

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St. Mary's Church of England Junior School

Address	Belle Vue Road, Old Basing, Basingstoke. RG24 7DE		
Date of inspection	22 March 2019	Status of school	VA Junior
Diocese	Winchester	URN	116350

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 Church of England junior school with 358 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few 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 or disabilities is below national averages. The school has a stable staff and the headteacher has been in post for eight years. St Mary's is situated in a village setting on the edge of Basingstoke.

The school's Christian vision

Our core Christian value of love, in the form of 'One Family' underpins everything in school. Whilst we believe in excellence in all aspects of school life, by focussing on love through working together as a strong and supportive family, we can achieve more- socially, emotionally and academically.

Love is what holds everything together in perfect unity. Colossians 3:14

Love your neighbour as yourself. Matthew 22:38

Key findings

- St. Mary's Christian vision underpins its work as a highly distinctive church school. It drives the work of school leaders and has a transformational impact on the lives of its pupils and their families.
- The rich, broad curriculum strongly supports the academic and social development of pupils exceptionally well.
- The skilled and determined leadership of the headteacher, strongly supported by the school's staff and governors, has created a vibrant Christian community where pupils and adults flourish, despite any challenges encountered.
- High quality provision for religious education (RE) and collective worship strongly contributes to pupils' spiritual development. This is further strengthened by the extremely supportive partnership that has been established between the local church and the school.

Areas for development

- To establish a positive working relationship with the newly appointed vicar so church and school partnerships are strengthened even further.
- Increase the number of opportunities for pupils to have first-hand faith experiences so they can further their knowledge, including similarities to and differences from Christianity.
- Further embedding of pupils-led worship so pupils have an increased role in worship planning and evaluation.

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

St. Mary's vision, strongly rooted within biblical teaching, is deeply embedded into the daily life of this distinctively Christian school. Stakeholders consistently refer to 'One Family' in discussions, describing the significant influence this has on the academic, social and emotional development of pupils. The broad, rich curriculum engages pupils' interest and enthusiasm, including their participation in a vast range of extra-curricular activities. Sport and music are highly valued and there is an impressive trophy cabinet displaying the evidence of pupils' success. The school has been awarded with Sportsmark Gold and the Music Mark, both celebrating high quality inclusive provision. Uniquely for a junior school, St. Marys has a full music orchestra. Participating pupils say how their confidence has grown, describing how wonderful it feels when making music alongside others. Pupils hold a wide range of school responsibilities and they are extremely diligent, making sure they organise themselves efficiently, even when it overlaps with their own free time.

Academic standards are extremely high when compared to national averages and most pupils make excellent progress from individual starting points. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special needs thrive because the school ensures they get the most appropriate support, including very close liaison with outside agencies. The Heartsmart programme is significantly supporting emotional well-being. Pupils describe its impact as, 'Learning to love yourself as well as others'. Parents say how grateful they are for the love and care shown to their children during times of difficulty. Attendance figures are higher than the national average because parents are made aware of the negative educational impact unnecessary absence has. Parents describe the school as pro-active in seeking solutions, taking pressure away from their families. Pupils know Christian values support them, stating, 'Christian values help people to build up the courage to get through the hard times'. Adults working in the school speak highly of leaders' support for professional development and work-life balance. In fact, two of the school's teachers are ex St. Mary's pupils! The local authority states the school exceeds requirements in its support of newly qualified teachers. Experienced teachers have been successful in being appointed to other school leadership roles.

Social responsibility is discussed and supported. The pupils' 'Green Team' have identified strategies to reduce the school's carbon footprint leading to a reduction of the school's electricity usage. Letters have been written to the Prime Minister, a local Member of Parliament and the president of Uganda regarding food poverty, all receiving written responses from their recipients. As part of National Holocaust Memorial Day communication was made with a Holocaust survivor, and she thanked them for their involvement. When discussing injustice pupils talk with age appropriate understanding about homelessness and modern slavery. They have developed empathy, saying, 'When I see children who are hungry it makes me feel sad and I want to donate food to a local food bank'. The school and church have an established link with Uganda which includes the support of Katakala Primary School and the sponsorship of a child's schooling through the Mityana charity. Teachers have had exchange visits with Katakala school's teachers, including its headteacher visiting St. Mary's, allowing pupils to appreciate the difference their support has made. The school has achieved the Christian Aid Global Neighbours bronze award.

