



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### **St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Church Lane  
Mucklestone  
Market Drayton  
TF9 4DN

#### **Diocese: Lichfield**

Local authority: Staffordshire  
Date of inspection: 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013  
Date of last inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009  
School's unique reference number: 124342  
Headteacher: Jane Hughes  
Inspector's name and number: Julie Moore 579

#### **School context**

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is a very small school with 39 pupils on roll. A small minority of pupils live close to the school and the others travel quite a distance. All pupils have White British heritage. There have been a number of acting headteachers in recent times but the school now has a permanent headteacher. The school has benefitted from recent improvements to the buildings.

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

The new headteacher is having a very positive impact on the daily life and work of the school. Effective leadership has enabled the school's Christian values to have a high profile as they are the firm bedrock for new developments and future academic success. Parents, pupils, staff and governors are well pleased about this as they work closely together, driving the school forward in its faith journey.

#### **Established strengths**

- Pupils of all ages have a clear understanding of spiritual awareness.
- The positive and effective partnership between the school family, the church family and the wider community enables all pupils and their families to be respected and valued.
- Prayer has a high profile and pupils' prayers demonstrate how sensitive they are to needs of others.

#### **Focus for development**

- Provide greater opportunities to share the life and work of the school with pupils from a school in a different area to the village of Mucklestone.
- Engage the parent group in sharing school based worship such as occasions for shared celebration and worship led by individual groups and classes.

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

The bedrock of this school are the firm and clear Christian values which underpin everything that happens at St Marys. Empathy for the needs of others, sensitivity and respect, alongside high quality relationships, demonstrate the many ways in which the school's Christian values

help every pupil to flourish and develop well. All of which is especially noticeable in their mature attitude to learning. Pupils always try hard and their learning progresses at a good pace in their academic work. Standards are high in the core subjects as well as in Religious Education and pupils make good progress. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils' mature understanding of spirituality shines through in their responses to questions in a Religious Education lesson. For example, questions focussed on the commandment; 'How might Christians show they love God?' *'Christians love one another, they love other people and they love nature'* came back one response. All of which holds good for everyone whatever their faith, belief or lack of belief. Relationships are very good. This is a very small school, everyone is included and no-one is left out. The school and church families work together successfully. Pupils are included in after school activities held in church as well as sharing worship experiences and joint community projects. By working together in this way the whole community successfully moves forward along its faith journey as they actively support the school and its pupils.

#### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

The school's strong Christian character ensures that prayer and worship are central to the life and work of the school. Christian festivals are celebrated at appropriate times and pupils have a good understanding of Anglican traditions and practice. Pupils enjoy worship. They are keen and enthusiastic to share their own experiences. *'I like worship, we take turns to light the candles and get things ready as well as tidying up afterwards'* and another pupil, *'All of us help in church. We do lots readings at Eucharist, and prayers, as well as helping the Rector'*. This has a good impact overall as pupils are successfully encouraged to have a very positive attitude towards church services. Parents also enjoy sharing worship in church and they say they would like to share other worship times with the school. Opportunities for personal reflection and quiet prayer are evident during the school day and these enhance pupils' awareness of spirituality very well indeed. Prayer is an important aspect of school life and pupils of all ages are adept at writing and talking about prayers. One pupil wrote, *'Dear God, Thank you for the seasons and nature. Thank you for the mountains and the animals that live on them. Amen'*. Indicating a mature sensitivity towards caring for God's world. At the time of the previous inspection there were some gaps in the school's approach to monitoring and evaluating worship. This has been tackled well. Parents, visitors, pupils and staff are now involved in all aspects of the worship experience.

#### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

This very small school has an equally small number of pupils in Year 6. Standards are above average and pupils achieve well because the teaching is very good. Lessons are well planned, pitched at the right level and pupils' progress is rigorously monitored. Gaps in learning are speedily identified and tackled. No time is wasted as lessons move forward at a cracking pace, enabling effective learning to take place. Pupils of all ages are fully engaged with the learning process and this makes their learning more meaningful. In one lesson, with younger pupils, the focus of the lesson was 'Friendship'. Comments such as *'We listen to God, pray to God and sing to God because he is our friend'* and *'We pray to God to help us be a good friend'* clearly show that these young pupils understand the true meaning of Christian friendship. Similarly with older pupils. They were discussing the meaning of the phrase, 'Thou shalt not take the Lord's name in vain'. One pupil replied *'That means we only talk about God in an ordinary way which is positive and not to use slang'*. Most other comments emphasised this aspect thereby showing sensitivity as well as understanding. The subject is led very well and managed effectively by the subject leader who is very secure in her knowledge of the Religious Education curriculum. Issues highlighted in the previous report have been tackled very well and are no longer issues.

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

The new headteacher is actively supported by clergy, parents, governors, staff and pupils as they all work together in a cohesive team which successfully moves the school forward at a good pace. A main focus has been to enhance and strengthen the school's Christian character and this has been achieved by firmly embedding shared Christian values across all aspects of school life. Communication is very good and the school family, the church family

and the wider community have a very clear idea what this truly Christian school stands for within both local and national communities. All the statutory requirements are met and this has been achieved through identifying clear goals alongside careful planning and evaluation. The school has a strong capacity to continue to move forward along its faith journey. Standards are high and academic standards are securely supported through the high quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Governors and staff are always keen to attend training which enables them to fulfil their role with greater effectiveness. In this, they are ably supported by their diocesan partners. The total cohesiveness that exists at St Mary's school has already been mentioned earlier in this report. However, there are few links with schools in a different area to Mucklestone and international links are under consideration, especially in relation to the charity 'Save the Children'

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