



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Charles Street
Wakefield
West Yorkshire
WF1 4PE

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: West Yorkshire and the Dales

Local authority: Wakefield

Dates of inspection: 15 January 2015

Date of last inspection: July 2010

School's unique reference number: 108269

Headteacher: Mark Taylor

Inspector's name and number: Nigel Castledine (652)

School context

St Mary's is a smaller than average primary school located in an urban environment. The school is at full pupil capacity. It serves a socially and ethnically diverse community in an area of significant deprivation. An increasing proportion of the children have a main language other than English. Children from families whose faith is other than Christian make up 57% of the school's population, of whom the majority are Muslim. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals and pupil premium is above average. The school works closely with St Andrew's church and has links with local mosques.

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

- The caring and respectful relationships between all members of the school community enable children to share and grow in their personal beliefs and spirituality
- The school's chosen Christian values underpin every aspect of school life and relate to weekly Statements for Life that link progress and achievement with faith
- The exceptional leadership of the headteacher, senior staff and the governors ensures the school's strong Christian ethos enhances learning outcomes for every child

Areas to improve

- Utilise the school's increasing links with the African Diocese of Mara to create greater awareness and understanding of Christianity as a world faith
- Extend the evaluation of worship to include the views of adults, to ensure that worship has meaning and significance for all who are present

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

Christian values are fundamental to the life and effectiveness of St Mary's School. The six chosen values epitomise the ways in which the school harnesses its beliefs to create a pervasive atmosphere of faith based on Trust, Forgiveness, Friendship, Hope, Respect and Responsibility. These values openly reflect the teachings of Christ, but are inclusive as they are equally applicable to the scriptural teachings of Islam and other major world faiths. They underpin every aspect of school life and give added drive to ongoing school improvement. They ensure pupils are challenged and supported to make progress. They underpin the care, respect and faith shown by all members of the school in a harmonious multi-faith community in which learning is irresistible. Because achievement is celebrated, this engenders in the children a pride in meeting the high expectations set for them and sparks their desire to master new skills. School data, verified by the last Ofsted inspection and Data Dashboard figures, indicate that pupils achieve well and make good progress over time. They also show the school is continuing to raise pupil achievement year on year. Christian values strongly influence the children's understanding of their roles in and out of school. This is seen in the children's respectful and polite manner, their tolerance of others and use of self-reflection. Accordingly, the children understand and respect the need for good behaviour. Restorative practices within the school's behaviour policy support children to make the right choices and again reflect the school's Christian values in their emphasis on forgiveness. The school embraces and celebrates its increasing diversity, using its faith ethos to ensure that everyone is understood and respected. The helpful inclusion team leads the welcome to the St Mary's community for all new arrivals and works to meet individual needs that facilitate settling into school life. The provision of a wide range of extra opportunities and experiences outside teaching times for children enables them to widen their vision and expectations. Combined with stimulating learning experiences, they fulfil the aim that each child has happy memories of every school day. Children are very keen to contribute to school life through service to others in roles such as members of the School Council or by giving their time to help as playground befrienders. Because children enjoy their education, they want to be in school. Attendance data show that parents and carers are growing in their understanding of the need for children's regular and punctual attendance, but taking children out of school for extended holidays in term-time is still an issue. Barriers to learning created by external socio-economic factors manifest themselves in children not having had the range of experiences and development that prepare them for entry to school. At St Mary's, to fulfil the school's Christian values, targeted resources are given supporting identified children from birth to pre-school. The outcome is a significant improvement in children's readiness for school life. Charitable giving, again linked to Christian values, is another important aspect of life at St Mary's. Support is generously given to high-profile events such as Children in Need alongside help for local good causes and fundraising for the linked African Diocese of Mara's annual appeals for practical aid such as mosquito nets.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship at St Mary's is an inclusive, special time at the heart of the daily life of the school. It supports daily spiritual learning and reflection in an inspirational atmosphere of faith, prayer and praise, which enables the Christian values of the school to be explored and refreshed. It is highly effective because it is well led, carefully planned and offered inclusively to meet the spiritual needs of the whole school community, both adult and child, irrespective of faith background. It is also regularly evaluated by the children as the outcome of a development point from the last inspection. Worship is given extra impact by the weekly 'Statements To Live By' which combine Christian teaching with Christian values and spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) learning. These statements are discussed both in class and whole school worship and give a focus for children to consider in their lives. In this way, a statement on 'faith to do impossible things' engenders children's thinking about meeting and overcoming challenges in their own lives. Worship does not just happen at the set time of day but occurs

naturally within other parts of school life. It is also seen in the spirituality of the children who are supported by the school's ethos to be able to share prayers and reflections with others, often during worship, but also in class and with their friends. Children take an appropriate full part in worship, but given the diverse faith traditions within school this is done with sensitivity. Adults present for collective worship also find spiritual refreshment in its content and comment on its impact in their own lives. However the school does not evaluate the views on worship of adults on a regular basis. The school uses Bible teachings and gospel values in collective worship, with appropriate references to other major world faiths and their sacred texts. In this way clear links are made between Christian belief, its major festivals and holy days and other major world faiths. Leaders for worship reflect the faith mix of the school and include St Mary's staff, the vicar and other Christian leaders, with members of a local mosque being invited to take part during Ramadan and Eid. Anglican tradition is clear in the way the worship table is reverently prepared by children at the start of worship with liturgical coloured cloth, the Cross, the Bible and the candle being lit to indicate the time is sacred. Good use is also made of music to create the atmosphere for worship and in the praise songs sung with enthusiasm. The Christian year is followed and the school worships at St Andrew's Church for the major festivals. Parents of all faiths attend these occasions.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious Education (RE) is regarded as a core subject at St Mary's and is given high priority in the life of the school. The effective subject coordinator has acted on the development point from the last inspection to put in place a system for monitoring progress in RE. The subject is now reviewed regularly and shows children's attainment in RE to be comparable with other core subjects. Because the subject is well taught, outstanding RE learning takes place that inspires children to move from learning factual information about Christianity and other world faiths to considering in some depth the place of faith and spirituality within their own lives. Accordingly children are able to reflect on elements of belief and how these may have relevance to them as individuals alongside their SMSC learning. This enhances the cohesion of the school as children learn to empathise with the spirituality of a range of world religions and to understand the meaning and significance of faith. The Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity is covered within RE with due sensitivity to differing religious beliefs as to the nature of God. Class visits are made to local churches and the cathedral to support learning and to take part in special events. These are balanced with learning visits to local mosques. This ensures a wider understanding and a closer working relationship between the mosques and the school.

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

The headteacher and senior leaders strongly promote and carefully evaluate a clear strategic vision for St Mary's as an effective Church of England school, based on its Christian values. This vision is scrutinised by the effective governing body which has a clear understanding of the school from its close formal analysis of data and regular visits. Governance has gained focus, impact and relevance since the last inspection in which it was a development point. Accordingly, this dynamic management has made St Mary's a continually developing and highly effective church school. Trust in what the school is doing is built up through parent support groups and an inclusive language-rich environment that respects home languages whilst ensuring the development of skills in English. Close links join the school with the local church community of St Andrew's and the vicar, who regularly leads school worship and gives pastoral support. Diocesan links encourage ongoing school RE development and the headteacher has contributed to the diocesan induction programme for new headteachers. The partnership between three local church schools has provided a wide variety of beneficial experiences for staff development. Community cohesion is supported by ongoing links with contrasting schools, in working on nearby improvement projects and with the local St Swithun's centre.