

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| St. Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School | | | |
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| Address | Littlegrove, East Barnet, Barnet EN4 8SR | | |
| Date of inspection | 13 February 2020 | Status of school | Voluntary aided primary |
| Diocese | St. Albans | URN | 101324 |
| 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 Excellent |
| Additional Judgements | The impact of collective worship | | Grade Excellent |
| | The effectiveness of religious education (RE) | | Grade Excellent |

School context

St. Mary's is a primary school with 215 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Some pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national averages. The leadership role has been shared by two headteachers since September 2019. One is newly appointed to that role and the other has been in post as headteacher for many years. The incumbent took up post in September 2019 after a two year vacancy.

The school's Christian vision

'At St. Mary's, inspired by Christian values, we are excited by our learning, proud of our achievements, determined to be the best we can be and caring for all of God's creation.'

This vision is theologically underpinned by the school's explicitly Christian values. It reminds everyone in the community that they can achieve great things in God's world from their seemingly small beginnings.

Key findings

- Leaders demonstrate emphatically how well every aspect of the school's work is driven by the distinctive Christian vision. Because of the depth to which the Christian values are understood theologically they underpin this vision. It is refreshed regularly so that it remains relevant and meaningful for the entire community. The joint headteachers are dynamic leaders and collaborate extremely well. They share a passion for maintaining the school as an excellent church school at the heart of this community, building on its long-established strengths.
- Governors are determined to maintain and strengthen the Christian character of the school and the centrality of the vision for everyone to flourish. They monitor this frequently and widely. They have shown their commitment through innovative succession planning.
- Worship is highly engaging and relevant, developing children's and adults' understanding of the Christian faith extremely well. It is greatly enriched by the strong ecumenical partnership, especially with the local Methodist Church.
- Pupils, parents, staff and governors articulate the vision confidently, explaining its biblical context and the impact the vision makes in ensuring that everyone flourishes. They demonstrate how they benefit from the school's wide-ranging partnerships.
- Religious education (RE) is excellent. Pupils make very good progress in understanding the Christian faith and the beliefs of others through outstanding teaching, opportunities for reflection and an exciting curriculum. Pupils are inspired by RE. They value the opportunity to discuss one another's views openly.

Area for development

- Further develop links with communities in different parts of the world so that pupils deepen their understanding of Christianity as a global faith.

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

Everyone at St. Mary's knows how powerfully the Christian vision drives the school forward, explaining how resources are allocated based on the determination for everyone to flourish despite their needs. The vision has long been deeply rooted in explicitly Christian teaching and is the foundation of the school's work. The new incumbent has built on the very close partnership between the school and the parish. He is working with leaders and governors to deepen understanding of the theological roots even further through the parable of the mustard seed. Through robust monitoring of the school's effectiveness governors reflect constantly on the impact of the vision.

Governors have been proactive in succession planning because the leadership of this as a Church school is their highest priority. They have secured an innovative and sustainable model which continues to develop the school's leadership capacity. In doing so they have met the recommendation of the last inspection report. Current arrangements are exceptionally effective because the co-headteachers share an understanding of what makes this an excellent Church school. There are very strong partnerships with the local Methodist and Baptist churches. During the recent vacancy they and members of the parish maintained the school's extremely close links with the parish church. The school works with many other schools to share expertise, reflecting the vision by improving outcomes for those pupils. The school works well with the Diocese, accessing professional development for staff and governors to develop the Christian distinctiveness further. Staff are well supported both in their professional development and personal lives. Leaders and governors have prioritised staff wellbeing for example, through reducing workload.

The curriculum is creative and rich in opportunities for pupils' reflection and spiritual development. Pupils learn to discuss opposing views with maturity and respect. All pupils, irrespective of their needs or backgrounds, flourish as learners. They behave exceptionally well because staff have high expectations and support them to 'be the best they can be'. There are many examples of the way the school 'goes the extra mile' to give every pupil the same opportunities, celebrating the progress made by those facing considerable barriers to their learning. Pupils reach, and often exceed, expected levels. They know that they can influence their world and take responsibility for preserving God's Creation. They have written to companies asking them to reduce pollution and to improve the lives of those with difficulties. Pupils become confident, courageous advocates, raising money for charities, supporting the local foodbank and a homeless shelter. Pupils have recently developed a link with a school for blind pupils in Jamaica which helps them understand similarities and differences between Christian communities around the world.

The school community is extremely harmonious and values everyone equally. Pupils and families of all faiths, and those without a faith, feel completely involved and respected in a school which 'feels like a big family'. Pupils particularly value learning about different faiths in their RE lessons, knowing they will be better equipped to live in harmony with people as they grow up. Parents whose children have additional needs say this is a 'very special place' and talk of the way their children are nurtured by the Christian values which underpin the school's ethos. They see the school 'shining out' in the community, 'absolutely committed to providing the best education for every pupil'.

Worship is inspirational in developing staff and pupils' understanding of the Christian faith. Pupils and adults feel inspired and uplifted by worship which influences their lives. Pupils learn about Bible stories, the life of Jesus and Christian festivals such as Candlemas. They have an age appropriate understanding of the Eucharist and of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They develop their spirituality through prayers, music and reflection. Pupils evaluate worship for themselves so that leaders are left in no doubt as to how it meets their personal and spiritual needs. Pupils contribute in many ways. They often make connections with their learning in lessons, for example, linking learning about Jesus as the Light of the World with light in science. The weekly visit to the parish church is particularly special. The contribution made by the Methodist minister and the Baptist church adds greatly to the richness of worship, enabling pupils to experience different styles and traditions.

RE expresses and promotes the school's vision extremely well. Pupils experience highly creative activities. For example, pupils in Year 1 discussed the similarities between the Torah and the Bible while Year 2 looked at the shared vocabulary used in Christianity and Islam. Pupils express mature views for their age, and are listened to with profound respect. Provision in RE reflects the Church of England Statement of Entitlement.

St. Mary's school's distinctively Christian vision is exceptionally effective in enabling all its pupils and adults to flourish academically, socially and emotionally. The vision empowers them to strive to excel and to know they can make a difference in God's world.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

Leaders monitor teaching and learning in RE rigorously. This informs Governors' robust evaluation of the effectiveness of RE. It is taught extremely well so that pupils make exceptionally good progress.

Pupils are inspired by RE and enjoy discussing contrasting views and comparing beliefs of different faiths.

The RE leader has developed a system for assessing pupils' progress and understanding their attainment so that teachers can challenge their pupils appropriately and plan to meet their needs.

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| Headteachers | Mel Adams and Maria Constantinou |
| Inspector's name and number | Gill Walley 644 |