

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England First Academy, Wheaton Aston	
Address	Marston Road, Wheaton Aston, ST19 9PQ
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
We love and value each member of St. Mary's family as precious individuals. Our outward-looking curriculum enables everyone to embrace life in all its fullness while celebrating the everyday and the unique. Through our Christian values of belief, respect and friendship we: 'Shine as a Light in the World'.
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> St Mary's has a distinctive Christian vision. It is rooted in theology that is shared enthusiastically by children and adults alike. The vision shapes the decision making of its dedicated leaders. It exists within the wider curriculum and supports the drive for improvement. Each member of the community is treated as a unique, precious individual. Character development is at the forefront of its vision. There is a culture of respect supporting its aim to 'shine as a light in the world'. Recognition of the importance of spirituality allows children and adults to flourish. Leaders at all levels promote wellbeing, enabling everyone to embrace life in all its fullness. Thoroughly planned collective worship is invitational and inclusive. It provides enjoyment and inspiration. However, children are not regularly involved in its planning and evaluation. Religious education is planned and delivered effectively using a range of resources. However, the teaching of different faiths and worldviews is less effective. This inhibits a deeper understanding of diversity. Schemes of assessment are not fully embedded to clearly demonstrate individual progress.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure children plan and evaluate collective worship so that they are fully involved in identifying and implementing areas for development. Embed schemes of assessment to clearly demonstrate the progress made by children in religious education. Implement rich learning experiences that enhance children's understanding of cultural difference, to support a greater knowledge of varied faiths and diversity.

Inspection findings

St. Mary's has undergone a period of extensive change as it federated with a middle school and joined a multi academy trust. Under new leadership, it has re-established a vision shaped by all members that reflects its Christian theological roots. Staff and children live out the values of love and care. Parents rightly comment that the staff know each child in such detail that they feel part of a wider family. Children learn how to live well together. This is demonstrated in classrooms and on the playground where respect and friendship are valued. The vision is evident in its policies and practices and it strongly promotes inclusion where every child is a precious individual. Investment in shared leadership across the federation shows the commitment to ensure the needs of all are fully supported. Guidance and care from the St Chad's Trust and the governing body (LAC) promotes the deeply Christian vision. This ensures that children can flourish.

In creating effective learning experiences, the academy has established its vision at the centre. Leaders work together across the federation to ensure teaching and learning is relevant, challenging and has an outward focus. Understanding the role of the school in its community is carefully considered. St Mary's welcomes local residents for meals on special occasions and a carnival supported by the active PTA. Within lessons, children can consider global events. They openly discuss their responses to issues, such as an earthquake in Syria and Turkey. Children show courageous advocacy as a response to learning through fundraising and sharing awareness with others. This illustrates the school motto to shine as a light in the world. Through the teaching of PSHE, they record reactions to issues of deprivation and diversity in floor books. A well-resourced library sits at the heart of the building. The investment in texts celebrating respect and difference enables children to deepen their understanding of living well together.

St Mary's links closely with its partners showing evidence of how the community lives well together. Training from the Diocese of Lichfield is used effectively to support its Christian vision. The academy also lead training for other schools with support from the local vicar. Parents and community members participate in raising aspirations during lessons in careers. This demonstrates how wider members of the academy are valued in its vision. There is a commitment to support the achievement of vulnerable children, shared by staff and families. Parents consult with leaders to provide feedback about their learning. Such actions allow the academy to flourish together as a united group.

Pastoral care is a strength of the school. Parents correctly share how children are welcomed quickly and staff take a strong interest in their lives. This enables them to develop healthy relationships and flourish with dignity and respect. The wellbeing of adults is demonstrated in regular supportive conversations and the positive recognition of the genuine care offered by the leaders. Children are encouraged to be reflective to ensure they can personalise their learning. The use of deep questions in lessons enables them to develop compassion allowing all to flourish.

Spirituality is woven into varied learning experiences. Children can articulate its meaning and share examples. A focus week on spiritual art enables many practical opportunities to express and share examples of God's love globally. Children are challenged to answer questions, such as 'if there was no sun what would happen?' This allows them to appreciate God's creation and express its meaning. Classrooms have inspiring reflective areas and resources to allow children to consider the needs of themselves and others. A large display in school is a central focal point where they draw and write prayers on a chalk board. Children rightly say that they are like one big family and look out for each other.

Leaders effectively utilise planning to organise Collective worship. It is inclusive as it welcomes all to participate. Opportunities are created for children to share readings, prayers and songs. Class worship also allows adults to grow spiritually. To better understand life in society, Bible stories are interpreted effectively. The academy is supported by the local vicar who leads regular worship and acts as a chaplain for all. Teachers know they can approach her at any time to seek advice and share concerns. The local Church acknowledges the need to link its work with the school and frequent visits there allow children to celebrate festivals. This deepens their understanding of acts such as the eucharist.

The Year 4 worship team enjoys sharing skills with younger classes. They openly discuss how the biblical analogy of the body and its parts explains the unity that worship brings. Such examples demonstrate how St. Mary's fulfils its vision to grow as a family. Children rightly claim they are welcomed members of the worship team even though some may be unsure about personal belief in God. Despite the strengths of this team, there is a lack of involvement for children in the planning and evaluation of worship. Increasing these opportunities allows them to express their own spirituality and gain confidence enabling them to flourish.

Religious education has a prominent place in the curriculum. Teachers develop rich learning experiences that reflect the values of the academy. 'Understanding Christianity' and the local agreed syllabus are used to shape learning experiences. However, the development of planning in teaching different faiths and world views is less effective. Subsequently, this inhibits a deeper understanding of diversity. Children are challenged to apply learning to their own beliefs using deep questions. They are confident to argue well as they explore themes. Younger children use craft and drama to support their understanding of faith and belief and they openly share Bible stories they have learnt in lessons. Whilst they can share knowledge and understanding, assessment in the subject does not provide a detailed profile of progress.

St Mary's vision enables strong improvement after a period of change and it encourages children and adults alike to embrace life in all its fullness.

Information			
School	St Mary's Church of England First Academy, Wheaton Aston	Inspection date	12 June 2023
URN	146427	VC/VA/ Academy	Academy
Diocese/District	Lichfield	Pupils on roll	78
MAT/Federation	St Chad's Academies Trust and Brewood and Wheaton Aston Federation		
Head of School	Naomi Brennan		
Chair of Trust Board	Ms V Evans		
Inspector	Keith Farquhar	No.	2143