



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Townsend Church of England School	
Address	High Oaks, St Albans, AL3 6DR

School vision
<p>At Townsend, our vision 'Achievement For All, Respect For All' is underpinned by the concept of 'Love your neighbour, love yourself, love the journey' from the story of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37. We value everyone, and show love and respect for ourselves and others, setting high standards and supporting each other so that we can all flourish.</p>

School strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's Christian vision has been carefully crafted and updated to address the particular needs of its diverse and vibrant student body. The outworking of the vision results in a palpable sense of belonging in the Townsend community. • Members of the school community care for each other. They understand and live out the school's vision of 'Respect for all, achievement for all'. • Leaders prioritise the wellbeing of both staff and students in their day to day work and in the allocation of resources. Both staff and students know that they are valued as individuals. • Students develop spiritually during their time at Townsend into reflective and compassionate young adults. The school's culture gives them the capacity and the drive to change their school and community for the better. • The school's partnership with the local cathedral greatly enhances the impact of collective worship. It offers an inspirational setting in which students are enabled to reflect and grow in their spirituality.

Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop the breadth of opportunities for students and adults to grow spiritually through collective worship. • Ensure that the biblical underpinning to the school's vision is clearly understood and applied throughout the school.

Inspection findings
<p>Townsend's Christian vision 'respect for all, achievement for all' has been enriched and updated over time. It directly addresses the current needs of its ethnically and culturally diverse school community. Students come from over seventy primary schools and a wide geographical area. Many join the school during Years 7 to 10. School leaders have therefore identified that promoting a sense of belonging and removing barriers to achievement are strategic priorities. The school vision energises leaders and staff to focus their attention on the most important issues faced by students. As a result, Townsend is a community where people feel valued and are supported to achieve. The school vision has been enhanced by the inclusion of Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan. This emphasises the deep Christian roots that underpin the school's philosophy of respect for one's</p>

neighbours. Leaders are aware that this distinctively Christian element is still an evolving part of school culture and are addressing the matter. They monitor the impact of the school vision rigorously by using regular surveys and focus groups, responding swiftly to ensure that concerns are addressed.

The school's vision is central to the strategic deployment of resources and the curriculum offered. Pastoral and learning support are given priority in funding decisions to ensure that vulnerable students are supported. Townsend's emphasis on curricular and extra-curricular music and other expressive arts enables students to thrive by developing teamwork, empathy and celebrating their creativity. Lessons begin with a 'do now' task. Students welcome the opportunity that these tasks often give to engage in reflection. The school's partnership with a local Christian educational charity provides additional important opportunities for students' spiritual development. The charity supports the delivery of RE, extra-curricular clubs and offers valuable enrichment opportunities for students in all years. Leaders direct additional resources towards vulnerable and disadvantaged students and those who join the school mid-way through a school year. This focus ensures that students are known and nurtured as individuals by the pastoral and inclusion teams. The effectiveness of support for the most vulnerable is rigorously monitored by school leaders.

At Townsend, students and staff talk freely about their beliefs and respect the standpoints of others. Discussion and disagreement are embraced as opportunities to learn and to put 'respect for all' into practice. For example, a recent act of collective worship about fasting was led by four students holding different worldviews. It prompted wide discussion and had a significant impact for good on the whole school community. Older students with different worldviews confirm that they have been supported in their spiritual development by the school. This is evident from their reflective approach to spiritual discussion, demonstrating that the Christian vision is deeply embedded in school life.

Collective worship is effective in supporting the spiritual development of students. It also keeps the school's vision and values at the forefront of people's minds. Students speak appreciatively about the invitational prayer and quiet reflection that are part of all acts of collective worship. Both Christian and Muslim students speak of benefitting from using the school's prayer room for private prayer. However, the school has no sacred space that is suitable for Eucharists and non-Eucharistic group worship. The school's collective worship is significantly enhanced by its partnership with St Albans Cathedral. The school's chaplain is a member of the cathedral staff. The school has use of the cathedral for important celebrations. Students work with the chaplain to craft these acts of worship, which are landmark celebrations of the school's Church of England foundation. These occasions greatly enrich the spiritual experience of both students and staff.

Leaders ensure that the rhythm of school life adapts well to tragic events. The sudden death of the recently retired headteacher of 28 years is being remembered with great sensitivity. This confirms the impact of the school's vision in creating a culture of deep respect.

Townsend is a community in which people treat each other well. The tone is set by leaders who care deeply for staff and students and act tirelessly to promote their wellbeing. As a result, members of the community know that they are valued and treated as individuals. Leaders actively support the career development of their colleagues by noticing their potential for fresh challenges and providing training. Staff greatly appreciate both this and the no blame culture at the school, where mistakes are treated as opportunities to learn. Leaders give mental wellbeing a high priority. This was shown by a recent staff training day with opportunities for prayer, reading and cooking. The strategic appointment of a school counsellor has benefitted the wellbeing of both staff and students. Pastoral staff are well informed and highly responsive to the needs of students in their care. Vulnerable students are given additional bespoke support by the inclusion and behaviour support teams, who make appropriate use of external agencies. The recently expanded and refurbished inclusion centre

provides a safe space for those who are going through difficult times. In this accepting culture, both staff and students willingly offer and receive support from their peers.

Students grow during their time in school into reflective and compassionate young adults. This is a result of the school vision's focus on the importance of respectful relationships. The new behaviour policy, emphasising students' shared responsibility to support each other's learning, has been widely welcomed. Students take pride in being able to exercise leadership within the community. There are many opportunities for this, such as by acting as mentors or as ambassadors for equality, literacy or ecological stewardship. The school's culture encourages students to be active citizens. For example, earlier this year a group of Year 11 students chose to initiate a very successful cultural diversity week. Student leaders recently decided that the school should support a local charity for homeless people and will lead this initiative. It is clear that students rightly feel that their actions make a genuine difference for the better in their community and beyond.

Leaders have comprehensively and effectively addressed the recent decline in performance in GCSE religious studies by reviewing all aspects of RE provision. There is now a clear curriculum which reflects the subject's importance. It is challenging and well sequenced with good breadth and balance across all key stages. All students take GCSE religious studies. Professional development of RE staff ensures that teachers are skilled practitioners. Timetabled lessons in all years are supplemented by learning for life lessons and occasional enrichment afternoons. These enable students to make improved progress by pursuing key elements of the subject in greater depth.

RE lessons are lively, interesting and challenging. Current students know how well they are doing and how to improve. They are making good progress. Students across all key stages speak of their confidence in venturing opinions because of the safe environment in lessons. An A level lesson on different ethical standpoints was fast paced and highly interactive. It demonstrated the genuine depth of students' understanding of complex philosophical ideas and their willingness to engage in intellectual debate. This illustrates both the quality of the RE teaching, and the embedded nature of the school's Christian vision.

The inspection findings indicate that Townsend Church of England School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
Inspection date	1 May 2024 - 2 May 2024	URN	117555
VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary aided	Pupils on roll	778
Diocese	St Albans		
MAT/Federation			
Headteacher	Anthony Flack		
Chair	Helen Quenet		
Inspector	Andrew Wilcock	No.	2112