

Church School Distinctiveness Statement of Intent for The White Horse Federation

Introduction

The White Horse Federation (TWHF) are committed to ensuring that the Christian foundations of the Church schools within our trust are maintained and promoted. As part of this we will ensure that each of our schools has a distinctively Christian vision, which is theologically underpinned, and drives decision making at all levels within the school in order to enable all to flourish. All those working and volunteering within the school are expected to be sympathetic to the Christian ethos and vision and to uphold the Christian values associated with these.

The Church of England Vision for Education

The Church of England vision for education clarifies what we aim to achieve in all our Church schools: *‘Life in all its fullness’ John 10:10*. This is worked out theologically and educationally through four elements: wisdom, hope, community and dignity. These elements all form part of the SIAMS inspection process. This vision is amplified through the Church of England document *Valuing all God’s Children*: ‘Church of England schools must ensure that their pupils are secure and able to make excellent progress whatever their background. They are invited into a school that aims to provide an education which leads to an abundant life. Every person in the school community is a child of God. At the head of Christian distinctiveness in schools is an upholding of the worth of each person: all are *Imago Dei* – made in the image of God – and are loved unconditionally by God. ... each person in all their unique difference should be able to thrive, irrespective of physical appearance, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic background, academic ability, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity.’

The Programme for Church School Flourishing

The trust works closely with Salisbury and Oxfordshire Dioceses. The trust is part of the Salisbury Diocese Programme for Church School Flourishing (PCSF). This project has been nationally recognised and is now being rolled out across the South West. St Mary’s and All Saints School, Reading, will also benefit from this project despite being part of a different diocese. Oxfordshire Diocese will be kept fully informed of work carried out to ensure that it is complementary to their own work.

The PCSF team will be almost fully operational during this academic year. The trust is not able to be fully accredited by Salisbury Diocese this year as the position of Champion for Church School Governance (CCSG) is yet to be filled. This is planned for the coming year. Therefore, TWHF will be fully accredited in Autumn 2024.

The team will provide, with support and ongoing quality assurance from Salisbury Diocese, support and challenge for school leaders at all levels to ensure that they are maintaining the Christian foundations and distinctiveness required by Church schools. The team comprises of the following roles:

Role	Abbreviation	Post holder	Key responsibilities
Leader for Church School Flourishing	LCSF	Anna Willcox (Education Team)	Church school leadership, SIAMS, vision, Church school distinctiveness
Religious Education Faculty Lead	REFL	Grace Pepper (St Mary’s Broughton Gifford)	Strategic leadership of RE across the trust Church schools

Collective Worship Faculty Lead	CWFL	Tiffany Butcher (Southbroom Infants)	Strategic leadership of collective worship across the trust Church schools
Champion for Church School Recruitment	CCSR	Anna Willcox	Ensuring the centrality of Church school foundations and distinctiveness during the entire recruitment process
Champion for Church School Governance	CCSG	VACANT	Support and challenge for Church school governing bodies on evaluating and maintaining the centrality of Church school Christian foundations

From 2023, the PCSF team will lead Church school reviews termly. Key strengths and areas for development will be identified and actions set accordingly. Other Church school heads will form part of the review team which will ensure maximum benefits for all schools through sharing expertise and working through challenges together.

Church School Governance

It is the responsibility of each school’s local governing body (LGB) to ensure that the Christian foundations of the school are maintained and that the vision is distinctively Christian and influences decision making at all levels. Each school’s LGB should have key members with a foundation background who take a lead for this responsibility and lead on routine monitoring and evaluation of the school’s Christian distinctiveness. Church school distinctiveness should be a standing item on all LGB meetings to ensure that all governors have regular updates on progress and that high quality monitoring and evaluation brings about required improvements. The Church School distinctiveness champion meets regularly with the school’s RE and collective worship leads as part of their monitoring and evaluation.

SIAMS

All Church schools will be inspected under the Section 48 Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) framework every three to five years. The SIAMS framework has been revised for 2023. Under the new framework ‘SIAMS inspectors will explore with school and trust leaders how they understand the specific context of the school, and whether they know how to respond to it theologically. Local, diocesan, and national expertise will help school and trust leaders to explore this, so that they can be confident in answering three key questions:

1. Who are we as a school?
2. What are we doing here?
3. How, then, shall we live and learn together?

Importantly, the 2023 SIAMS Framework highlights and seeks understanding of the theology that underpins a school’s Christian vision. It also provides a structure for inspectors and school and trust leaders to, collaboratively, gather evidence of how this vision enables people to flourish. Using this evidence, inspectors then make judgements, holding school and trust leaders to account.

SIAMS, rightly, sets a high bar for each school to live up to its foundation as a Church school through its theologically rooted Christian vision, and it provides affirmation, aspiration, and areas for development for school leaders.’

