

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St John's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School, Lemsford

Vision

"I came that they may have life, life in all its fullness." (John 10:10)

At our school, we are striving to be a community in which everyone is enabled to have a full life centred on God's love: a life of opportunity, fulfilment and service to others.

St John's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School, Lemsford is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. It has the following notable strengths.

Notable Strengths

- Collective worship is a priority at St John's with an emphasis on the school vision and 'life in all its fullness'. Worship is thoughtfully and collaboratively planned by school leaders and local clergy, to meet the spiritual needs of pupils and adults. This vibrant partnership enhances worship and brings school and church together in a mutually beneficial way.
- Kindness, exemplifying God's love, is the main thread that pervades the school culture. This results in positive relationships between adults and pupils, creating a harmonious place to work and learn.
- Leaders prioritise inclusivity, upholding their Christian vision. Therefore pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are welcomed into the school. Staff work diligently as a team to ensure pupils receive extra support where needed and have the best chance to succeed.
- The vision is clearly understood and articulated, as adults and pupils embrace the learning opportunities that are offered at St John's. Governors and school leaders actively live out the vision, showing the school values of wisdom and understanding through the decisions they make.
- Pupils are highly motivated to 'serve others' and seek opportunities to make a difference in their community, the environment and further afield. Their keen sense of responsibility and fairness is rooted in the school vision.

Development Point

- Broaden the teaching within the religious education (RE) curriculum to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of major world religions and non-religious worldviews. This is so that pupils build secure knowledge over time and gain awareness and deep understanding of how faith and belief affect others.



Inspection Findings

Vision and Leadership

The compelling Christian vision enables pupils and adults at St John's to flourish academically, personally and spiritually. Leaders communicate the vision through the guiding principles of 'opportunity, fulfilment and service to others'. Therefore, staff and pupils understand the vision in a way that influences their daily lives. Living life to the full is expressed through the breadth of learning opportunities provided for pupils. As one young pupil explained, 'fulfilment is having good things as well as challenging things to think about'. Governors implement key decisions, guided by the vision, to ensure adults and pupils flourish. They consider wellbeing of staff and pupils carefully by providing clear direction and support. Staff acknowledge that individual children are unique and created in God's image. They work purposefully to ensure pupils feel cherished and valued through the strong relationships they build. Consequently, pupils have personalised learning experiences to support them to reach their potential and thrive. The headteacher works closely with the local clergy to forge connections that benefit the school, church and the village. This vibrant relationship has a huge impact on the school and community as they work together to live out the vision. This is seen in daily interactions, events at key Christian festivals and the organisation of the renowned village fete.

Vision and Curriculum

In line with the Christian vision, leaders have reshaped the curriculum to embed a reflective approach to learning. Big questions provide starting points that enable pupils to think deeply and engage confidently in discussions. A shared 'look up, look in, look out' approach helps pupils reflect thoughtfully on their learning and spiritual development. Pupils consider something greater than themselves, explore their own values and recognise the needs of others. The extensive school grounds and surrounding countryside give pupils a chance to connect with nature and appreciate God's creation. Forest school further strengthens this provision by developing pupils' resilience, practical skills and teamwork. As a result, the vision is lived out through these character-building experiences. Cross curricular enrichment days facilitate younger and older pupils to work together, such as when creating leaf sculptures inspired by Andy Goldworthy's art. These shared experiences encourage pupils to support and learn from one another, reflecting the school's vision to serve others. The specialist teaching for music, sport and French alongside a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, further extends pupils' learning. This rich curriculum develops pupils academically, personally and spiritually, enabling them to encounter 'life in all its fullness'.

Religious Education

Overall planning and resources for the RE curriculum are in place. Teachers are increasing in confidence in the delivery of RE, supported by training from the local diocese. An enquiry-based approach helps pupils reflect and discuss religious concepts. The recently implemented RE curriculum encompasses major world faiths but does not include non-religious worldviews. The content for individual religions lacks depth and sacred texts are explored in a limited way. RE enrichment days enhance learning through experiences such as exploring a variety of approaches to spiritual development and the Christmas story told from different viewpoints. Consequently, pupils understand religious diversity.