A strong partnership has been established with the diocese. Leaders attend network meetings, they have led training sessions and participated in professional development. The school's vision of 'One Family' extends beyond the school. For example, the headteacher has organised a school cluster group where regular meetings support and discuss issues specific to Church schools. The Religious Education (RE) leader has established a group for schools to share good practice and ideas. The headteacher has also significantly supported another school during the absence of their own headteacher.

Respect and dignity have high prominence in the school and this is clearly seen within RE lessons. When discussing big questions the pupils confidently express their thoughts, even though their ideas may not necessarily align with other viewpoints in the class. They are aware that some questions have a variety of valid responses, however, they show respect and tolerance towards each other by listening and discussing respectfully, giving each other the time and space to state their personal views.

Collective worship is planned around the Christian values of the school, successfully ensuring pupils have a deep understand of each value and how it applies to daily life. Statutory requirements are met. A range of worship leaders, including clergy from a number of Anglican churches, allows pupils to experience a wide range of worship styles. There are numerous prayer spaces throughout the school site and pupils say they regularly visit them for quiet prayer and reflection. Anglican traditions are an established worship feature, such as different coloured altar cloths in line with the liturgical year. Pupils present their class candle at the start of worship, saying the light shows the presence of God. Music plays an important spiritual role with individual pupils competently playing their instruments. The choir sings harmonies to the hymns that are enthusiastically sung by the school

community. The pupil led Values Group has a role in observing the school's Christian values through the school day, and this contributes to governor's formal worship monitoring systems. Further embedding of pupil-led worship is now needed so pupils have an increased role for worship planning and evaluation. Adults' shared understanding of spirituality has ensured planned and unplanned spiritual encounters are recognized and appreciated to support pupils' spiritual development.

Older pupils take part in the two annual Eucharist services and curriculum time is given to ensure understanding. Pupils say services held in the church feel special. Members of the church are close working partners of the school. They plan and lead the annual Pilgrimage Day and the Church's Ash Wednesday service is held in the school hall. During a period of interregnum, the strength of the church and school's close partnership has been shown by church wardens seamlessly stepping in to support the school's Christian work until the newly appointed vicar takes office.

RE planning is thorough using the Understanding Christianity scheme alongside the Living Difference syllabus. Rigorous monitoring shows standards to be at least in line with other core subjects. Professional development has strongly supported teachers' confidence with their teaching of RE. Pupils understand the lessons within Bible stories and their relevance to daily life. Pupils can discuss many world religions and can clearly explain their reasoning on why all faiths need to be respected. The school leadership is aware that more opportunities are needed for pupils to have first-hand faith experiences to further their knowledge, including similarities to and differences from Christianity.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

High standards are evident in pupils' RE books with a good balance between learning about religion and from religion. Pupils are exploring theological concepts in depth, supported by high quality schemes of work. Pupils give their independent ideas around the topics being studied and this is supporting their understanding. For example, 'Are the ten commandments still valid today?' Rigorous assessment systems allow leaders and teachers to support and challenge learning effectively including the identification of areas that may need further exploration. Pupils are able to discuss themes with each other openly and confidently. Skilled questioning by teachers encourages pupils to think deeper so they can justify their individual responses. Pupils know and accept that there are differing opinions, respecting the views of pupils who come to different conclusions. Leaders support members of staff with their teaching and high quality professional development takes place within school and through external partnerships. Statutory requirements for RE are met.

Headteacher	Caroline Welch
Inspector's name and number	Lorraine Pugh 819