TWHF Church School Distinctiveness Statement of Intent



'Having evaluated the evidence made available under the six (seven for previously voluntary aided schools) inspection questions, the inspector will award the school one of the two following judgements:

Judgement 1: Through its vision and practice, the school is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish.

Judgement 2: The school's vision and practice are not enabling it to fully live up to its foundation as a Church school.' (The inspector will provide reasons for this judgement.)

(Extracts taken from the SIAMS evaluation framework September 2023)

All Church schools are required to complete self-evaluation around the SIAMS framework and to keep this up to date. Governors should have a clear understanding of how the school evaluates itself in line with the SIAMS framework.

The Trust and Trustees

Trustees have a responsibility to support and uphold the Christian distinctiveness of our Church schools as co-leaders. Under the new framework, the responsibilities of the trust to uphold and enhance the school as a Church school are brought to the fore and is viewed as entirely fundamental to a school's effectiveness. (Appendix A 'The What, Why and How of SIAMS' outlines these responsibilities)

Key Trust Responsibilities

The trustee with responsibility for Church school distinctiveness is Jilly Norton.

The strategic lead for Church school distinctiveness and the LCSF within the federation is Anna Willcox, Primary Consultant Principal, who is also a practising SIAMS inspector.

TWHF ensures that all their Church schools:

Secure a distinctively Christian vision which is theologically underpinned	Audit - School visit Paper exercise	LCSF	Reviewed annually
Have key personnel identified to lead RE and collective worship	Paper exercise	REFL, CWFL	Reviewed annually
Have local governors identified with a responsibility for championing Church school distinctiveness	Paper exercise	LCSF (to be CCSG)	Reviewed annually
Have 50% (previously VA)/a good representation of (previously VC) foundation governors or co-opted governors with a foundation focus	Paper exercise	LCSF (to be CCSG)	Reviewed annually
Meet the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship and adhere to the Statement of Entitlement	Audit – school visit	REFL, CWFL	Reviewed annually
Engage in arrangements for working together with other Church schools on continuously developing of their Church school distinctiveness	Paper exercise – engagement	LCSF	Reviewed annually
Receive appropriate support with SIAMS self-evaluation and improvement	Networks and Church school reviews	LCSF, REFL, CWFL with heads	Annually/ more frequently ahead of inspection
Have support in preparation for SIAMS inspections	Annual Church school review with PCSF team 1:1 half or full day session; mock inspection or work on specific areas whichever is identified as key need	LCSF, REFL, CWFL with heads, key govs, RE and CW leads	Prior to inspection due date
Have effective policies in place for RE, PSHEE, collective worship, SMSC, including spirituality and ensure other policies reflect the Christian vision	Paper exercise	LCSF, REFL, CWFL	Reviewed biannually

Monitoring and Reporting

TWHF will:

Monitor the effectiveness of Church school’s Christian vision in enabling all to flourish. Monitor progress at each school through at least annual review visits.	School visit and review visits – review of SIAMS SEF, key areas for development from last inspection and areas pertinent to school	LCSF, REFL, CWFL with heads	Annually
Provide annual reports to trustees on the effectiveness of Church schools in relation to the SIAMS agenda.	Report written and submitted to trustees	LCSF	Annually
Provide opportunities for headteachers of Church schools, leaders of RE and collective worship to meet regularly to discuss practice, share learning and train together.	Hold network meetings twice a year for headteachers, RE leaders and collective worship leaders	LCSF, REFL, CWFL	Biennially
Provide in house training as required when needs are identified. Ensure opportunities for diocesan training are available/provided as required to support succession planning.	Paper exercise – ascertain level of involvement in diocesan training Provide bespoke training packages as needs identified by LCSF, REFL, CWFL and/or school.	LCSF , REFL, CWFL	Annually As required
Provide opportunities to self-evaluate effectiveness through the SIAMS SEF as Church schools with colleagues from other Church schools.	Headteacher meeting to work on SIAMS SEF together.	LCSF with headteachers	1 day or 2 ½ days annually
Provide feedback, and provide opportunities for peer feedback, on quality of SIAMS SEF and accuracy of areas for development identified.	Headteacher meeting to work on SIAMS SEF together. Paper exercise – LCSF reviews SEF prior to inspection due date and provides feedback.	LCSF with headteachers	Prior to inspection due date

Training

All staff are expected to engage in appropriate training as required. Bespoke training will be provided where a need is identified by the PCSF team and/or the school. In addition, training will be accessed for leaders of RE, collective worship and Church school distinctiveness through the diocese where deemed beneficial. All Church schools are expected to engage with the trust PCSF team and diocesan training. Governors and trustees will have opportunities to receive training through the diocese as needs are identified.

Review

This statement will be reviewed every year or whenever Church of England requirements or guidance changes, whichever is the sooner, by the Teaching, Learning and Standards Committee.

