

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

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

<b>Address</b>	Biggs Lane, Fownhope, Hereford HR1 4PG		
<b>Date of inspection</b>	25 June 2019	<b>Status of school</b>	VA primary
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Hereford</b>	<b>URN</b>	116880

<b>Overall Judgement</b>	<b>How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Additional Judgements</b>	<b>The impact of collective worship</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
	<b>The effectiveness of religious education (RE)</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Good</b>

#### School context

St Mary's is a primary school with 152 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few 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 and/or disabilities is below national averages. The headteacher has been in post for five years. The school was rated good by Ofsted in March 2017.

#### The school's Christian vision

##### 'What we nurture today, flourishes tomorrow'

As a Christian school we nurture children to display the 'fruit of the Spirit', "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). Through a rich and varied curriculum, pupils flourish so they become inquisitive, well balanced and cheerful adults, discovering a faith to sustain them.

#### Key findings

- The new vision expresses well what is important at St Mary's. It enables pupils, whatever their background, to access a rich and diverse curriculum.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher lead the school with care and dedication to the pupils, staff and families at St Mary's. It is an inclusive community where staff know the children well. Pupils speak warmly of how their teachers nurture them academically, spiritually and emotionally.
- The curriculum and ethos committee monitors the ethos of the school and the religious education (RE) curriculum. Monitoring is not sufficiently rigorous because its terms of reference are too broad.
- Collective worship is invitational and allows for deep reflection about what it means to be Christian. It reflects the school's values, bringing together the community in a sense of purpose and achievement. Pupils are actively involved in worship but as yet do not independently plan and lead these times.
- RE expresses the school's vision well. Lessons encourage debate so that pupils are developing enquiring minds, preparing them well for their future lives.

#### Areas for development

- Embed the school vision in policy and practice so that all stakeholders can articulate how the vision is rooted in the Christian faith. Ensure that pupils understand how the vision and values of the school support daily life at St Mary's.
- Develop a robust monitoring system that is clearly linked to the school vision and the school improvement plan, involving governors as well as staff.
- Empower pupils to plan and lead acts of collective worship so that they further understand and live out the school's Christian vision.

## **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 is a welcoming, nurturing and creative school. It has recently developed a new vision that encapsulates the practice within the school. Leaders articulate how a rich education is more than simply learning through reading, writing and maths. All stakeholders are proud of the way that the school has a holistic approach to every aspect of the curriculum so that pupils flourish in diverse ways. Parents see the outworking of the vision in the way that pupils play together across age groups. Relationships are good between pupils and adults within the school because teachers know all the pupils well. The vision is implicit in every area of school life because all staff care deeply about the pupils. They want the very best for them so that they flourish both now and in the future.

At present the vision is not driving school improvement. This is because governors have not had sufficient training for them to understand current developments in Church school education. They do not articulate the central role the vision has in decision making and in the daily life of the school. For example, policies do not detail how the vision can be lived out in practice.

The fruit of the Spirit are understood by the pupils to reflect the other Christian values that the school promotes. Pupils learn about these values through collective worship, principally through biblical teaching. They are changed every half term and pupils are encouraged to reflect on how the values can be applied in their own lives. This has led to some memorable work, where pupils explored their 'talents'. Many identified how the ways that they demonstrated a value was one of their God given talents. Pupils' spiritual development is nurtured by such thoughtful tasks and by ensuring all children have regular 'wow' moments. The large number of values explored is confusing to some pupils and they find them difficult to remember. They felt fewer values would be more useful in reminding each other how to behave. Pupils have found the recent focus on the fruit of the Spirit to be helpful in this way.

Pupils achieve well at St Mary's and most groups make good progress. Where this is not the case, leaders are proactive in ensuring that effective steps are taken, so that all feel nurtured and enabled to flourish. Learning behaviours within the classroom are good because pupils and staff respect each other. Lively debates are common across the curriculum and pupils feel safe to disagree with one another. The school supports pupils' mental health through the work of a dedicated pastoral worker. She works closely to support vulnerable families and pupils value her role. Staff feel very supported by the headteacher, who goes the extra mile to support them both professionally and personally.

