

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

St John's Church of England VA Primary School, Sandbach Heath	
Address	Heath Road, Sandbach, CW11 2LE
School vision	
<p>At St John's we understand that we are all God's children, that he loves us unconditionally and that 'With God All Things are Possible.'</p> <p>The hope God brings, through the wisdom of His teachings and example, enriches our lives as a community of followers.</p> <p>Through encountering a values-rich school life, pupils develop moral character and, in our diverse community, people know that they are valued.</p>	
School strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loving and supporting one another is a reality at St John's. The new leadership team has created an environment where the aim is to include everyone. The school celebrates the diversity of its community and is welcoming to all. This allows staff and pupils to feel cherished as 'children of God'.</li> <li>• Rooted in the Bible, the Christian vision is wholly appropriate and meets the needs of the school's diverse community. 'With God all things are possible' is very much known and understood. The vision motivates pupils and staff, who are determined to succeed.</li> <li>• Strengthened by a fruitful partnership with local churches and clergy, the Christian vision and values are central to collective worship. As such, the worship life of the school helps pupils develop their moral character.</li> </ul>	
Areas for development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St John's Church of England Primary School is not meeting all of the requirements expected of a Church school. Therefore leaders should, as a priority, take the following action.</li> <li>• Ensure that all decisions are clearly shaped by the vision. This is in order that pupils and adults flourish in every area of school life.</li> <li>• Ensure that the Christian vision shapes an holistic curriculum so that all pupils flourish academically and spiritually.</li> <li>• Take steps to ensure that RE is of the highest possible quality and standing as part of the whole-school curriculum.</li> <li>• As part of this work, ensure that the quality of teaching in RE is high. This is in order that pupils achieve well in RE, in line with the requirements of a Church school.</li> <li>• Develop a whole-school, shared understanding of spirituality. Leaders should use this to ensure that collective worship enables and enhances individual, spiritual growth.</li> <li>• Ensure that there are planned opportunities for pupils to recognise injustice in the world. These experiences should be used to equip pupils to become agents of change beyond their school environment.</li> </ul>	
Inspection findings	



St John's is in a period of transition following a recent, significant time of turbulence for the school. A new interim executive board has been appointed, along with an interim headteacher, and there has been a change in senior leadership. These developments have been embraced by the whole-school community and a tangible sense of hope for the future permeates the school. The school's Christian vision, which has been recently revised, is based upon the Christian teaching of salvation. This fosters an understanding of God's unconditional love, which provides joy and peace. The vision is sustaining staff through the challenges that they are facing. The recent revisions ensure that the vision is entirely appropriate in meeting the needs of the community. Newly-introduced 'vision and values' days provide pupils with a rich variety of experiences to explore the six, carefully-chosen values. The pupils appreciate these opportunities and can describe how to live out their values in everyday life. In line with the vision, the newly-formed leadership team is creating a supportive and empowering culture. People feel valued and want to give their best. This change is allowing all staff to be devoted to loving and developing each pupil. Parents and carers speak warmly about how the school accepts and supports their children. The chair of the executive board is closely involved in the work of the school. Board members are working hard to build meaningful relationships and confidence in the staff team. The vision is in the early stages of being embedded. As such, its impact, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish, is currently limited.

The school's Christian vision is not being applied to the curriculum and it is not used to shape the learning experience of all pupils. The curriculum lacks ambition. However, through a change in culture driven by the headteacher, potential in everyone is identified. This is particularly evident in the nurture of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The newly-formed 'Sunshine Room' provides a safe space and bespoke provision for pupils who need additional support. Pupils value the wide range of extracurricular activities now in place. They also talk enthusiastically about the increase in educational visits and the visitors to school. These experiences allow pupils to explore interests and improve skills to become well-rounded individuals. Currently, there is no shared, whole-school understanding of what is meant by spirituality. Consequently, pupils' spiritual development is not planned for or explored within the curriculum.

