



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

College Road
Purton
Swindon
SN5 4AR

Previous SIAS grade: Good

Current SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Bristol

Local authority: Wiltshire

Dates of inspection: 25 June 2015

Date of last inspection: 5 July 2010

School's unique reference number: 126350

Acting headteacher: Laura Oakes

Inspector's name and number: Patricia Morris 626

School context

St Mary's is a larger than average primary school with 344 children on roll. The majority of children are of white British heritage. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of children supported by the pupil premium is below the national average. At the time of the inspection, the school was being led by the deputy headteacher in the role of acting headteacher, due to the substantive headteacher's maternity leave.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's as a Church of England school are good

- Core Christian values are reflected in children's caring attitudes and behaviour around the school.
- Good quality experiences contribute to children's growing awareness of spirituality.
- The hard work of all staff effectively promotes the Christian ethos within the school environment.

Areas to improve

- Develop a systematic way to monitor and evaluate collective worship and religious education (RE) to include opportunities for the RE/Worship co-ordinator to be involved in the observation and impact of lessons.
- Provide opportunities for children to plan and deliver worship to encourage greater ownership.
- Strengthen the recently initiated monitoring system for governors by planning more systematic opportunities to evaluate the impact of the Christian distinctiveness on the learning and personal development of the children.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners

The Christian character of the school is outstanding. Christian values are underpinned by the core value of love and are very well linked to Bible stories that underpin other values. The vision statement emphasises this with the statement 'Love God, love our neighbour, love ourselves'. The current value of compassion is promoted throughout the school. Every classroom has a specific area reflecting examples of compassion in action within the class. Displays contribute to the importance placed on values. For example, children talk enthusiastically about stained glass window collages and class paintings that represent each value to which all children contributed. Children are enthused by the way they share values at home through booklets with suggestions for families to engage in supporting the current value. This is reinforced through the school website which encourages children to explore how to live their lives with compassion and is effectively supported through poems, photographs, Bible passages and challenging questions. As a result, parents feel values are reflected at home with children able to explain their meaning and showing them in their behaviour. They say the school 'has the feel of a small village school in the way everyone cares for each other'. The promotion of a previous value of friendship continues to impact on children in the way it is linked to the current topic in a younger class. Children explained how they are continuing to sow the seeds of friendship as well as sowing seeds in their school garden. The promotion of positive behaviour based on the motto 'kind hands, kind feet, kind words' is evident from the very good behaviour and good manners displayed by children and their interactions between each other and with staff. Core values are actively promoted from a Christian perspective that influences the very good moral and spiritual development of children. Raising the awareness and presence of spirituality in the school was a focus from the last inspection and this has been enthusiastically embraced by current leaders and as a result is given a high profile within the school. Good resources are used to enhance opportunities for spiritual experiences across all areas of the curriculum. Inset from the Diocese has worked particularly well in bringing a shared understanding of spirituality to staff who actively look for opportunities to promote spirituality through creative planning. The impact of such high quality experiences and good opportunities for reflection positively encourage children to believe in themselves. A particularly effective outdoor area includes a spiritual garden where children talk about the awe and wonder of aspects of nature. They are especially proud of their experience in contributing towards a nature-based woodcarving in the centre of the garden based on their own clay models. As a result, children have a very good understanding of what spirituality means to them as reflected in statements such as 'Spirituality is knowing the concept that you are part of God's bigger plan' and 'Spirituality is what makes you, you'. Children have some understanding of Christianity as a world faith and show respect for the diversity within other faiths and cultures. They talk enthusiastically about a Diwali day and a visit to the Sikh temple. Spiritual links in religious education (RE) engage children and give them an appreciation of their own lives in comparison to those less fortunate. This is reflected through a number of fund raising events such as the local food bank as well as more global charities many of which are initiated by children because they understand that 'some people don't have as much as us'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is an important part of school life and plays a central role in promoting Christian values and the ethos of the school. Worship is well planned and has a high profile. All classrooms have clearly defined worship focal points and reflection tables that children value and talk about enthusiastically. Children listen and respond well to questions in worship. There are opportunities for reflection through the mirror, door and window resources that are compared to children's own lives through effective quotes linked to the current value. This gives children the opportunity to reflect on how they behave. Bible stories are linked to values and opportunities for children to act these out enable children to be involved in worship. They contribute to worship through a recently formed worship group consisting of members from each class. Regular meetings empower children to be involved by making suggestions for the delivery of worship although they would welcome opportunities to plan and lead worship

themselves. Prayer is an important part of the school day. Children have a school prayer and know the Lord's Prayer. Prayers are said at lunch times, at the end of RE lessons and there are opportunities to say prayers in worship. As a result children understand that 'prayers are part of being a Christian school' and 'they are said to show we care about God'. They are less sure about the Trinity and this is an area in which the school and the church are currently working together. Links between the school and the church are strong with regular visits from the curate and the youth worker to lead worship. The vicar runs a five-week programme based on Bible Explorer for Year 5 children on an annual basis. This increases their knowledge of Bible stories from the Old Testament that enthuse them because of the high level of drama and song involved. Regular services in the local church to celebrate Christian festivals are valued by children and parents, as are visitors who take worship. Evaluation of worship takes place informally through discussion, feedback from the worship group and some observations. A booklet in every classroom provides opportunities for children to make comments on what they have enjoyed and what they would like to see included in future worship. Pupil voice evaluations are recorded and acted upon but leaders recognise that a more systematic monitoring system needs to be in place to move forward in this area.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good

The leadership and management of the school as a church school are good because leaders consistently promote the distinctive Christian vision. The acting headteacher works hard and articulates a clear vision based on distinctive Christian values. This effectively promotes and impacts positively on the school community. Areas for improvement have accurately been identified to move the school forward. Governors are very supportive of the school's Christian character and regard it as central to the life of the school. They have a clear grasp of the purpose of being a church school and the importance of their role. They are well informed about children's progress and speak highly of the commitment of the acting headteacher during a period of huge change. Governors visit the school on a regular basis allowing them to experience the impact of values on behaviour and the positive relationships within the school. Increasing opportunities for observation of lessons and discussions with staff are instrumental in keeping governors more informed and as a result they are able to ask more challenging questions. The vice chair of governors is very knowledgeable about the school and has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Foundation governors regularly meet to consider the impact of changes on the school's Christian ethos. A recently initiated monitoring cycle for governors is resulting in an increased involvement in moving the school forward. RE and worship contribute to the Christian character of the school and have a positive effect on children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The RE co-ordinator is passionate about her role and leadership is good. Regular meetings with governors and delivery of continuing professional development means that governors are well informed on children's good progress which is in line with other core subjects. Work scrutiny and tracking systems are in place but this is on an informal basis and leaders are aware a more formal and systematic way to monitor and evaluate RE as well as the involvement of the co-ordinator in lesson observations needs to be developed. The good quality of relationships between the school and the church supports the Christian character of the school and actively promotes a strong community spirit. Parents are very supportive of the school. They say their views are listened to through such developments as a breakfast club and the purchase of staging for productions. They feel their children are well prepared for life in the future.

SIAMS report June 2015 St Mary's CE VC Primary School Swindon SN5 4AR