

# **Your School's Distinctive Christian Vision**

**Huw Thomas  
Diocese of Sheffield  
June 2023**



The deeply embedded Christian vision is built upon a shared understanding of the community the school serves. It is the driving force that enables pupils and adults to understand how they can 'belong, believe, learn and achieve'.

SIAMS Report – Travis St Lawrence

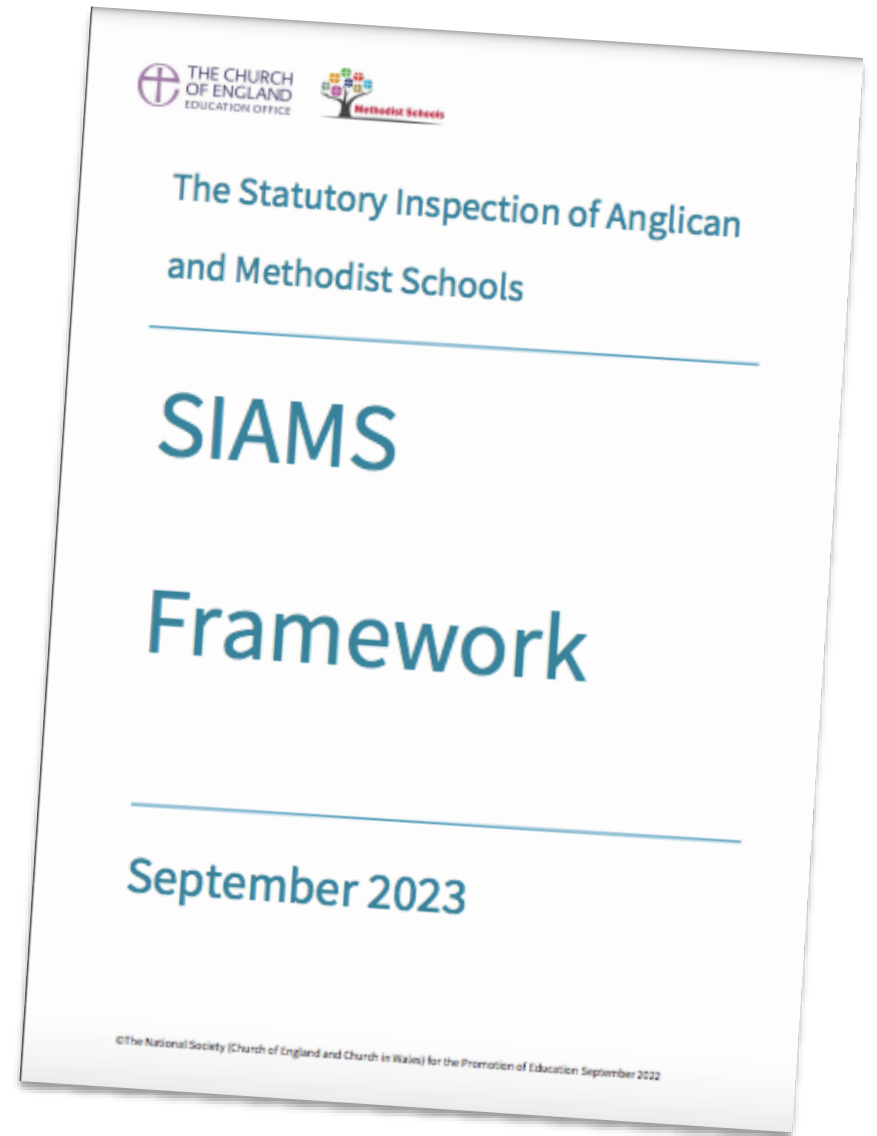
# Why have one?

Where to look for the answer..

- Underneath
- Outside
- within



“school’s work...driven by a contextually-appropriate theologically rooted Christian vision of education that reflects its foundation as a Church school, meets the needs of the school community, and enables people to flourish”



