

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Garnet Road, Willesden, London, NW10 9JA

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	London
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Brent
Date of inspection	20 June 2018
Date of last inspection	22 April 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 101537
Headteacher	Susan Lawrence
Inspector's name and number	Allan McLean NS823

School context

St Mary's has retained a stable senior leadership team since the last inspection. It is a slightly larger than average-sized primary school that serves pupils from a wide range of minority ethnic groups, the largest being Black African and Black Caribbean. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is higher than average. The number of pupils with special educational needs/and or disabilities is much higher than the national average as is the number of disadvantaged pupils eligible for additional funding. The school was inspected by Ofsted in June 2017 and received an overall effectiveness grade of 'Good'.

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

- The vision and drive of all leaders ensure that the school remains steadfastly on course to fulfil the mission – 'Live, love and learn together in the light of the life of Christ.'
- Relationships at all levels are informed by Christian values and guarantee a high level of pastoral support for all members of the school community.
- The school enjoys very strong partnerships with the local parish church, which makes a positive contribution to the Christian character of the school.
- Christian values shape, support and sustain the academic achievement, personal development and well-being of all pupils.
- A respect for diversity and a celebration of those of different faiths and those of none results in a harmonious community where pupils flourish.
- Religious education (RE) is given a high priority within the curriculum, is thoughtfully planned to meet the needs of pupils and enables and encourages pupils to take ownership for their learning.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that a higher proportion of pupils exceed national expectations in RE.
- Develop the systems already in place for governors to oversee monitoring and evaluation in order to ensure continued improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in RE.

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

The school has developed a clearly defined mission statement alongside a clear set of values which are firmly

embedded in the life of the school. Explicit Christian values permeate every aspect of the school, creating an ethos that enables pupils to make good progress and achieve academic standards that are at least in line with national expectations and often higher. The schools Christian values are clearly and creatively displayed in every classroom and throughout the school. They are well known and clearly articulated by all of the school community. As one child reflected on the values he stated, 'Our values help us to understand how we should act and guide us in our lives everyday.' Christian values inform all decisions regarding policy and practice and underpin the relationships between all members of the community. The school has established its own hymn with the words based on the values of the school. This further reinforces the centrality of the values at the heart of the school.

All those involved in the school communicate high expectations and aspirations for every child in this diverse community where levels of deprivation are indicated to be extremely high. This is seen both in the strong progress pupils make, and in their preparation as life long learners. The relationships between all members of this school community are excellent. They are characterised by mutual respect and a genuine sense of a shared set of values regardless of religion. At the heart of these relationships are the school's values which are best summarized by faith, love and forgiveness. Pupils are able to make clear links between the values and the choices they make. The school assists the children in developing a deeper knowledge and understanding of their role as citizens within their community. Links to charities are connected with the charitable work of the parish church. Children talk positively about making a difference through the charity work they have done in order to support the local food bank in the community. Opportunities for spiritual development is excellent. Pupils respond with sensitivity and maturity to collective worship. The links between RE, Christian values and creativity through art and music have been extremely well developed in order to provide children with high quality opportunities to reflect and respond to their RE teaching. Themes linked to the values are followed through during collective worship and as a result have a profound impact on pupil's behavior and well being. RE plays an important role in its contribution to the Christian character of the school. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of the Christian faith that makes a significant contribution to their moral and social development. Pupils have developed a clear understanding that Christianity is a world faith in the context of the diverse society within which they live. They enjoy the good opportunities which they have to learn about religions and faith communities and demonstrate a deep respect for one another, regardless of faith or cultural background. The RE curriculum, together with the daily act of worship, ensure that pupils understand the roots of the values within the Christian faith.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Pupils recognise that distinctively Christian worship is at the heart of St Mary's. As a result worship makes a positive impact on all aspects of school life. Pupils readily describe the importance of daily collective worship and articulate how it reinforces their knowledge and understanding of the place of Jesus Christ within the Christian faith. They also describe how certain themes guide them in their own lives. Parents comment positively on how collective worship has an impact on the way their children relate to adults and other children: 'Whether we are Christian, of another religion or no religion the worship teaches the children the values we share at home. The children talk about how they should show their love to one another.' The worship is very well planned through the year and relates well to both the church calendar and the school's Christian values. Children take an active leadership role during collective worship, acting as readers and servers during the weekly mass at held at the church. These opportunities should now be extended further into other acts of collective worship.

