

manna

From the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells ☩

July 2026

Care, dignity and aspiration for everyone

The Church of England has been providing education in a formal way through its Church schools for more than 200 years. 180 Church of England Schools are supported by the diocese. The foundation of all our church schools is underpinned by the Christian faith which informs decision making, relationships and the wider culture of the school community. SIAMS, the statutory inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools, plays an important role in exploring how effectively that Christian foundation is lived out in practice. For many school leaders the process offers an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the impact of their vision and values on the whole school community.

Dominic Shillabeer is the Headteacher of Axbridge CofE Academy which underwent a SIAMS inspection in March this year. He says it gave the school the opportunity to tell its story and celebrate the people, relationships and values at the heart of the school community.

“The process helped us to pause and notice the many ways our Christian vision, rooted in “a life in all its fullness” is lived out each day



through our values of courage, community and love.

“For us, SIAMS was affirming, encouraging and reflective, helping us to see the strength of what we do while also inspiring us to keep growing. It reminded us that our vision and the school culture is not just something we talk about, but something our children, staff and families experience together.”

Saltford Primary School was inspected in November 2025.

Headteacher Dawn Sage describes the experience as positive and encouraging.

“It provided an opportunity to reflect deeply on how our ethos shapes the experiences of all pupils and staff. It was a valuable and positive process that celebrates strengths while encouraging thoughtful development, ensuring that our work remains rooted in care, dignity and aspiration for all.”

News in brief

Space for reflection

More than 220 students at Gordano School took part in HeartSpace, using 14 reflection stations set up in the school library.

The interactive space offered a range of activities designed to encourage students to slow down, reflect, and think about their lives, hopes and values.

It was created by members of local churches, sixth form students, together with school chaplain Verity Eastwood-Dewing.



Exploring a fresh approach to youth ministry

A group of clergy, curates and lay leaders from across Bath and Wells have been taking part in a five-week course exploring parish-based youth ministry.

Launchpad, delivered by the Go

New Archdeacon of Wells

Jo Stobart is to be the next Archdeacon of Wells and Residentiary Canon of Wells Cathedral. She will succeed Anne Gell who stepped down after nine years in the role. Jo will be returning to Bath and Wells in the late autumn.

Bishop Michael said, "I am thrilled that Jo is coming home. She is someone with huge ability, who loves our diocese, loves Somerset and rural ministry. I am absolutely delighted to welcome her back with us as the new Archdeacon of Wells."



Team and created by Youthscape, explores models of youth ministry that could work in different contexts. Through discussion, reflection and research, participants explored new possibilities for engaging young people.

Find out more on these and other stories at bathandwells.org.uk/news

Human flourishing for all

By Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath and Wells

'Tell me about your school days' is a deeply illuminating question to ask. Our experience of school shapes us deeply our whole lives long. Schools mould our character and values. They develop our skills and expectations. They influence our relationships and our life chances.

Rooted in our understanding of the Bible, Christians have been involved in schooling for many centuries. In the nineteenth century, the Church of England's National Society set up thousands of schools all around our country, established principally for the benefit of the poor. It is largely out of this heritage that our Diocese of Bath and Wells continues to have a stake in so many of Somerset's schools today. We have 182 Church Schools, the majority of which are for primary aged children, with 9 middle, upper or secondary schools and 1 specialist provision. Big and small, and found in all kinds of communities, our schools educate around 60% of Somerset's primary school children.

Our schools are church schools, they are not faith schools. We are open to everyone, of all faiths and none. Our schools are guided by our Christian ethos, manifested in their engagement with the Bible and worship, in prayer and Christian

ethics. More recently, this is expressed most fully in the Church of England's Vision for Education. This understands our schools' mission to be 'deeply Christian, serving the Common Good'. Our vision embraces the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and social development of children and young people. Our vision is of human flourishing for all. As bishop, I am privileged to spend lots of time in our Church Schools. The most fun I have is being grilled by young people who pose me questions about ethics and doctrine, our Church's life and faith. I'm certainly kept on my toes! What I value most is seeing played out in our young people the four main elements of our Church's vision - wisdom, hope, community and dignity. These commitments are reflected in the stories told in this edition of Manna. I hope you'll enjoy reading them as they illustrate our vision for education in the schools of our diocese.



A Christian vision

Louise Jenkins, Lead Education Adviser for Bath and Wells, explains why SIAMS, the statutory inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools, matters for church schools today.



What is SIAMS?

It is an inspection process that all church schools go through approximately every five years. Its purpose is to evaluate their effectiveness as a church school. It includes questions around justice, responsibility, spirituality and human flourishing, making it highly applicable to today's world.

How does it work?

Schools have to answer and evidence inspection questions. These include things like the impact of the school's Christian vision, how the curriculum supports inclusivity and care for the community, how people are treated within the school, how the school lives out justice and responsibility in the wider community, and the effectiveness of the RE curriculum.

How does it build on a school's Christian ethos?

Church schools often have historic foundation statements. In the 21st

Century, the underlying ethos remains the same: education for everyone. Church schools are for children of all faiths and none, and SIAMS looks at how that Christian vision creates an environment where all can flourish.

Does it reach beyond the school?

SIAMS looks closely at the partnerships a school has with its local church and wider community. It also considers how the school supports families and the impact it has beyond the classroom. For example, schools may respond to local concerns by organising litter picks or working with a church on rewinding part of a churchyard.

What does the report tell a parent about the culture of a school?

A SIAMS report should give a real sense of what it is like to be a child, or the parent of a child, at that school. It explains the school's Christian vision, often with a biblical foundation, and describes what the school wants for its children. It may also highlight the values the school focuses on through collective worship, such as friendship, trust, responsibility and respect.

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Living and telling the story of Jesus