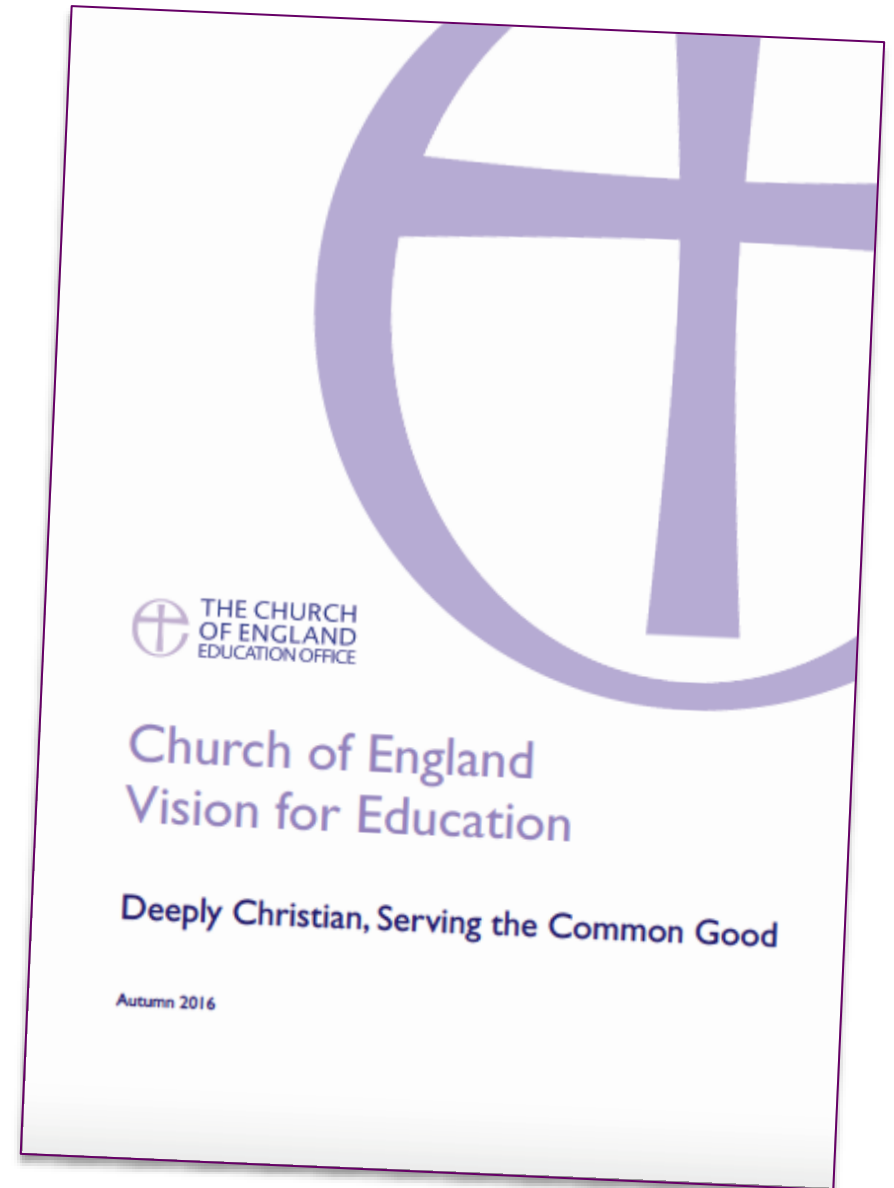


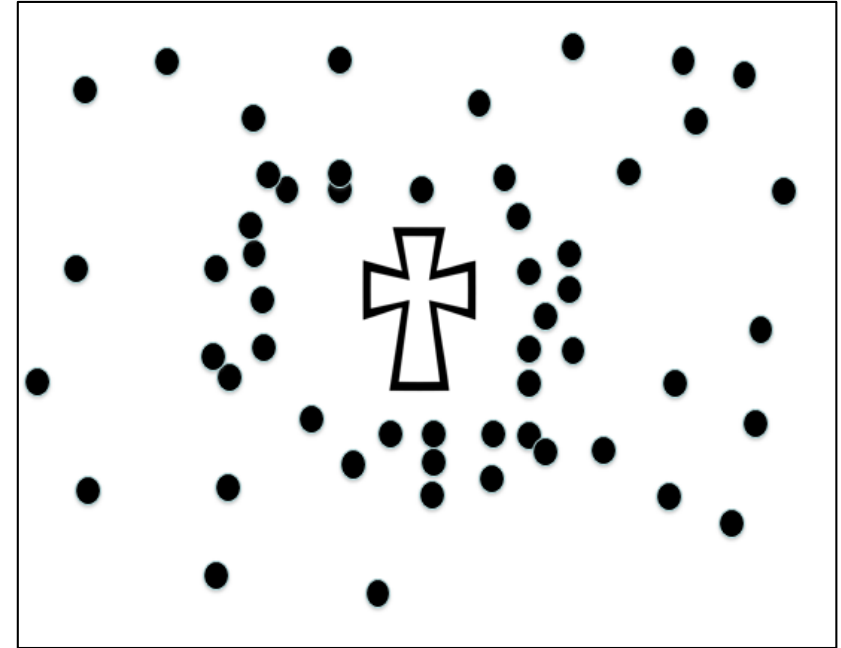
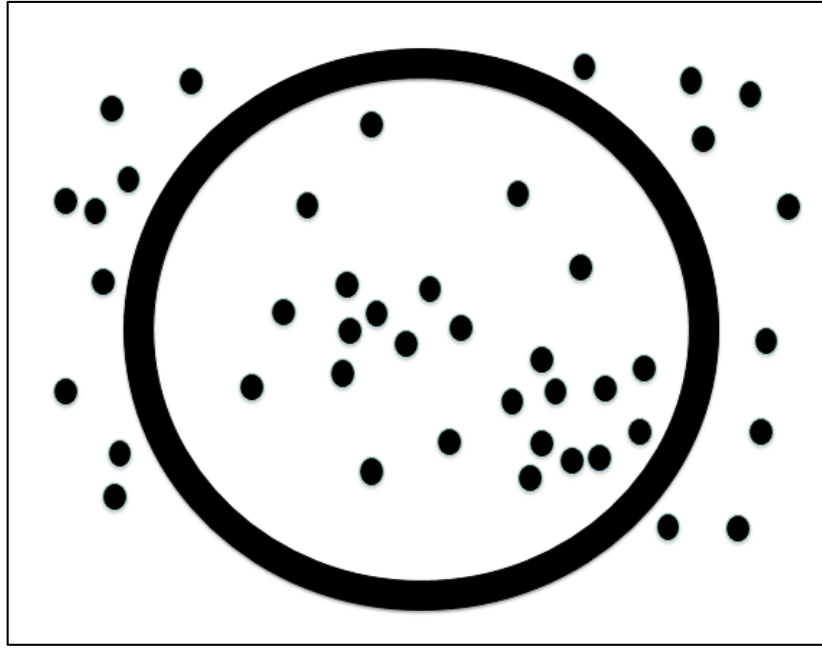




