

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St. Mary's Church of England Primary School

Address	Yew Tree Road, Sough SL1 2AR		
Date of inspection	13 June 2019	Status of school	VC Primary
Diocese	Oxford	URN	109995

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Good
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good

School context

St. Mary's is a large primary school with 625 pupils on roll, including those in the nursery. The majority of pupils are from Asian backgrounds. Most pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is above national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national figures. There is an increase in the number of pupils presenting with more complex needs.

The school's Christian vision

As we share our strengths and talents, we build on strong Christian foundations and values to shine and flourish in our school and community, inspire and improve the lives of ourselves and others, and together build a bright future. *Matthew 7 v 24 '...everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.'*

Matthew 5 v 16 'Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.'

Key findings

- The vision reflects the diversity of the school while retaining its Christian distinctiveness. There is a tangible impact of the vision of 'building a bright future' for those within the school community.
- The focus on mental health and wellbeing is an area of excellence which supports the nurture of adults and pupils.
- The school is ambitious for its pupils and this is seen in the improving results in national assessments.
- Governors know the school well. Systems to evaluate the impact of the vision, worship and religious education (RE), however, are not fully embedded.
- A culture of care and compassion is seen at every turn. This motivates staff who are true 'extra milers'. Consequently, pupils are safe, secure and so able to learn.
- RE and collective worship demonstrate the firm Christian foundations of the school.

Areas for development

- Extend systems for governors to monitor the impact of the vision, worship and RE so these directly inform and secure improvements in the school as a Church school.
- Enhance worship by extending pupils' role in planning and leading so that worship is more engaging and harnesses the capabilities of the many articulate youngsters.
- Consider ways to capture the range of activities in RE so that assessment and tracking are more robust.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

Inclusivity is the hallmark of this vibrant, richly diverse school. As one member of staff said, 'God means different things to different people. I can live Islam here in a Christian community.' Leaders have revised the vision, so that it builds on the former statement and has clearly stated biblical roots. As a result, the Christian character of the school is more explicit than at the time of the last denominational inspection. The focus on 'building a bright future' and 'shining' is intrinsic to the life of adults and pupils. Leaders are shining examples of tireless and compassionate care. They are selfless in their giving of time, love and energy. The school is blessed in the dedication of the headteacher, her leadership team and staff. Unswerving in their commitment to the pupils, they embody an authentic, living faith which ensures pupils flourish. Beyond St. Mary's, the school engages with the local authority and Diocese and is highly regarded for its work on mental health and wellbeing, leading work on this locally. Governors, in particular the chair of the board, determine the strategic direction of the school. However, their monitoring of Church school aspects is limited. School development plans do not focus on improving the school as a Church school.

An improving picture of test results demonstrates effective teaching. Data shows that the longer pupils attend St. Mary's, the better they do. Provision for pupils with special educational needs/disabilities and those who may be disadvantaged is sensitive and has a positive impact on academic outcomes. More importantly, it enables pupils to build more secure foundations for the rest of their lives. Pupils know and live out the vision and core values of love, forgiveness, responsibility, honesty, respect extremely well. These support both learning and personal development. One pupil with English as a second language said, 'I now shine in English.' Another stated that, 'The values help me feel good inside, more self-confident, so I learn'. At St. Mary's learning is more than academic studies. Great emphasis is placed on spiritual, social, cultural and emotional development. Much support is provided by specialist staff. Facilities like the wellbeing room, Wilson the school dog, and library quiet space, make a real difference to how brightly pupils shine. Equally important to leaders is the wellbeing of staff. Much is expected of them in their key roles and they are valued and supported, for example with ongoing training and guidance. It is commendable that several staff, nurtured at St. Mary's, have been promoted to senior posts in other schools.

A spirit of mutual respect is palpable. Almost all pupils behave well and cooperate willingly with staff and each other. Adults too form a lively and harmonious team which, despite staff changes, stays true to its community feel and caring ethos. When challenges occur, particularly around behavioural issues, leaders and staff are steadfast and make decisions based on the best interests of each child. Pupils are very aware of the needs of others. Many opportunities for pupil leadership exist. These include championing eco issues and identifying charities and projects to support. This gives pupils a sense of connection with local, national and global issues. Pupils state that they respect themselves, others and the environment. The 'community feel' of the school is seen in the way it builds respectful partnerships with parents and family members. They are eloquent in their praise for all the school does for their children and for them. An example they gave was of staff welcoming pupils by name at the gate every morning. They said they felt welcome and part of the extended family of St. Mary's. In effect, the commitment to building community goes beyond the school day and school gates. Offering the use of the playground for families after school is an indicator of service to those who do not have access to safe places to play.

Collective worship contributes to St. Mary's identity as a Church school. It offers, to those who wish it, the opportunity to engage with Christian teaching. In such a diverse community, care is taken to make worship inclusive and to invite responses, not to insist on them. As a result, staff and pupils of a range of faiths and views feel comfortable to attend. Pupils particularly enjoy worship which is on topical themes and which is led by their peers. With the collective worship ambassadors supporting worship, the school is well-placed to extend leadership to pupils of all ages. The experience of worship is enhanced by support from local clergy from Anglican, Methodist and Baptist denominations and by representatives from other faiths. Collective worship is well-planned around the Bible. It reflects the main festivals in the Christian calendar and also special events for a range of faiths, for example, to mark Ramadan. Prayer is integral to worship. It supports the sense of community. Pupils are offered time to pray or reflect around lunchtime and at the end of the day as well as during assembly. An outdoor area is being developed as a quiet space for spiritual reflection. Parents and community members contribute to the resources and skills needed for this project. Again, this exemplifies a trusting partnership, built on the vision of care, which characterises so much of the school.

RE makes a good contribution to pupils' sense of their place in our multi-cultural world. Pupils enjoy learning about a range of faiths. They find the subject interesting and challenging. For example, work exploring the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit intrigued older pupils. During the inspection, excellent questioning by staff and respectful debate among pupils was seen. This is exceptional and demonstrates the well-established climate for learning. It is clear that RE is an effective vehicle to deepen and broaden pupils' views and experiences. When debating certainty in faith, a pupil explained his view, 'From a bad thing, you may get a good thing.' Another noted that 'obstacles make us stronger'. At present, coverage of some of the RE curriculum is inconsistent between classes and year groups. Methods of assessment are developing but do not note how teachers capture work, like drama or debate, which is not written in books.

St. Mary's is a special place where pupils and adults are encouraged and valued. The school itself shines as a beacon of hope in the community and gives its pupils the firm foundations for life. The vision is summed up in the words of a pupil, 'Our vision means I can see what is in our future.' For those at this school, the future does indeed promise to be bright.

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