During lessons pupils do not have adequate time to unpack key religious beliefs in depth. Thus, their knowledge is basic in some areas. There is a leap to personal reflections before a clear knowledge base has been understood. Leaders do not monitor RE regularly enough, so pupils do not progress



as well as they could. Younger pupils learn RE through lively presentations, use of puppets and practical activities. Pupils show enthusiasm for the subject and have enquiring minds. They are keen to express their own personal beliefs and thoughts in a respectful way. The local Faith tour is a highlight of older pupils' learning. They have opportunities to speak to people of faith and visit different places of worship, giving a real-life context for their understanding in RE.

Worship and Spirituality

Collective worship is the focal point of the school day. Each week, pupils walk to the parish church for worship led by local clergy. Families are warmly welcomed, strengthening the connection between school, church and home. Leaders create an inclusive and engaging atmosphere through lively presentations of Jesus' teachings. Worship is relevant and accessible, with clear links to the school's Christian vision and values. For example, pupils reflect on how they treat others fairly after considering how the early Christians cared for needy people in biblical times. Pupils participate enthusiastically through drama, readings and joyful singing about God's love. Times for reflection and invitational prayer are integral to worship and reflect the school's vision. At the beginning and end of worship, a pupil team processes with a candle, Bible and cross, denoting a special time of reverence. Christian festivals are celebrated throughout the year, with activities shared between school and church. This partnership extends beyond school worship, with pupils attending Sunday services and joining the church choir. They enjoy being part of the church community. To enhance opportunities for pupils' spiritual development, the local vicar leads a lunchtime Bible club and confirmation classes on request. Consequently, worship strengthens pupils' understanding of faith.

Vision, Justice and Responsibility

The Christian vision influences pupils' actions in school and the wider community. They are motivated by the values of courage and responsibility to serve others. Older pupils are carefully paired up to buddy new starters, helping them settle quickly into school life. The school council inspires pupils to work together on projects, for example, to improve outdoor learning in the playground. Pupils' strong view of justice is inspired by studying significant historical figures. They also enjoy opportunities to question local MPs about their roles and learn how decisions can affect and improve the locality. Building positive community relationships is key to St John's vision. Through visits to the local care home, pupils develop empathy over time, by interacting socially with residents. The pupil Eco Committee takes responsibility for the local environment by planting and caring for trees, showing how God's world can be protected.

Vision and School Culture

Staff and pupils treat each other with kindness and respect, 'centred on God's love'. Pupils are known well by staff, and families feel nurtured by the school during good times and difficult times. Staff are approachable and address concerns effectively. Consequently, pupils' individual needs are met well. Provision for vulnerable pupils is exceptional with staff using adaptive teaching methods and bespoke timetables. The skilled SEND team works closely with staff, who receive regular training to strengthen their practice. Following the Christian vision, staff adopt a restorative approach to behaviour, resulting in pupils knowing how to build positive relationships. The school actively develops pupils' understanding of inclusion and difference. For example, the whole school participated in World Down Syndrome Day and learned Makaton. During celebration worship, pupils are recognised for demonstrating St John's Christian values, such as hope and wisdom. Children also discuss the importance of living out these values at home. The aspirational culture of the school extends to adults, with leaders prioritising professional development for staff. Therefore, adults feel valued and thrive in their roles, working collaboratively in a harmonious environment.

Information

Address	Lemsford Village, Welwyn Garden City, Herts AL8 7TR		
Date	17 September 2026	URN	117435
Type of school	Primary	No. of pupils	102
Diocese	St Albans		
Headteacher	Michelle Boylan		
Chair of Governors	Caroline Shannon		
Inspector	Claire Coulson		