Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS)

Report **St John's Church of England (VA) Primary School, Midsomer Norton** Address Redfield Road, Midsomer Norton, Bath, United Kingdom, BA3 3JN

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 Excellent

The impact of collective worship Good

The effectiveness of religious education (RE) Excellent

School's vision

'Working together to build a firm foundation for learning and caring.' Rooted in Matthew 7:24–25. 'Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.'

As a foundation for learning, we provide a broad and balanced curriculum which enables all pupils to achieve and flourish whilst discovering their unique gifts and talents. As a foundation for caring, our Christian values are at the heart of school life, developing ready, respectful and caring citizens of the future.

Key findings

- The school's vision is deeply rooted in Christian thinking. It drives a relevant contemporary curriculum in which pupils flourish academically and spiritually. Although there are many opportunities for spiritual development they are not clearly identified in all subjects.
- The vision has an excellent impact on the flourishing of staff, the Midsomer Norton Partnership Trust and the wider community. This is seen in outward-facing support encouraging other schools.
- Collective worship inspires pupils to understand the vision and its relevance to their lives. It strongly supports spiritual development. However, understanding of the centrality of prayer and the Eucharist is limited following absence from school during the pandemic.
- Religious education (RE) articulates the vision and has an exceptional impact on the lives of the pupils. They show a depth of understanding of major world faiths and some knowledge of multicultural Christianity. Very high progress in the subject is evident.
- A first-class range of opportunities driven by the vision raise the aspirations of the pupils to make the world a better place. The impact of this is seen in their clear understanding of themselves as significant agents of change.

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Areas for development

- Following the pandemic, deepen the impact of collective worship through redeveloping the centrality of prayer and understanding of the Eucharist, to further strengthen personal spiritual growth.
- Review use of opportunities for spiritual development in all curriculum subjects, to ensure an understanding that spirituality pervades all areas of life.
- Develop further understanding of Christianity as a living world faith, to enhance a greater awareness of the many ways in which God can be worshipped.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

The school's well-established Christian vision is deeply embedded and has consciously been evolving to maintain its contemporary relevance. Pupils understand it promotes 'koinonia' or community. They symbolise this by dropping a personal pebble in a bowl when they join the school and taking it with them when they leave. The vision is lived out in an exemplary manner by the senior leadership team, staff and pupils. The pupils readily understand the source of their vision and values arising from it. They know that beyond religious symbols, the vision is 'the way we are as people'. Pupils instantly connect with biblical material focusing on the parable of the wise and foolish house builders. (Matthew 7: 24-25) A profound sense of shared purpose unites the school, governors, trustees, parents and the church. The deeply-held vision is supported by local clergy and other ministers. High quality displays enhance the clarity of the vision. The school is part of the Midsomer Norton Partnership Trust which strongly supports the vision. There is an exceptional element of mutual encouragement between the schools in the Trust. This is particularly evident in this school supporting others in communicating vision, and the influential work of the RE lead.

The senior leadership team implement a wide range of innovative approaches to focus on strategic development. These ensure pupils have the potential to live out the vision through academic, spiritual and cultural opportunities. Leaders encourage adults to flourish through approaches to professional development. Staff of all ages and experience speak warmly about the care they receive. This is seen in their commitment to continue working in church schools. A staff 'buddy' system ensures mutual support. Emphasis is placed on flourishing through good mental health for all supported by the vision, Innovation in leadership is seen through the introduction of activities such as Rota Kids. This is an original way of enhancing character development. Many other opportunities are used by pupils to be significant agents of change in line with the vision.

The Christian vision is explicitly realized in the powerful educational impact on all pupils. The inspirational curriculum ensures the outstanding progress pupils make. This includes significant impact on those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Parents deeply appreciate the availability of the staff and feel every pupil is highly valued. Letters and testimonials from parents offer strong evidence of this. Parents especially appreciate the weekly 'Purple Pages'. This document shares news and notes on the Christian values and living out the vision at home. The impact of this care is excellent and clearly demonstrated in the way pupils' express appreciation of school life. The parent teacher association supports the vision by supplying pupils with a Bible on entry into the school. Families speak of how these are valued and used to support learning.

