

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Lane, Muckleston, Market Drayton TF9 4DN

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| Current SIAMS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Diocese | Lichfield |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade | Good |
| Local authority | Staffordshire |
| Date of inspection | 5 July 2018 |
| Date of last inspection | May 2013 |
| Type of school and unique reference number | Voluntary Aided Primary 124342 |
| Headteacher | Clare Hill |
| Inspector's name and number | Lizzie McWhirter 244 |

School context

At St Mary's there are currently 70 pupils on roll in this dyslexia friendly rural primary school. Almost all pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and /or disabilities is below the national average. The headteacher was appointed in April 2018. The experienced religious education [RE] subject leader is a long serving and experienced member of staff.

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

- This is a welcoming and nurturing Christian family community. Here every pupil and adult is accepted and a strong sense of belonging unites everyone, with Jesus at the centre.
- The vision of the headteacher, the commitment of the governors, the passion of the RE subject leader and the dedication of all the staff ensure this school's distinctive Christian character permeates all policy and practice.
- Pupils' religious knowledge and understanding is excellent in this church primary school and nurtures their spiritual and personal lives very well.

Areas to improve

- Extend the gathering of evidence in RE, as part of on-going assessment, so consistency and continuity from Reception to Year 6 is celebrated and shared.
- Enable pupils to meet more people of faith, as regular visitors into school, to enrich their spiritual and cultural development.

