

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St. Mary's Church of England Primary School, Sale

St. Mary's Road, Ashton-on-Mersey, Sale, Cheshire, M33 6SA

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Chester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Trafford
Date of inspection	18 January 2018
Date of last inspection	October 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 106344
Headteacher	Wayne Hitchcock
Inspector's name and number	Carolyn Whiteway 933

School context

St. Mary's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School is a one-form entry school and currently has 245 pupils on roll plus 30 full and part time nursery pupils. A majority of pupils are of White British heritage but the number of children speaking English as an additional language has increased in recent years with twenty-two languages now spoken. The number of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is significantly below the national average. The headteacher has been in post for seven years, having previously been the deputy headteacher. The school has a stable staff and pupil mobility is low.

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

- Pupils are highly valued and nurtured as individuals in a caring Christian environment which enables them to flourish academically, spiritually and socially.
- Relationships between all members of the school community are a strength of the school and are clearly influenced by the school's core Christian values.
- Religious education (RE) and worship of a high quality make a significant contribution to learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.

Areas to improve

- To further develop learners' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith in order to extend their understanding of and respect for diversity.
- To develop learners' ability to make links between the beliefs, practices and value systems of the range of faiths studied to provide a greater understanding of the similarities and differences between them.

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

The Christian values of trust, hope, friendship, perseverance, forgiveness and peace are deeply embedded in the life of the school and clearly articulated by all members of the school community. These values effectively underpin school policies and practice to the extent that, as one member of staff said, 'they are like the centre of a stick of rock'. The physical environment supports and celebrates the school's Christian identity with crosses, stimulating displays and Bible quotations making an effective contribution to the spiritual development of all members of the school community. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and value its Christian ethos. They feel that it produces thoughtful, respectful and confident children. They expressed disappointment that there are no Church of England high schools in the local area for their children to attend for the next phase of their education.

Relationships are a real strength of the school and are clearly rooted in the Christian ethos and values. Parents, children and staff all speak of the school as being like a 'big family' where they all feel supported and encouraged. Staff value the atmosphere of trust which they feel empowers both learners and themselves to take risks without fear of failure. The achievements of all learners are valued and celebrated with Golden Tickets and weekly award assemblies. The school's behaviour policy, which is firmly based on the school's core values, promotes the idea of choice and reflection and is supported by the use of restorative justice techniques. This has led to learners showing a mature attitude to their behaviour. One pupil explained, 'We don't always behave well because no one is perfect, but we talk it through with a teacher.'

The warm, supportive Christian ethos has clearly contributed positively not only to learners' attitudes and behaviour but also to the school's impressive achievements both academically and in sport and the arts. Learners make excellent progress and attain well above the national average. A very wide range of lunchtime and after school clubs is available and the school has achieved Arts Mark Gold and the School Games Mark Platinum Award, despite having no playing field on site.

The school's intake is becoming increasingly diverse with twenty-two languages now spoken. The school has embraced this change and celebrates the contribution made by learners from different cultures. Each term, year groups focus on a different language with a pupil who speaks the language as expert. Close relationships with an ethnically diverse school in Manchester and with Joy School in Uganda are well established. As a result of initiatives such as these learners are developing a good understanding of diversity and difference. Their understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith is, however, limited.

Pupils are enthusiastic about RE which enables them to explore and reflect upon both Christian beliefs and those of other major religions. They are encouraged to relate their learning to their own lives and as a result, RE makes a significant contribution to their SMSC development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

All members of the school community value and respond positively to the daily act of worship. Worship is carefully planned and linked to the school's core Christian values and the church year. It is distinctively Christian in nature, frequently using biblical material and focusing appropriately on the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Resources such as pictures, props and volunteers are used effectively to engage learners who are keen to take part. During the act of worship witnessed they were particularly enthused by the challenge to learn a Bible verse by heart which they did successfully. The quality of the singing also contributed to the reverent atmosphere. The use of simple liturgical words of welcome and the saying of the Lord's Prayer help learners to understand Anglican tradition. This understanding is reinforced by visits to St. Mary's Church to celebrate the major church festivals and Day School Sunday. At the beginning of worship three candles are lit and a prayer and responses are said to represent God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Learners use the analogy of a Jaffa cake to explain the Trinity clearly and with some understanding.