“The ultimate worth of each person is grounded in being created in the image of God and in God’s love and compassion for each.”

Church of England  
Vision for Education, p.9





*Christian identity is established not primarily by denying and combating what is outside but by embracing and highlighting the centre of what is inside – Jesus Christ as the Word”*

Miroslav Volf

**Rooted**

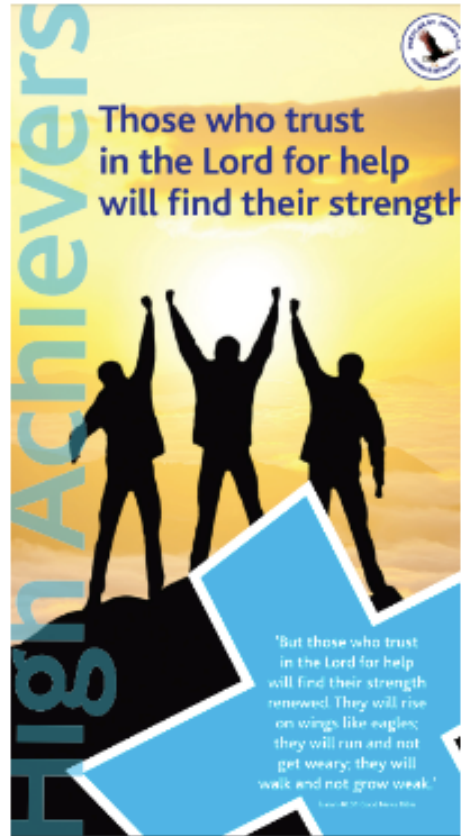
**Bespoke**

**Connected**

**Personal**

**Practical**





# High Achievers

At Deepcar St John's, everyone is inspired to reach their full potential. Our vision for our children is akin to Paul's energising encouragement to the Corinthian church: 'You've all been to the stadium and seen the athletes race. Everyone runs; one wins. Run to win. All good athletes train hard. They do it for a gold medal that tarnishes and fades. You're after one that's gold eternally.' (1 Corinthians 9:24-25)

We believe that learning is a journey in which we teach the child the way, such that they then maintain it into maturity' (Proverbs 22:6) and, by way of equipping them for that journey, we are committed to promoting a growth mindset. We challenge any sense of limitation. As Paul said in his letter to the Philippians 'I can do all things through him who strengthens me.' (Philippians 4:13 ESV)

Our symbol is that of an eagle and our approach to learning is best envisaged in Isaiah's description of flight:

***But those who trust in the LORD for help will find their strength renewed.***

***They will rise on wings like eagles;***

***they will run and not get weary;***

***they will walk and not grow weak.*** (Isaiah 40:31 Good news bible)

At Deepcar St John's the individual matters and we empower each child to rise on wings like eagles, to be the best they can be.

