor and evaluate Christian distinctiveness. This is so that school leaders are fully supported in developing as a Church school.



Inspection Findings

School leaders passionately live and breathe their Christian vision of love at St Giles'. They show patience, kindness and diligence, displaying love in action. Positive relationships and a sense of belonging are central to all that goes on at the school. The welcoming heart of the school emanates from leaders, as staff say, 'you are only new for five minutes here.' Pupils are nurtured to grow and develop as individuals to reach their potential. The executive headteacher is constantly finding innovative ways of working that enable pupils and adults to thrive. Being part of the federation provides shared resources in terms of finance, staffing, training and learning opportunities for pupils. Collective worship has a powerful impact on the community, developing a deep sense of spirituality. The uniqueness of the individual is celebrated, and the creative learning approach provides acceptance, respect and love for one another and God's world. Governors oversee the federation and help to connect the vision to all three schools. However, they are spread thinly across the three schools. Monitoring and evaluation of the school as a Church school is not yet driving improvement. Partnerships with the local churches and diocese support and strengthen the school's vision.

The curriculum provision is ambitious, driven by leaders' desire to 'do everything in love'. The joy of learning outdoors is a cornerstone of the curriculum offer at St Giles'. The recently acquired minibus enables pupils to experience forest school, sporting and musical events plus residential trips with the federation schools. This provides a greater sense of community, building confidence and resilience. Visits to cultural centres, religious places and local farmlands are frequent. Parents speak highly of the 'outside learning balancing the rigour of academic subjects'. Within school, the environment has been adapted to enhance outdoor learning to develop spirituality and reflectiveness. For example, pupils tie ribbons to the pear prayer tree, situated in the spiritual garden, adjoining the playground. As one pupil commented, it is a 'place for thinking about questions that bother me'. As part of their spiritual development in lessons, pupils readily link their thoughts about self, others, the world and beyond. They enjoy learning and are curious about life, as a result of the trust and respect shown to the individual. Those pupils who have special education needs and disabilities (SEND) are integrated very well.

The RE curriculum is well planned and resourced. Pupils participate in lessons actively, showing enquiring minds about belief and faith. They respect others' opinions and confidently take part in class discussions and ask the big questions about life. Visits to local places of worship enhance their experience of religions. They have a foundational understanding of Christianity, key world religions and worldviews. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to deepen and link their ideas about faith and belief as they move through the school. St Giles' have recently appointed a new RE leader to work across the federation schools. The RE leader is supporting teachers to establish the building blocks of religious literacy across all religions and non-religious worldviews.

Collective worship is prioritised at the beginning of the day and led by the executive school leaders. It is planned carefully and inspirationally, drawing upon clear biblical teaching rooted in the Christian vision. Themes are chosen to reflect the church year and school values. Examples from nature enable the community to develop a spiritual awareness of God's creation. Music plays an important role in worship, with pupils contributing by singing solos and playing instruments, creating a joyful atmosphere. Adults talk about the meaningful impact collective worship has on their own lives. They see that it 'sets everyone up positively for the day'. Pupils have time to reflect and



consider their own lives and their place in the world. They keenly share prayers and reflective artwork during collective worship, inspiring one another in their spiritual development. School and families attend the local parish church at key festivals during the year, making it a special experience for the community. The local vicar visits school regularly to enrich RE lessons and to lead Christian meditation sessions. Pupils speak of the positive impact these meditation sessions have on their wellbeing. Bibles are presented to pupils moving onto secondary school, which families value as a memory of their time at St Giles’.

Relationships around school are extremely positive. Pupils work together well and respect each other. They know the vision and values of the school well and remind each other about them daily. The playgrounds have been carefully organised to meet the varied social needs of pupils. Spaces in school are used flexibly, enabling them to flourish in friendships. The construction area, outside the pastoral room, is open for pupils to come and talk to a trusted adult if needed. Pastoral care in the school is exceptional, showing timely communication with parents and a flexibility of approach. Behaviour of pupils is exemplary, and forgiveness is a key value, encouraging fresh starts. Staff show that ‘love always protects’ by supporting families when they are going through difficult times. Parents talk about this support with gratitude, citing the impact of the school vision. Staff feel valued, knowing that the ‘solution-focused leadership’ is there to support and guide them. Their skills and talents are encouraged and developed to reflect the vision and values. The federation enables staff to thrive by providing training and professional development opportunities across the schools.

There is a strong sense of personal and community responsibility, stemming from the culture within the school. Pupils sponsor a school in Peru, supporting their vegetarian kitchen, helping finance their school bus and exchanging postcards. This exemplifies their outward-looking perspective, living out their vision. Pupils take care of their local environment and show initiative to help others. Back at school, pupils enjoy their environmental science lessons, which help them care for the world around them. Older pupils teach younger pupils how to look after the herbs and plants they have chosen to grow in beds. Responding to the local issue of water conservation, pupils are busy campaigning to get water butts in school. Love in action motivates them to do so.

Information

Address	Church Street, Great Maplestead, Halstead, Essex, CO9 2RG		
Date	29 January 2025	URN	115068
Type of school	Voluntary Controlled	No. of pupils	83
Diocese	Chelmsford		
Federation	The Chorus Schools Federation		
Headteacher	Jinnie Nichols		
Chair of Governors	Penelope Doe		
Inspector	Claire Coulson		