Worship is varied and led by a range of staff, pupils and clergy from several local churches. As a result learners are familiar with some of the distinctive features of different Christian traditions. They were particularly enthusiastic about the lively worship led by the children's pastor from St. Mary's Church. Following the last inspection the school has provided more opportunities for learners to plan and lead worship. This has extended their understanding of the structure and content of worship. Parents appreciate the termly worship led by each class and opportunities to join their children in worship at St. Mary's Church. A governor commented that the close links between school and church have led to several families becoming regular church attenders. Year 6 also plan and lead worship for the younger pupils on a regular basis. Members of the ethos group, whilst involved in monitoring and evaluating worship, would like the opportunity to lead worship independently.

Prayer and reflection contribute significantly to learners' spiritual development, which is central to the Christian ethos of the school. Pupils write and use their own prayers which are placed in prayer boxes or books in each classroom. Reflective areas in each classroom effectively prompt prayer in imaginative ways such as by adding a lego

brick to a house or selecting a shell. Learners talk appreciatively of the Pop Up Prayer Space run weekly in school by the children's pastor. Here they are able to pray in a quiet, reflective environment during the lunch hour. Systems for the monitoring and evaluation of worship are well embedded and include all stakeholders. Action taken following evaluation has improved learners' understanding of the Trinity and of personal prayer.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Good and often outstanding teaching, underpinned by the strong Christian ethos, ensures that pupils are fully engaged in their learning. As a result they make at least good or better progress, with attainment in RE in line with the high standards achieved in other subjects. Lessons are very well planned and delivered, using a range of imaginative approaches which challenge and inspire learners. The use of paired and group work and drama help to ensure that lessons are fully inclusive. Where appropriate, cross-curricular links are made with creative subjects and Philosophy for Children, enabling learners to explore ideas through investigation and discussion and to present their work imaginatively. Stimulating displays in each classroom contribute to learning in RE and provide a further prompt for reflection. Learners demonstrate a mature and confident response to issues raised during RE lessons and are keen to share their thoughts and feelings. This was particularly evident in Year 6 where learners showed an impressive ability to articulate their ideas on the Kingdom of God. As a result RE makes a significant contribution to learners' SMSC development.

The school uses the Chester diocesan syllabus and is currently introducing the revised version of this, together with elements of Understanding Christianity. This is being undertaken in a planned way that builds on what has gone before. Learners clearly enjoy RE and demonstrate an excellent knowledge of key aspects of Christianity and the Bible. Whilst clearly having some knowledge and understanding, they were less confident when talking about the beliefs, practices and values of other faiths and in making links between these.

Assessment is used effectively to inform future teaching and learning. Marking encourages pupils to reflect on their work and points the way to further improvement. Subject leadership is highly effective. Monitoring and evaluation are undertaken systematically and the results feed into the school development plan and are reported to governors.

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

The strong, purposeful leadership of the experienced headteacher is inspired by Christian values. His vision for an inclusive Christian community is shared and upheld by all members of staff who effectively model expectations of behaviour and care. Leadership is widely distributed with staff, governors and the ethos group all playing significant roles. Self-evaluation involves all members of the school community and is thorough and accurate, enabling the school to continue to improve the way in which it meets the needs of all learners. Staff commented on how the focus on six core Christian values has led to a strong feeling of shared purpose and pride in the school.

Governors are fully committed to the school and help to promote the link with St. Mary's Church. They commented that the close collaboration strengthens both church and school. The children's pastor from the church is well known in school. She runs a Pop Up Prayer Space and a Christian Sparks Club weekly during the lunchtime and leads worship on a regular basis. A governor has also facilitated long-standing links between St. Mary's and The Joy School in Uganda. Learners are active in raising money for the school in addition to other local and national charities, demonstrating an understanding of the Christian imperative to support those in need. Governors are keen to develop their role and have recently attended joint training with staff on the new RE syllabus and have visited another school in the diocese to share good practice as governors of a church school.

The broad and balanced curriculum is underpinned by the school's core Christian values which are built into teachers' medium term plans. Excellent provision for creative subjects and sport enables all learners to shine and contributes to their well-being and to their SMSC development.

The school has achieved the gold Investors in People Award, demonstrating a commitment to staff development, as illustrated in the training of a young teacher in the role of RE leader. The leadership of RE and worship is given a high priority with the headteacher fully involved.

Parents are very appreciative of the school's Christian ethos. They feel that 'every child matters' and comment that staff are always willing to 'go the extra mile' to provide support and encouragement.