Leaders ensure that worship covers a broad range of Christian themes with a strong emphasis on the school's Christian values and on key Christian festivals. This enables pupils to have a very good understanding of the nature of worship, the Christian faith and Anglican traditions and practice. Pupils speak very positively about the impact of special services such as the weekly Mass. Members of staff attend collective worship and parents are also invited, thus reinforcing its importance to the whole community. Worship at the church is led weekly by the vicar of St Mary's church. Traditional Anglican practices are reflected in the use of liturgy and hymns. Other acts of worship are led in school by members of staff, reflecting Christian and Anglican traditions which would sometimes be different to that of the parish church, providing the children with a breadth of Anglican experiences. Each act of worship is distinctly Christian in character, seeks to deepen the children's theological understanding and provide pupils and staff with time to reflect on how it will impact on their daily lives. This, together with the prominent place of prayer across the school ensures that worship is a spiritual experience of real significance. Prayer happens at least twice a day in classrooms, prayer boxes are available for pupils throughout the school and these prayers are used effectively to support collective worship. Worship allows pupils the opportunity to begin to develop an age-appropriate understanding of complex Christian beliefs such as that of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Prayer in the life of the school and community has been strengthened through the use of prayer bags which are regularly sent home. These provide candles, Bible stories and various activities for families to use for reflection and prayer. This has been developed using materials and ideas based on 'Prayer spaces for schools'.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious education is given the status of a 'core subject'. The impact of changes to the RE policy and scheme of work has led to pupils making good progress. Standards are at least in line with national expectations and in some cases are higher due to the good progress being made. Pupils are able to apply their strong subject knowledge to a wide range of circumstances. The pupils consistently make reference to finding RE lessons exciting, engaging and interesting. They are stimulated to grapple with some of the big questions within Christianity and other world faiths. They frequently make comparisons between religions, considering the similarities and differences. The impact of teaching over time is evident in the pupils having been well equipped with appropriate language to confidently discuss religion. Pupils make good progress within lessons and the quality of teaching is consistently good. Lessons observed engage children through an effective hook at the start of the lesson. They develop pupil's vocabulary and deepen their understanding of the topic. Conversations with pupils illustrate the impact of the teaching and the level of enjoyment they find during RE lessons. Marking provides reflection and opportunities to make improvements but is not yet consistent across the whole school. Further opportunities should be given for children to demonstrate greater depth in their knowledge and understanding in RE.

The governors have adopted the diocesan syllabus and the RE subject leader has worked hard to adapt this to reflect the school's own values and personal, social, health and citizenship curriculum. The importance of leadership in RE is emphasised by the involvement of all senior leaders in the introduction of the new scheme of work. The RE leader has shown a real desire to ensure best practice is in place. She has accessed effective training and support through attending regular RE network meetings at the diocese. She is also a member of the local SACRE and works in close partnership with other Church of England schools in the local authority. The school has developed the foundations of an effective assessment system that allows children to be involved in reflection and self assessment. A robust tracking system is in place to ensure the progress of all children is regularly reviewed. The leadership team has implemented a thorough approach to working with governors through regular presentations and reports on the impact of changes to RE. This allows governors to understand the changes and impact that has been brought about with the introduction of the new syllabus. Lesson observations in RE are also part of an annual monitoring cycle. Teachers are given feedback from this to enable them to build upon their good practice.

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

School leaders and governors have shown determination in ensuring that a drive for high standards is achieved through a focus on the spiritual development and well-being of pupils. They can describe the way in which the school's Christian character and values are at the heart of its success. The school's mission statement and values are articulated and understood by all members of the school community. They are well embedded in the life of the school and they sum up the school's priorities and shape the thinking of all members of the community. School leaders work in close partnership with the vicar and together show a high degree of pastoral concern for pupils. Parents feel strongly that each child is nurtured, cared for and celebrated as an individual. Parents and pupils express the view that senior leaders and members of the clergy are always present and available in and around the school. Parents comment that the school leadership team always take the time to listen to their concerns and are very approachable. Governors receive detailed information on developments in RE through presentations by the subject leader. Governors are knowledgeable about the school and have many formal and informal measures for monitoring the success of the school as a church school. Consequently, they ensure that both worship and RE meet statutory requirements. However, a more systematic approach to evaluation and monitoring by governors would ensure continued improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in RE. The London Diocesan Board for Schools RE network leader meetings has provided continuing professional development to the RE subject leader which has had a significant impact on the development of RE at the school. There is a strong focus on professional development that contributes significantly to Christian leadership both within and beyond the school, with the experienced headteacher providing support and advice to other schools through the Brent schools partnership. The school has extended this partnership, resulting in a large number of teachers visiting from church schools in Norway and Ghana. Succession planning is carefully considered resulting in a stable and effective staff team. A number of teachers have gone on to be leaders in other church schools. The close partnership with the local church is a great strength. This can be seen in the prayer life of the church and the school and the close links established through the weekly visit to the church for Mass. The vicar is present in the playground at the beginning and end of each day and forms a key part of the community. Mutual respect and support enable both institutions to flourish and to fulfil their mission to the school and the local community.

SIAMS report June 2018, St Mary's CE VA Primary School, Garnet Road, Willesden, London, NW10 9JA