



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St. Mary's Church of England Primary School

Link Lane
Pulborough
West Sussex
RH20 2AN

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Chichester

Local authority: West Sussex

Dates of inspection: 11 November 2014

Date of last inspection: November 2008

School's unique reference number: 126048

Headteacher: Alyson Heath

Inspector's name and number: Connie Hughes 765

School context

St. Mary's is a voluntary aided, village primary school with 352 pupils on roll. The headteacher will retire in July 2015. In September 2014, the school appointed five new members of staff, including three newly qualified teachers. Major building work was completed in September 2014. The majority of the school community are white British, with nearly half of families coming from low socio-economic backgrounds. There are strong links with St. Mary's Church and parish. A significant number of the school community, including the Governing Body, attend a church within the local area. The school is undertaking the Religious Education Quality Kite mark.

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

- The Christian character and values of the school are embedded in pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school's motto "A Christ centred school with a child centred curriculum", nurtures all pupils, including the most vulnerable, to achieve personal success.
- Relationships between the school, the church, parents and the village community are strong.
- Daily collective worship, guided by the headteacher and strongly supported by the Rector and the parish church, positively affects pupils' spiritual understanding of the life of Jesus.

Areas to improve

- Develop the leadership role of the newly appointed religious education (RE) co-ordinator, and secure consistent use of assessment strategies, to ensure good to outstanding teaching and learning experiences.
- Through collective worship (CW), policy and practice identify more opportunities for pupils to plan, engage and deliver a greater richness in the worship and the prayer life of the school.
- Through the governing body's Ethos Committee, revise the monitoring and evaluation of RE and CW to produce a more accurate picture of its impact on the life of the school.

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

The school motto 'A Christ centred school with a child centred curriculum' is at the forefront of the headteacher's leadership. Pupils reflect on their strongly held belief, "Everything we do is based on the teachings of Jesus", and enthusiastically burst into a favourite school song based on His greatest commandment, "Treat others as you would be treated". 'The Inclusion Quality Mark' (IQM), was achieved for the second time, in the last academic year. It commends the school on its Christian ethos permeating the whole community. A pupil enthusiastically explained, "This school welcomed me, we are treated the same and fairly, it's just brilliant". Analysis of pupil progress data reflects the positive impact of targeted school intervention strategies. Pupil Premium expenditure identifies significant strengths in school provision for the most vulnerable pupils. Annual pupil and parent questionnaire outcomes celebrate children's positive attitudes, outstanding behaviour and strong relationships with a school team who support and challenge them to achieve personal success in a Christian environment. Pupil attendance is very good.

The physical Christian environment, climate and ethos, strongly affect pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. On entry to the school, a vivid display of poppies, individually created by all pupils, is a reflection on the impact of the first World War during this period of remembrance and request for peace across the world. Pupils in Key Stage 11, when questioned, sensitively shared their empathy for the loss of a soldier from the village who died in a more recent conflict. Reception pupils thrive in an exciting and motivating curriculum. For example, weekly exploration in their 'Forest School' grounds, expertly organised by staff, family and community volunteers, enable them to engage with skilled adults, explore ideas, work co-operatively and develop independence. Class identity names and curriculum themes with countries around the world expand all pupils' cultural knowledge and understanding of their place within a global society. Pupils show a conscientious awareness of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith when applying Christian values to their daily life through participation in charitable activities, including Fair Trade fortnight and their partner school in Sierra Leone.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Collective Worship (CW) is at the centre of school life and makes a significant contribution to pupil's spiritual development "within their daily lives", reflected a member of staff. Pupils state, "It gives you guidelines for the day ahead... through knowing Jesus' love we are all kind to one another". The headteacher's comprehensive worship plans, develop pupils' knowledge, experience and application of Christian beliefs, practices and values throughout the Church year. The strong partnership with the rector, who leads whole school and class worship, significantly extends the children's experience and understanding of the Bible, Anglican liturgy and tradition. Parental discussions and questionnaire returns reflect full support for the schools links with St. Mary's Church. The school and village community participate together in celebrating Christian festivals and the established termly Eucharist service. Class worship in upper Key Stage 2, primarily led by the teacher, was inclusive and interactive, combining Anglican structure, biblical reference, prayer, music and joyful singing linking "Remembrance" day to the Christian value of generosity. Through their attentive responses to the symbolic lighting of three candles on the worship table and reinforced in their established classroom 'Reflection - who is Jesus?' corner, pupils understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is well developed. They knowledgeably compared the range of moral and Christian values shown by soldiers fighting for their country and the generous sacrifice of Jesus dying for us. More opportunity for pupils across the school to plan, and lead worship would enable them to engage further in a strong spiritual experience. Prayer and reflection, as displayed and carried out in the daily life of the school, are extremely important to pupil and adult worship. More focus in the school policy and planned practice would enrich whole school prayer experiences.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious Education has a good balance between Christianity and other principal world religions. Assessment, monitoring and marking of pupils' work in RE, although a focus for the past two years has not moved sufficiently forward to enable the school to have an accurate picture of the pupils' attainment and progress. Resources are of a high quality and consistently used to support the teaching and learning of RE through discrete and cross-curricular themes. Additional literature, created by older pupils for young pupils, included inspiring comic strip Bible stories. There is an over dependence on photocopied sheets. Godly Play, the creative arts and Christian values to the story of 'The Good Samaritan' in Key Stage I contributed to engaging and inspiring some pupils in their learning. This was not consistent, as not all pupils were given sufficient guidance in applying the next steps in their learning. Explicitly planned provision for spiritual development has a high profile. For example, in Key Stage 2 at the start of the RE lesson, "talk partners", were presented with a thought provoking big fat question (BFG), "Is death the end?" stimulated them to think deeply about their own and other people's thoughts and experiences in a climate of mutual respect. High quality interaction, articulation and outcomes included, "There is hope for those left behind ... you are still metaphorically alive." The lesson continued with pupils demonstrating, through differentiated tasks, their understanding the importance of Mohammed, the prophet, in the Islamic faith. Pupils confidently share their familiarity and experience of linking RE to biblical teaching, Anglican tradition, Christian values and the opportunity to submit personal prayers. For example, explaining the content and importance of the changing focus of 'Reflection' areas in each classroom on the cycle of Christian values. The headteacher, previously the subject leader, has recently identified a new coordinator for RE as part of succession planning.

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

The highly effective Christian leadership of the headteacher underpins the impact of its church school ethos. Parents agreed, the headteacher "instils a strong foundation for our children to build upon in their lives". Leadership and management are not outstanding because a new distributed leadership model is in its early stages. Governors are contributing to the school's self-evaluation strategies, including accessing professional development on understanding and challenging the school's academic performance. They are currently pro-active in succession planning for a new headteacher, recognising this is "a period of profound change" in securing its Christian foundation. The Ethos committee, although carrying out some monitoring has yet to develop a more robust and rigorous system to gather sufficient evidence to enable them to identify in depth, strengths and weaknesses of RE and CW provision. A visit to review RE early in this term is a good example of how they are developing a more structured approach to gathering evidence of leadership and standards. The school leadership team, with a significant number of new teachers, are addressing further improvement in attainment and achievement in RE, as a core subject, through planned diocesan professional development in the spring term 2015. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator is exceptional in her knowledge, skills and qualities. Through structured leadership, applying intervention strategies and including guidance on the website, she supports all staff and parents to work with their children in the core curriculum areas. Families from other church communities strengthen the distinctive Christian ethos of the school, including the embedded, monthly parent support group 'Time out for Dads'.

SIAMS report November 2014 St. Mary's CE Primary School, Pulborough RH20 2AN