Statutory Inspection of Anglican & Methodist Schools

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England (VC) Junior School

Vision

Care. Believe. Succeed.

'All things are possible for one who believes' – Mark 9:23

St Mary's Junior School works to foster a culture of respect and compassion, where children are confident to take risks, persevere and embrace challenges. We strive to provide dynamic learning without limits, to give children the wisdom, skills and knowledge they need to aim high and achieve their full potential as unique individuals within an inclusive environment.

St Mary's Church of England (VC) Junior School is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. It has the following notable strengths.

Strengths

- A strong and proactive commitment to inclusion ensures pupils considered vulnerable and/or disadvantaged are fully supported to thrive.
- The school's vision shapes a curriculum inspired by compassion, belief and aspiration. This nurtures spiritual growth through reflection, resilience and personal development.
- Justice and responsibility are actively promoted, empowering pupils to treat each other well and contribute positively to their school community.
- The vision drives leaders' actions, prioritising dignity and strengthening relationships. Mental health is actively prioritised, enhancing wellbeing for pupils and adults.

Development Points

- Refine how the Christian vision clearly reflects the school's identity and purpose as a Church school and is impacted through leaders' evaluation. This is to help adults recognise how its biblical roots can enhance and inform the school's direction, priorities and relationships.
- Strengthen the evaluation of collective worship by leaders, including governors and pupils. This is to ensure worship inspires reflection, and makes a meaningful contribution to spiritual development over time.

Inspection Findings

At St Mary's, the Christian vision is expressed through strong pastoral care, inclusive practice and positive relationships. Leaders create a deeply inclusive, nurturing environment where pupils are known, valued and supported to thrive. This reflects leaders' clear understanding of the school's context and the varied needs of its community. Staff provide consistently responsive support as many pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or join the school mid-year. Leaders act swiftly to remove barriers, helping pupils to participate fully and develop a strong sense of belonging. The Christian vision and values promote aspiration, confidence and spiritual growth, enabling pupils to persevere, take risks and build character. Staff model the values consistently, creating a respectful, compassionate and purposeful learning environment. Relationships reflect the Christian belief in each person's unique worth and potential. This shared ethos supports pupils and adults to flourish personally, socially and spiritually in a safe and encouraging environment. The school benefits from valued support from the diocese and close links with the local church. However, the monitoring and evaluation of Christian distinctiveness, and understanding of the vision's impact, are underdeveloped. As a result, the vision does not clearly reflect the school's identity and purpose as a Church school.

The curriculum encourages pupils to believe in themselves and recognise their worth and capabilities. It is shaped by the vision enhancing a culture of inclusion, wellbeing and aspiration. The curriculum is adapted so pupils with additional needs can access learning, engage fully and experience its moral and spiritual benefits. Subjects such as personal, social and health education (PSHE) and religious education (RE) make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Leaders have begun developing a shared understanding of spirituality to deepen the curriculum's impact in this area. Although at an early stage, this work reflects thoughtful leadership and growing confidence in exploring spirituality across the curriculum. Beyond the taught curriculum, pupils access a wide range of clubs and extra-curricular opportunities throughout the school day. These experiences develop confidence, cooperation and a love of learning. Physical activity promotes resilience, teamwork and emotional wellbeing, further supporting pupils' personal and spiritual development.

Collective worship provides a welcoming space where pupils reflect on meaning, identity and belief in a calm and respectful environment. They engage thoughtfully, showing confidence when pausing, praying or reflecting during worship. Bible stories explored in worship reinforce the vision, helping pupils explore concepts of perseverance, kindness and hope. Church-based services contribute meaningfully to the school's Christian distinctiveness and strengthen relationships between the school, home and parish community. Celebration worship deepens pupils' understanding of values by recognising how they are lived out across daily school life. Planning with local clergy and the neighbouring infant school ensures coherent themes that develop understanding across both age phases. Pupils appreciate gathering together and speak positively about the shared sense of belonging that worship creates. Although worship offers meaningful experiences, its impact on pupils and adults' spiritual development remains unclear. This is because monitoring by governors and pupil worship leaders does not evaluate the impact of worship effectively.

Wellbeing is central to policy and practice at St Mary's, creating emotionally secure spaces where pupils can flourish and thrive. The school nurtures a culture where compassion, equality and belonging guide how pupils and adults relate to one another. Pupils benefit from feeling respected, safe and recognised as unique individuals within a deeply welcoming culture. Staff ensure that carefully planned approaches to behaviour support help restore relationships and reduce conflict. Adults model patience, empathy and encouragement, which builds mutual trust

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across the school. Pupils take risks, accept challenges and grow in confidence by responding positively to encouragement and feedback. Leaders' bold decision to appoint a trained pastoral lead strengthens its capacity to respond to pupil's emotional and social needs. Effective pastoral care helps pupils manage personal challenges and remain calm, particularly during emotionally difficult situations. Staff respond with consistency and compassion, ensuring pupils considered vulnerable feel seen, understood and supported. The school's vision guides this culture, promoting a sense that pupils and adults are loved, worthy and capable of success.

