

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Andrew's Church of England VA Primary School, Lopham	
Address	The Street, North Lopham, Diss, Norfolk IP22 2LR

School vision
<p>Shine as lights in the World (Philippians 2:15). God values everyone within our community. The values of respect, kindness and encouragement are at the heart of all we do; seeking to help others to know the radiance of goodness and light; and aiming to unlock everyone's potential so that they can shine as lights in our wonderful world.</p>
School strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone in this close-knit school community knows their Christian vision well. Adults and pupils all share the aspiration to shine as beacons for each other. • The curriculum is carefully designed to work well in this small rural school. It inspires delight and curiosity from pupils, and provides a safe place to reflect and speak out. • Pupils and adults feel safe and loved, even when times are hard. Leaders are inspired by biblical teaching about hope and light to ensure that all are treated well. • Pupils love to shine as beacons of love and justice. Staff, parents and children work together for the good of all. • This is a community where adults and pupils develop well spiritually. Everyone understands spiritual development in terms of creativity and curiosity, putting them at the heart of the curriculum.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a consistent approach to personal prayer and reflection for pupils. This is so that worship can be a more inspirational experience for all. • Further develop the religious education (RE) curriculum so that all lessons and activities build on what pupils have already learned. This is so that they can be well prepared to understand and remember what they learn next about religion. • Develop a more precise understanding of what pupils should know at the end of each school year in RE. This is so that teachers can help pupils to understand religious vocabulary and ideas more accurately.
Inspection findings
<p>The whole community at St Andrew's is determined to support each other to shine as beacons of light. Adults are motivated by biblical theology of light and hope. As a result, the school is a bright and hopeful environment in which pupils and adults shine. Leaders have turned the school's small size to their advantage by creating an atmosphere where every individual feels safe and loved. The challenges of its size are mitigated by the school's membership of the Saints Federation alongside two other local Church of England schools. The three schools share many key leadership roles, making strategic decisions which enable St Andrew's to shine in the local community. The interim executive board (IEB) adds to this. Its members know the school well. They diligently monitor the impact of the shared Christian vision. This enables them to hold leaders to account, ensuring that pupils fulfil their potential in keeping with the vision.</p>



The curriculum compensates for the small year groups by creating opportunities for the whole school to work together. These activities are planned to reflect the Christian vision. This term, for example, the theme of ambition and flying high is helping pupils to unlock their potential. Each pupil has made their own balloon which is displayed in the hall and reminds them to be ambitious. Carefully chosen school visits, such as the recent one to the Norwich Aviation Museum, encourage pupils to broaden their horizons. As a consequence, pupils are enthusiastic and imaginative in their ambitions, explaining them in terms of the Christian vision. The curriculum draws the whole school together for weekly creative afternoons. This style of learning is particularly effective for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This is because they feel safe and supported to engage with teaching and speak about what they are learning. It also empowers older pupils to be role models for younger pupils in the behaviour and knowledge that they display. As a consequence, younger pupils follow the good example of older pupils and conduct themselves well. Teachers lead ambitious whole-group discussions that stretch pupils' thinking and encourage open debate and reflection. The curriculum also helps pupils to develop spiritually. This is because the school has a shared understanding of how it wants pupils to grow as spiritual beings. At the heart of this is the promotion of creativity and curiosity. These are evident in the work that pupils produce and in the way they think.

Worship is carefully planned to encourage curiosity about the Christian theological roots of the school's underlying values. Pupils reflect thoughtfully on the reasons why these values should apply to them. For example, the story of Job is used to demonstrate resilience. This promotes curiosity about spiritual questions, such as why an all-powerful divine being might allow suffering in the first place. As a consequence, worship helps pupils to develop and shine spiritually. The local parish church adds to this through shared Bible stories, singing and celebrating festivals in church. Pupils and adults are invited to be curious about the teachings of Jesus, but are never compelled to assent to any set beliefs. This invitational ethos creates a friendly and reflective atmosphere. Pupils respond well to some of the prompts that encourage prayer and reflection, such as the prayer pebbles in the hall. There is, however, an inconsistency between classes in how pupils are encouraged to pray and reflect through the course of the day. This means that some pupils have a more inspirational experience of worship than others.

Leaders at St Andrew's believe that emotional resilience is a necessary part of their vision to help everyone to shine. A leader is trained in emotional coaching, and gives much-valued support to pupils and adults. Because of this, relationships are characterised by mutual respect and consideration. Pupils are also motivated by the desire to be beacons for each other, and this impacts positively on their behaviour in school. This has created a feeling of trust and calm, providing a platform upon which pupils can begin to unlock their full potential. By sharing this effective practice with its partner schools, leaders ensure that St Andrew's shines as a light across the wider community.

Leaders are courageous and compassionate in the way they support disadvantaged and SEND pupils. The school's vision inspires leaders to be advocates for these families. They help them to access support from outside agencies, and encourage them to be resilient when times are hard. As a result, pupils and their families are drawn into the light of their school community. Leaders are unrelenting in their commitment to helping pupils to attend school regularly. Their imaginative approach to promoting attendance has led to a recent rapid decline in persistent absence. The local authority invites leaders from St Andrew's to share this exemplary work with other schools in Norfolk.

The concept of justice is embedded into the curriculum and into collective worship. Pupils speak thoughtfully, for example, about what they have learned about Martin Luther King. Because of this, pupils understand the importance of racial justice. Recent harvest celebrations have introduced pupils to the story of Ruth from the Bible. As a consequence, they can understand the importance of economic justice and fairness at the heart of their Christian vision. Pupils and adults are inspired to be agents for change through the charities they support. This goes beyond simply raising money. It

also involves learning to develop empathy from representatives of the charities for those who are personally affected by sensitive issues such as bereavement.

The RE curriculum is carefully planned to ensure that pupils learn about a range of religions including Christianity. The curriculum inspires pupils to apply their knowledge about religion to answering ambitious questions such as ‘Is believing in God reasonable?’ Discussion and creativity are embedded into the curriculum alongside pupils’ thoughtful written work. The three schools in the Saints Federation meet together for regular RE days where pupils learn about key festivals in the church calendar. This enriches pupils’ knowledge as they discuss Christian ideas with staff and pupils from other schools. Teachers are well supported in their provision of RE by expert advice from the Diocese of Norwich. Not all activities, however, are designed to build on what pupils have already learned. Because of this, pupils do not progress sufficiently well in some RE lessons.

Pupils develop a breadth of knowledge about different religions as they move through the school. They respond thoughtfully to the curriculum’s big questions. They can explain some key beliefs about the Christian faith, and can also remember some details of the additional religions they have studied. Teachers regularly assess pupils’ work to check their progress. It is not always clear, however, what leaders want pupils to know about religion at the end of each year. This holds back pupils’ progress because teachers have not checked how well they can explain some religious ideas with sufficient precision.

The inspection findings indicate that St Andrew's C of E VA Primary School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
School	St Andrew’s Church of England VA Primary School, Lopham	Inspection date	19/10/2023
URN	121149	VC/VA/Academy	VA
Diocese/District	Norwich	Pupils on roll	33
Federation	The Saints Federation		
Interim Executive Headteacher	Rhiannon Price		
Chair of the IEB	Kay Swann		
Inspector	Richard Hopkins	No.	2234