Adults and pupils value the opportunity to gather as a whole-school community within collective worship. It is an important part of the school day. An inclusive Christian atmosphere encourages pupils to respond positively to the relaxed, worshipful tone. Those with SEND are provided with support, if required, to enable them to take part. A new structure has been introduced, ensuring that collective worship upholds and celebrates the school's vision and values. The school is supported by local Anglican and Methodist churches. These partnerships provide a variety of worship styles, giving pupils a broader experience of different Christian practices. This enriches the worship life of the school. Singing brings joy to all. Staff recognise that song is a way in which many pupils access and express their spirituality. However, as there is not a clear, shared understanding of spirituality, there are missed opportunities for stillness and reflection. As a result, collective worship does not sufficiently enhance and enrich individuals' spiritual growth.

Motivated by the vision of everyone knowing that they are valued, there is a genuine sense of love and care at St John's. Staff know their pupils and families well. An open-door culture has been established and parents and carers now feel like an integral part of the school. There is a strong sense that nothing is too much trouble. Led by the headteacher, an affirming ethos actively supports staff development. Staff now feel safe and cared for. Likewise, pupils are growing in confidence. They know that they are cherished and will happily engage in conversation with adults across the school. The new school values, such as forgiveness and justice, are creating an environment that encourages all to treat others well. The new school value of fellowship underpins leaders' determination to bring the school community together by celebrating each pupil's uniqueness. For example, leaders have introduced the symbol of cherries, which can be seen throughout the school.

Pupils understand that, just as cherries do not grow alone, they, too, need each other in order to flourish. Pupils from diverse backgrounds valued the recent opportunity to discuss their culture and heritage with the whole school. As a result, pupils better appreciate the rich diversity of cultures within the community.

Leaders use collective worship as a starting point in nurturing a sense of responsibility. For example, pupils talk enthusiastically about singing and making cards for a local care home, as well as raising money for various charities. Older pupils are beginning to consider the actions of those in the past who fought for a better world. However, an understanding of the importance of justice is in its infancy. Currently, there are no planned opportunities for pupils to learn about ethical choice and inequality. Consequently, pupils do not have the knowledge to equip them to support and speak up for important causes.

Leaders have recently updated the RE curriculum following input from the diocese. However, leaders have not ensured that the provision, profile and priority of RE reflects its place on the curriculum of a Church school. There are inconsistencies in the amount of curriculum time dedicated to the teaching of RE. Where pupils are taught RE more consistently, they recognise that it gives them space to think about their own beliefs. Within the new curriculum, more creative activities are used to stimulate pupils' thoughts and imagination. For example, in the Early Years, when learning about Pentecost, the children made kites and used collage to make fire headbands. As a result, they were able to talk about how the disciples might have felt when the Holy Spirit came. However, pupils in Upper Key Stage 2 are currently taught very little RE. Thus, they are confused by Bible stories and have insufficient time to explore and understand the core beliefs of Christianity. Furthermore, across the school, pupils' knowledge of different faiths and worldviews is very underdeveloped.

The newly-adopted RE curriculum has not had time to impact positively on the quality of teaching. Where it is being taught, teachers are gaining confidence in their subject knowledge. However, the teaching of RE lacks aspiration and consistency across the school. Within some lessons, teachers use questioning to help assess pupils' understanding. However, there is very little recording of pupils' independent learning and little evidence that they are making progress. The leader of RE is now benefiting from working alongside other Church schools and there is a clear vision for the subject. Recent monitoring activities are providing an accurate understanding of the actions needed. For example, new assessment processes, which help inform teaching and learning, are in the early stages of development.

The inspection findings indicate that St John's Church of England VA Primary School has strengths, but that there are also issues that leaders need to address as a matter of priority. These relate to the school vision, RE, the curriculum, collective worship and justice and responsibility. They are listed in the areas for development.

Information			
Inspection date	20 June 2024	URN	111334
VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary aided	Pupils on roll	174
Diocese	Chester		
MAT/Federation			
headteacher	Nevin Deakin		
Chair	Rob Halsall		
Inspector	Caroline Mackenzie	No.	2332