Justice and responsibility are woven throughout school life, helping pupils act fairly, care deeply and speak out with confidence. Pupils learn how to treat others with respect and show courage when challenging unkindness or confronting unfairness. They understand how their behaviour affects others and take responsibility for restoring relationships when needed. Curriculum topics, such as the suffragette movement, help pupils explore injustice and reflect on moral responsibility. Pupils connect learning to life, developing awareness of rights, equality and the need for change in society. The school's pupil parliament enables them to influence decisions and advocate for fairness, inclusion and wellbeing. The pupil eco-team encourages stewardship, empowering them to take action for sustainability and climate justice in their community. Leadership roles develop self-esteem, pride and a strong sense of service within the school and the wider community. Active involvement in community work inspires pupils' sense of responsibility to others and understanding of justice and service. This lived experience of justice reflects the school's vision and equips pupils to act with integrity, compassion and purpose in the world.

RE holds a high profile in the curriculum, giving pupils regular opportunities to explore belief, identity and big life questions. It is well resourced, providing pupils with access to stories, texts and materials that support deeper understanding. The curriculum is well structured, building pupils' knowledge of Christianity and other worldviews progressively over time. Diverse and relevant themes help pupils consider global issues, personal values and different ways of seeing the world. RE lessons encourage pupils to listen, ask questions and think carefully about faith, fairness and human experience. This supports inclusion by allowing pupils to express ideas safely and respectfully in dialogue with others. Pupils engage with curiosity, honesty and openness in a nurturing environment free from fear of judgment. They learn how beliefs influence choices and shape peoples' lives in real and meaningful ways. RE at St Mary's strengthens the school's values and prepares pupils to live with understanding, compassion and integrity. Through RE, pupils develop wisdom, empathy and curiosity about faith, culture and the world around them.

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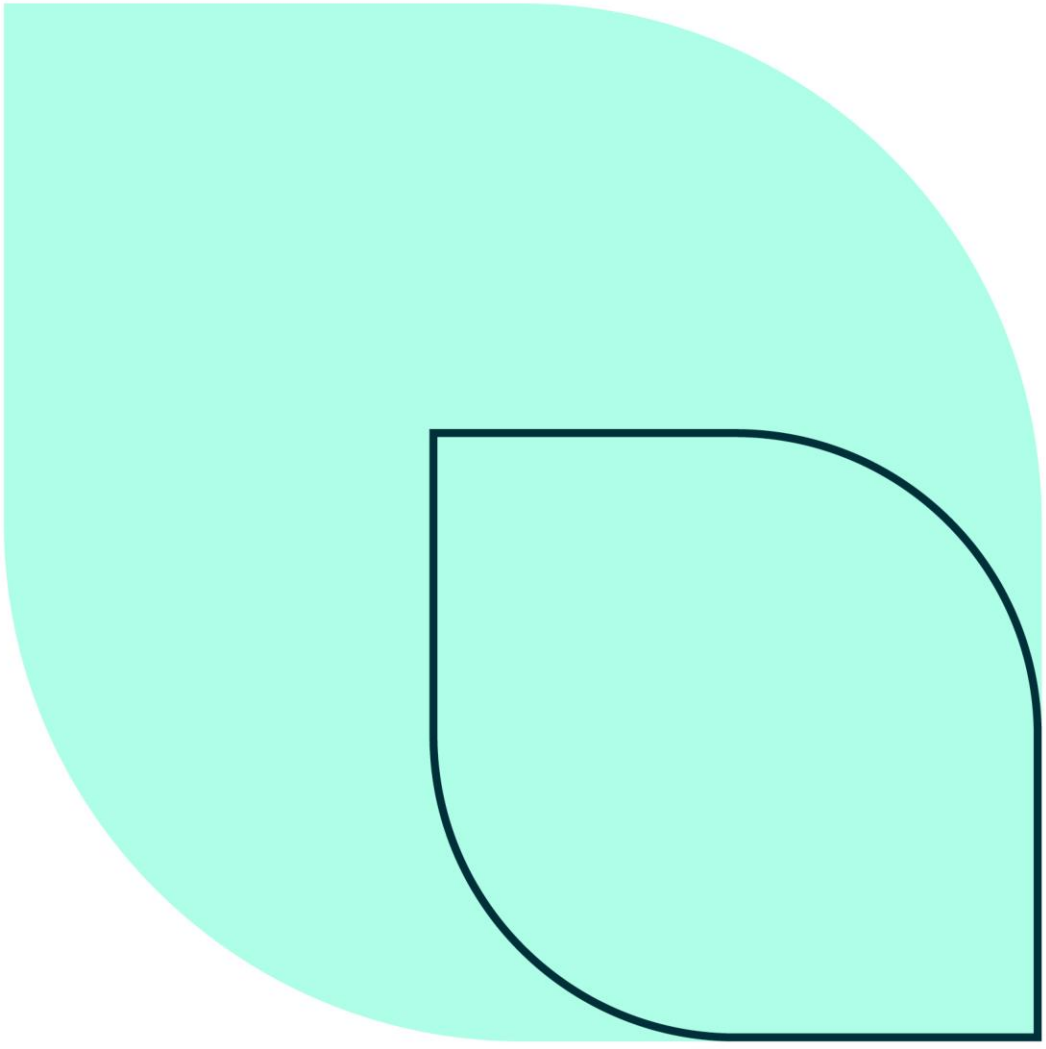
Information

Address	St Mary's Way, Baldock, Hertfordshire, SG7 6HY		
Date	20 June 2025	URN	117385
Type of school	Voluntary controlled	No. of pupils	198
Diocese	St Albans		
Headteacher	Samantha Britton		
Chair of Governors	Michael Austins		
Inspector	Nicola James