<https://www.deepcar-st-johns.sheffield.sch.uk/home>



# Theological Vision

[Home](#) » [About Us](#) » [Theological Vision](#)

## Treeton Church of England Primary School Theological rationale

**Let your light shine (Matthew 5:16)**

Our vision is to nurture and inspire our whole school community, to use their God-given gifts, to be the best that they can be, so that they can **let their light shine** to the world.

To do this we seek to inspire our children to:

- have courage
- have respect
- have faith

## 2A.3 INCARNATION/GOD RESOURCE SHEET 4: CHRISTIANS BELIEVE, SO...

Christians believe God made  
the world

so they care for the earth.

Christians believe God was  
at the beginning of time

so they trust God because  
he is great.

Christians believe God is full of love

so they trust in God for forgiveness.

Christians believe God came to  
earth as Jesus

so they celebrate Christmas Day.

Christians believe Jesus was on a  
rescue mission to save humanity

so they always remember his death  
and his resurrection



“We want pupils to leave school with a rich experience and understanding of Christianity, and we are committed to offering them an encounter with Jesus Christ and with Christian faith and practice in a way which enhances their lives.”

CE Vision page 10





## **It's a bit like...**

seed (Mark 4:31-32)

treasure (Mt 13:44)

two builders (Mt 7:24-27)

yeast (Mt 13:33)

flowers (Matt 6:28,29)