Ongoing Review of TWHF Church Schools Church School Distinctiveness

The Board of Trustees (BoT) of The White Horse Federation has the responsibility for ensuring the Christian foundations of our Church schools are protected and promoted.

The trustee with responsibility for Church school distinctiveness is Jilly Norton.

Operationally, this responsibility is delegated to Anna Willcox, Primary Consultant Principal and LCSF.

The Teaching, Learning Standards Committee will receive a report on:

TLS Meeting 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website ‘compliance’ for Church schools – evidence of Church school distinctiveness on websites • SIAMS inspection due dates for Church schools. Key focus schools for the year. • Self-evaluation readiness. Key areas for development identified in each Church school and action planned.
TLS Meeting 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training needs identified • Training plans in place • Review of training provided/received
TLS Meeting 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and feedback from network meetings held • Review of local governor meeting minutes to assess profile of Church school distinctiveness at school level
TLS Meeting 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback on SIAMS inspections from year and areas for development identified • Church school reviews – actions for individual schools + MAT wide. Progress on areas for development • MAT Church school distinctiveness action plan for next academic year • Nominate trustee for responsibility for Church school distinctiveness • Church school distinctiveness - Statement of Intent reviewed and updated

The Chair of the Teaching Learning and Standards Committee will be report separately to the Trust Board on an annual basis.



The What, Why, and How of SIAMS

1. What must SIAMS do?

SIAMS must, in accordance with the law:

- i. make judgements and report on religious education
- ii. make judgements and report on collective worship
- iii. make judgements and report on pupils' SMSC education
- iv. make judgements on how, through its theologically rooted Christian vision, the school is living up to its foundation as a Church school, enabling people to flourish

a) Why must SIAMS do this?

SIAMS must do this because the Church has a:

- i. gospel-inspired obligation to seek fullness of life for pupils and adults in its schools
- ii. legal obligation to make judgements and report on religious education, collective worship, and pupils' SMSC development
- iii. moral obligation to hold leaders to account for whether, how, and to what extent a school's theologically rooted Christian vision and leadership are enabling people to flourish
- iv. duty to report on the above to those who have an interest in the school
- v. duty to make a positive contribution to the improvement of Church schools

b) How will SIAMS do this?

SIAMS will do this through its skilled inspectors who will:

- i. explore how leaders know and ensure that the school's theologically rooted Christian vision and the ensuing policies and practice are enabling it to live up to its foundation as a Church school
- ii. hold conversations with school and trust leaders, members of staff, pupils, parents, and representatives of the DBE/MAST and local community, including, crucially, from local church/es
- iii. ask questions that are probing and open, enabling the school community to describe their context and their contextually-appropriate, Christian-vision-driven decisions and actions
- iv. scrutinise documentation, including, for example, self-evaluation, policies, plans, and pupils' religious education work, as part of the evidence-gathering process
- v. observe typical school life and relationships
- vi. evaluate evidence carefully, so that they are able to make fair and accurate judgements on the effectiveness of the school's Christian vision and leadership, holding leaders to account



2. What must schools and trusts do?

Schools and trusts must provide convincing evidence of how:

- i. the school's work is driven by a contextually-appropriate theologically rooted Christian vision for education that reflects its foundation as a Church school, meets the needs of the school community, and enables people to flourish
- ii. the vision and practice of the trust resonate with those of the school
- iii. leadership and governance are appropriate and effective
- iv. collective worship reflects the school's Anglican/Methodist foundation and enables the spiritual flourishing of those in the school community
- v. the school offers a religious education curriculum that:
 - o meets legal requirements
 - o reflects the Church of England's Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education
 - o is effective

a) Why must schools and trusts do this?

Schools and trusts must do this because:

- i. they are required by law to facilitate the inspection
- ii. they have a moral duty to provide an education that is shaped by a theologically rooted Christian vision that reflects the school's foundation and that enables people to flourish
- iii. the trust has a responsibility to provide appropriate leadership and governance for the school, to enhance its Anglican/Methodist foundation, and to demonstrate, in an evidence-based way, that this is the case
- iv. their involvement in the inspection process enables accurate judgements to be made
- v. SIAMS inspection provides the school with the opportunity to tell the evidence-based story of its Christian-vision-driven work

b) How will schools and trusts do this?

Schools and trusts will do this by:

- i. ensuring that the school's everyday work is rooted in and driven by a context-specific theologically rooted Christian vision
 - ii. ensuring that they have a regular and meaningful relationship with the DBE and/or MAST, accessing expertise and support for Church school leadership, religious education, collective worship, SMSC education, and other aspects of their work as appropriate
 - iii. providing an inspector with brief and focused evidence of how the theologically rooted Christian vision enables the school to live up to its foundation as a Church school
 - iv. working with an inspector to arrange an inspection-day timetable that addresses the inspection lines of enquiry, enabling the inspector to hear the story of the school from a wide range of diverse groups from the school community, including from the trust leadership
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