

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Andrew's Church of England VC Lower School, Biggleswade	
Address	Brunts Lane, Biggleswade, SG18 0LY

School vision
<p>At St Andrew's School we develop aspiration, strength and self-belief by supporting each other and living our values.</p> <p>Don't be afraid, I have called you by name, you are mine. I have marked your name on the palms of my hands.</p> <p>(Isaiah 43:1 and 49:16)</p>
School strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The established Christian vision is well-known and cherished, permeating all aspects of school life. It reflects the diversity of the community and drives all the school does. • Pupils' learning on racial segregation and exploitation of the natural world leads them to be knowledgeable about injustice. They are determined to make a difference as a result. • Spiritual development is woven throughout worship. This includes thoughtful opportunities for pupils and adults to develop their personal spirituality through silence and prayer. • The challenging religious education (RE) curriculum enables pupils to become well-informed about a range of world faiths and worldviews. Through RE, they are encouraged to become critical and independent thinkers. • Leaders ensure the curriculum has pupils' individual needs at its heart. They expertly adapt learning so that pupils, including those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), flourish.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase pupils' and adults' spirituality by embedding opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum. • Develop opportunities for pupils to become independent agents for change, allowing them to follow their ambition and drive. • Build on the close working relationship between school leaders and governors to include evaluating the impact of the vision.
Inspection findings
<p>Staff, governors and parents have contributed to a well thought through Christian vision. As a result, it is known, valued and lived out in many ways. This includes through the warm welcome extended to visitors. In line with the vision, staff know pupils so well it is as if 'they have their names written on the palm of their hands'. Staff seek to serve them and their families. They take time to get to know and understand individual circumstances so that they can advocate effectively for them when necessary. Families are appreciative of the level of care staff demonstrate for their children. This includes pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Leaders prioritise staff</p>



wellbeing, leading to a strong sense of togetherness across a large school on two sites. Governors know the school well and are passionate for it to succeed. They are aware of its strengths and areas of development. However, they do not routinely monitor and evaluate the impact of the vision on actions taken.

Collective worship forms the foundation of life at St Andrew's. As a result of carefully chosen stories, pupils are inspired to action and enjoy collective worship. Bible stories help the community to understand the teachings of Christ. Worship allows pupils time to reflect and to be still from the busyness of daily life. Staff and pupils are grateful for this. Prayer is held in high regard and many pupils participate in the prayer club that is offered. This enables them to develop their own sense of spirituality. However, opportunities that are specifically spiritual in nature are not planned for across the curriculum. Consequently, spirituality is not well developed. Worship is enhanced through regular visits from clergy. Pupils are enthusiastic about acting as worship leaders. They value the opportunity to independently plan and lead worship for others. This demonstrates the value adults place on developing self-esteem. Although confident in voicing their opinions, there are few opportunities for pupils to act upon them.

Parents know and appreciate that staff will advocate for them if their children need support from external agencies. As a result, families feel they are valued, and that staff 'believe in them'. The school's family worker and SEND teaching assistants offer guidance to pupils and their parents beyond the academic. This work is invaluable in promoting good mental health. Leaders readily adapt the school's resources and approaches to meet the diverse needs of pupils. One such response was to create a flexible provision in the Cabin and the Group Room. Other areas around the school have also been developed to offer nurture. Pupils receive individualised support and feel valued as a result.

The curriculum challenges pupils so that they rise to the high expectations staff have for them. It is supplemented by a wide range of clubs, such as art and sports. Participation in these enables pupils to develop as individuals and allows their talents to flourish. There is a strong culture of recognising achievements. The school's positivity and encouragement spills over into regular acts of thanks and celebration through the presentation of awards. Consequently pupils' self-esteem, and therefore their self-belief, is strengthened.

Opportunities for learning about the wider world and current affairs enhance the curriculum. For example, their understanding of injustice grew by learning about segregation in history. Pupils know about topical issues facing the natural world such as deforestation. They are also keen to discuss recent conflicts around the world that put others in danger. This enables them to empathise with those in difficult situations. However, there are no planned opportunities for them to take action against things they feel are wrong. Some pupils learn how to serve others in school by being members of the School Council. This gives them a sense of service and prepares them to be citizens who make a positive contribution to society. This builds a culture of respect.

A rich offering of learning experiences ensures pupils enjoy RE. The curriculum is meticulously designed to provide them with the knowledge needed to answer big questions and develop curiosity. Staff provide creative opportunities for pupils to think philosophically and critically about worldviews. This enables them to see both sides of an argument. They respond thoughtfully and know there may not always be an answer to their questions. Thus, they become aware of their own place in the world and respect the beliefs of others. Pupils are knowledgeable about Christianity. They can confidently talk about the similarities and differences between Christianity and a range of world faiths. Learning is strengthened by visits to explore different places of worship. This promotes an ethos of inclusion and acceptance. The Faith Tour in Queen's Park was a very popular and memorable experience as pupils met faith leaders from a range of world religions. This enhanced



their respect for beliefs that differ from their own. The RE leaders provide support to teachers, guaranteeing consistently high quality provision. They use their expertise to help shape the curriculum so that it meets the needs of pupils.

The inspection findings indicate that St Andrew's Church of England Lower School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
Inspection date	11 March 2024	URN	109595
VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary controlled	Pupils on roll	828
Diocese	St Albans		
MAT/Federation			
Headteacher	Sue Rolfe		
Chair	Sally Wells		
Inspector	Ben Hodson	No.	2231