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

St Mary's vision of 'Every day matters' is at the heart of school life. This is because 'the school's Christian ethos and close connection to the church are at the heart of our vision and values'. Staff affirm this is a 'happy and caring school, full of fun and laughter'. Moreover, this supportive community has 'high expectations of learning, with Jesus at the centre of all that we do'. The core values of gratitude, thoughtfulness, forgiveness, kindness, perseverance and courage, chosen by pupils enable them to learn, grow and flourish. Relationships and behaviour are very good, with values modelled by the whole community and achievement of the whole child central to the school's mission. Attendance is high and there have been no exclusions, with vulnerable children well supported. For example, the needs of pupils who are dyslexic are met here, as are all pupils who are 'unique and have a right to education'. Attainment across all age groups is high. Mathematics is a strength of the school whilst writing is a focus area. School residential visits enable pupils to demonstrate Christian values, such as perseverance, in action. For example, pupils found courage when tackling new skills on the high ropes and drew inspiration and 'support from God, teachers, their peers and parents'. Time is invested in pupils to allow them to achieve. This is because there is mutual respect and support for one another and every person is valued. Pupils have access to a wide range of achievement, with musical and sporting activities a strength of the school. Worship and RE make very good contributions to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development and to the Christian character of the school. An excellent example is the travelling Posada, which takes place every Advent. Families get ready to welcome visitors, namely large figures of Mary and Joseph, who enjoy being part of family life in the journey towards Christmas. RE has a particularly high profile and follows guidance from the diocese in using the 'Understanding Christianity' resource. Whilst St Mary's pupils enjoy living in a very rural context, they appreciate different cultures and communities when they visit places such as Derby and encounter diversity of belief on its excellent faith trails.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship at St Mary's is an important part of school life and this gathering time of being 'God-centred' is enjoyed by adults and pupils alike. It is varied in its approach and has an emphasis on key festivals in the church year and biblical teaching. The close links with nearby St Mary's Church ensure the pattern of worship includes church services at Harvest, Christmas and Easter. The recent 'Children's Church' project has enthused pupils to be creative in their approach to making the partnership between church and school a legacy of longevity. This is because pupils are designing stained glass windows based on the three key seasons in the church year, namely Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. The giant church is proudly displayed in the school hall where many activities are celebrated and shared. For example, pupils would like the popular Christian club to be renamed as the 'Children's Church' club. Pupils are encouraged to pray and reflect as well as lead worship, especially Class 3 worship leaders, with The Lord's Prayer, school prayer and prayer tree well used and known by pupils. For example, one young pupil wrote on a prayer leaf, he was 'searching for courage when he went swimming so he could swim like a dolphin'. The new reflection area in the school hall is very well used by pupils as a space to reflect. They have complete ownership of it and regularly introduce creative and inspiring ways to pray, individually and collectively. Pupils and adults are growing in their understanding of 'the great mystery of faith; namely the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The rector uses 'Messy Grace' which is based on the three members of The Trinity. Pupils explain in their own words that, 'basically Jesus went up to heaven and left the Holy Spirit behind. We've all got The Holy Spirit.' It is also an important part of Eucharistic worship which pupils and parents attend. Some pupils have been confirmed, and can explain the symbolism of bread and wine extremely well. Pupils go on to say that the message of Bible stories, such as Noah, encourage them to listen to God. They comment that the story of David and Goliath helps them 'to speak up for myself and helps me through life. Even if you're little, you can still do a lot of good'. They firmly believe that you can 'always be courageous and brave and don't forget that God is by your side'. The Good Samaritan inspires them to 'remember to always be kind and be strong and wise'. They add that they 'like it when visitors come in' to school to lead worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE has a very high profile at St Mary's. Achievement in RE is high as in other core subjects and the quality of teaching and learning in RE is consistently good. This is because group work helps everyone to succeed and everyone is supported in their different approaches to learning. Staff have good subject knowledge and ask effective questions of pupils. In turn, pupils like to ask important questions, such as, 'How did God create us?' and 'Who made God?' The school is incorporating the 'Understanding Christianity' resources into teachers' planning and teaching. Whilst new resources are being used for the teaching of Christianity, the diocesan syllabus and other quality resources are used for teaching about other faiths. The RE subject leader is very committed to RE, undertaking professional development and reporting to governors as well as supporting colleagues. Governors are active in gathering pupils' viewpoints. Pupils know they can improve in their work if they 'look back at what they have done'. However, the school correctly identifies the need to extend the gathering of evidence, as part of the on-going assessment of RE, to ensure the consistency and continuity of standards from Reception to Year 6. The rector teaches Year 6 pupils on the importance of what it means to belong to a Christian community and confirmation in preparation for Eucharistic services. Pupils confirm they enjoy going to Derby and 'talking about faith that's not ours'. They say they would like to meet more people of faith and welcome them as visitors to their school. The school recognises this. Pupils understand the importance of Passover and comment upon Easter that, 'The Jewish people thought he was guilty but he was actually innocent'. They believe it's important to meet people of faith. The school takes this seriously and is committed to help them achieve this. Pupils attend 'Inspire' days at Lichfield Cathedral and Shrewsbury Abbey 'Open Door' days. Pupils gain immensely from the learning which takes place in their local churches. This includes the Roman Catholic Church and Methodist Chapel. Consequently, their religious vocabulary grows to include words such as sacristy. In addition, the 'Focus on Faith' days every half term enable pupils to look at broader aspects of RE, such as festivals of light celebrated in Judaism, Hinduism and Sikhism. As a result, pupils' religious knowledge and understanding is very good. They think deeply and can explain the Christian story of incarnation and salvation very well. For example, for one pupil, 'heaven is the promise Jesus left, he would be back. To me heaven means if you have passed away, then you still sort of live'. They make connections and say, 'the dove represents the Holy Spirit' in the story of Pentecost. Above all, they 'like learning about God and find that leaders like Moses 'really inspires me'.

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

Whilst the headteacher has only been in post since April, she has a strong Christian vision for this school and there is renewed impetus to take the school forward. Committed governors, and dedicated staff, led by a passionate and experienced RE subject leader are enthusiastic in their work. Areas from the previous inspection have been addressed, with clear priorities for action. This includes the 20/20 vision, which is based on values and measures success in different ways. This includes academic and personal development, with wellbeing at its heart. Links with the diocese are very supportive, with the school benefitting from diocesan training. Community links are very positive, with the school held in high regard. For example, the school features regularly in the parish magazine. The rector leads worship fortnightly and monitors worship, including class worship. Both worship and RE are well led, managed and resourced and meet statutory requirements. From the rector's point of view, 'growing the kingdom' is a key priority for the future. Self-evaluation is accurate. Parents affirm that they and their children 'love going to church and feel very welcome there'. An excellent example was the Remembrance Day service, when the parish community had adorned the way to church with large poppies. Parents say church is 'part of everyday life'. Above all, they speak highly of the confidence they see in their children, and the courage they witness and strength of character which comes from belonging to this nurturing community. In this farming community, the 'lambs' which represent the six values chosen by the pupils reflect the values which parents hold dear too. As one parent put it, 'This school has helped me and my family to have better values' for life.