There is a very high-quality curriculum with a significant approach to spirituality identified. However, this is

not specifically written to indicate opportunities in each subject. As a result, spiritual development is not fully maximised. Pupils reflect well on their learning, and this is evident in discussion about work in their RE books. Further evidence is

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seen in writing prayers offered in collective worship. Many opportunities are provided for pupil leadership such as a pupil ethos committee and school council. Pupils are elected and clearly understand their responsibilities which leads to very strong character development. Pupils readily understand the practical application of the vision. All this results in an intuitive knowledge that the Christian vision applies to all areas of life both academic and personal.

The Christian vision holistically infuses the life of the school and is immediately apparent on entering the building. It is evident everywhere from the quality of relationships to the decision making of the governors. The Christian imperative of valuing everyone underpins the way pupils and adults behave. They show in exemplary conduct that as Jesus worked with his followers to care for everyone, so they strive to do the same. Perseverance with Christian ideals of love and compassion is readily lived out. Staff remark that when pupils disagree 'they know how to put things right.'

Pupils respond very well to the school's inspirational, invitational and inclusive worship. They appreciate the impact of this on their lives. Collective worship shows all the hallmarks of excellent planning with strong pupil involvement. Their enthusiasm in this shows in personal spiritual development. The church building is used for special services. The impact of this adds to a deep sense of spirituality. The presentation of a floral cross as a special gift made by the school at Easter evidences this. Studies of religious buildings in other countries deepens the sense of understanding spiritual places. Reflection areas and a spiritual garden also help this. Pupils sing enthusiastically and well, and some are inspired to make videos to demonstrate to their parents. Singing in worship is particularly appreciated by pupils in their feedback. An innovative idea during lockdown is when all classroom doors were left open during simultaneous singing. This lasting memory makes pupils value and appreciate music in worship. Understanding of the Trinity and Anglican tradition is evident. However, practice around the Eucharist has diminished during the pandemic. Prayer opportunities have been reduced by some recent school day restructuring.

RE is a distinct subject and is exceptionally well-planned and delivered. The RE leader is a knowledgeable specialist who resources and promotes the development of staff. She is highly active in making the fullest use of all available training and RE support groups to ensure professional development. As a result, staff are highly equipped and confident in the subject. Staff make maximum use of diocesan courses, and the RE lead's expertise influences other schools in the Trust. As a voluntary aided school, a high quality RE curriculum has been developed. This combines local elements with use of the 'Understanding Christianity' resource and other material. Strong links with the diocesan adviser support this. Governors regularly monitor the impact of RE and write comprehensive reports to inform future planning. Pupils have an impressive understanding of religions and worldviews. They show a deep appreciation of the need to study world religions to promote global understanding. There is some understanding of Christianity as a multicultural world faith but this is not fully developed. Feedback to pupils and their response is provided through colour coded comments and various imaginative rubber stamps. This helps pupils gauge their progress and strongly encourages them in further study.

VA ONLY	**The effectiveness of RE is**	**Excellent**

	Excellent practice is very evident in RE. Planning, monitoring and evaluation are of the highest quality. Effective and thorough tracking of individuals shows very clear pupil progress including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Quality features include the ability of pupils to give confident and articulate age appropriate accounts of Christianity and other world religions. Their depth of knowledge, seen in their work, enhances their spiritual understanding of the world.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	18 May 2022	URN	140452
Date of previous inspection	5 November 2015		
School status	Voluntary aided primary school	NOR	422
Name of MAT	Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership		

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Diocese	Bath & Wells		
Headteacher	Danielle West-Gaul		
Pupil profile	The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages.		
	The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)			
Inspector's name	Jeremy Hellier	No.	899

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