# Bespoke

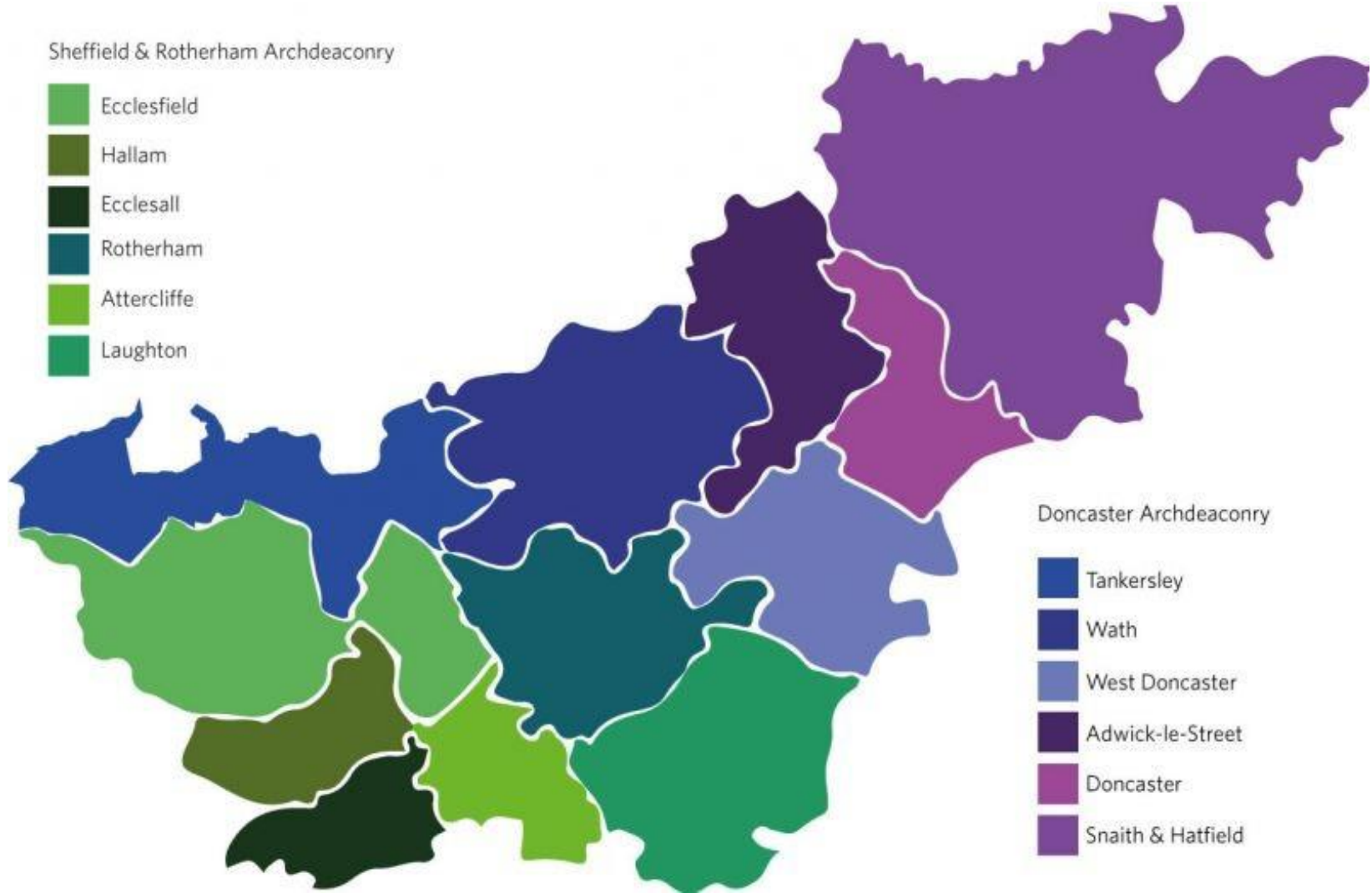
...is your school like every other

...is it like many others

...is it like no other



# Context is everything....



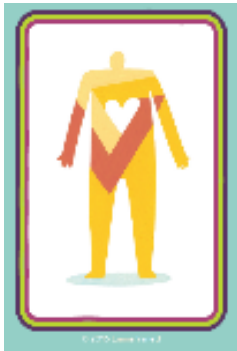
# Connected

Connecting what  
we are about with  
our Christian roots









**Wisdom**  
**Hope**  
**Dignity**  
**Community**

Creation (Gospel, Kingdom)  
 Salvation (Fall, People of God)  
 Incarnation (Creation)  
 Kingdom (People, Gospel)

I will instruct you and teach  
you in the way you should  
go;

I will counsel you with my  
loving eye on you.

**Psalm 32:8**

Therefore encourage one  
another and build each  
other up, just as in fact you  
are doing.

**1 Thessalonians 5:11**

Guide me in your truth and  
teach me,  
for you are God my Saviour,  
and my hope is in you all day  
long.

**Psalm 25:5**

Teach me to do your will,  
for you are my God;  
may your good Spirit  
lead me on level ground.

**Psalm 143:10**







# So....

- WAWA – what are we about?
- Five words?
- Who's words?
- Connect
- 500 words
- Boompitty boom



Christianity is not just two-worldly: it's about how the transcendent relates to here – the mundane from creation, through fall to incarnation and salvation and to the fulfilment of the kingdom. This is how we construe the world

(Volf and Croasmum 'For the Life of the World' 163).



## Theologically-rooted Christian vision

- Analysis of SIAMS reports from 2021 – 2022 reveals widespread misapprehension of what is meant by a theologically rooted Christian vision.
- Common mistakes include thinking that:
  - simply adding a Bible verse turns a vision into a Christian vision – it does not!
  - biblical = theological – it does not! Theology is the study of the nature of God and consists of Scripture and the teachings and traditions of the Church.
  - taking a Bible verse out of context does not matter – it does!
  - there does not need to be connection between the Christian vision and the work of the school – there does!

# **Staying Alive...**

- When do you look at it?
- How prominent is it?
- Link in to what we do
- Highlighters: sounds like, reminder, question
- Links to others
- Context – Vision - Action

## The Law

What drives me? Why am I called to be a leader? What is my educational philosophy? My theology for education? What is my understanding of faith? What is my view of leadership? What would my team say about all of this? Who am I? Who are we?

## SIAMS Schedule

# Vocation

What does the Bible teach about education, in the context of my school? What do the teaching and traditions of the Church add to this? The CofE vision for education has done a lot of this thinking already – what parts of it are most relevant for my school? What are we doing here?

What characterises my school? Who are they? What about the wider community? What do they most need from the school? How can we best serve them? How can we bring hope and aspiration? How can we enable flourishing? What do the Bible, and the teachings and traditions of the Church say about this?

## Trust Deed

# Theology

# Context

## Ofsted Framework



## Theologically-rooted Christian vision

- Inspectors will discuss the provenance of each school's Christian vision. Where does it come from? Why this particular vision?
- They must be able to report on the vision as a *theologically rooted Christian vision*.
- It is recommended that school leaders access diocesan training on Christian vision to improve their understanding.

## Theologically-rooted Christian vision

- Inspectors will not expect everyone in the school community to 'recite' the vision.

### **BUT they will expect**

- evidence of how school leaders created the vision and that it has theological roots
- to see evidence of the vision in action.

## Theologically-rooted Christian vision

When exploring Christian vision, inspectors will not be convinced by the following.

- a list of Christian values
- a vision that simply has a Bible verse added to the end with no deeper theological thought/basis
- a generic vision that has a phrase like ‘rooted in our Christian values’ or ‘in the love of God’ added to the end with no evidence of real theological roots and understanding