The school has worked hard since the last inspection to improve its provision as a Church school. This is very apparent in the links that the school has forged in the local community. This too is reflected in the vision. The school has good links with the local church and the vicar is a regular and welcome visitor to school. St Mary's works with a local residential home, Brockhampton Court, in imaginative art and music projects. Both residents and pupils appreciate the way this relationship is flourishing. Aspirations for pupils have been raised because they enjoy their conversations with an older generation and are inspired by their achievements. This is one way that pupils are learning about diversity and the need to treat others with respect. Pupils raise funds for many charities, locally and nationally. This work is led by the 'Disciples', a group of older pupils who apply for this role. They show passion and enthusiasm for their role. They have a growing sense of commitment to world concerns such as the impact of plastic on the environment. This is beginning to inspire them to take action but doesn't challenge injustice and inequality. This work is reflected in the vision that pupils become inquisitive adults, flourishing tomorrow.

Collective worship is enjoyed by all. Good news assemblies on a Friday are well attended by parents and are seen as a way that the vision is lived out within school. Achievements beyond the academic are celebrated, including the way in which pupils have demonstrated Christian values. Prefects plan and lead these times. Other pupils are not involved in planning and leading worship, a role that they long for. In other times of worship, pupils are actively engaged. They bring the Bible, cross and candle to the worship table and help with bringing biblical stories to life. Heartfelt singing, as well as opportunities for quiet reflection provide a special worshipful atmosphere where pupils can consider what it is to be Christian. The majority of worship times focus on helping pupils to understand how the values and vision reflect the life of Jesus. Pupils are invited to evaluate worship and this has led to some changes. Prayer is important at St Mary's and it allows pupils to feel they can 'send a message to God'. It is used throughout the day and each class has a prayer tree. On here are thoughts and reflections pertinent to the current Christian value. These show depths of thought and sensitivity, reflecting pupils' ongoing spiritual journey. Those with faith and of no faith feel included and inspired by collective worship. Links with the local church are enabling pupils to understand Anglican liturgy. They have an age appropriate understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The headteacher has many calls on his time. His teaching commitment and other responsibilities have left him insufficient time to monitor collective worship and RE strategically. Governor monitoring is not always effective in bringing about improvements because the focus for visits is not sharp enough. Governing body minutes do not show how decisions governors make flow explicitly from the vision.

Leaders are aware that they have a responsibility to broaden pupils' horizons and see this as part of the school's Christian vision. RE is taught effectively so that pupils have a good understanding of some major world religions. Lessons focus effectively on encouraging pupils to make links between faiths. They stimulate pupils' interest and enjoyment of this subject whilst challenging them to deeply consider contemporary religious issues such as the 'challenges Muslims in Britain face'. The questions that they consider support pupils spiritual understanding and development. Pupils have a limited understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith because their experiences are too narrow. This is because there are too few visitors of faith to the school. Visits to places of worship, including those from different Christian tradition, are infrequent. Older children value the way that they are encouraged to debate some difficult issues. RE expresses the school vision because pupils are asked to consider how the school's values are reflected in the stories they are learning about.

St Mary's is a school that has made much progress in the last few years. It is secure in its vision and is ready for the challenge of ensuring that the vision explicitly underpins its actions and decisions.



**The effectiveness of RE is Good**

All children make good progress in RE because lessons provide a safe place for debate and discussion. This fosters articulate children who have a developing sense of themselves on a spiritual journey. Lessons open their minds to consider the value of faith, both for themselves and for others. Standards in RE are comparable with those achieved in other subjects. The annual report to parents shows how RE is considered a core subject. Where teaching is of the highest quality, it ensures that pupils are well informed and promotes active engagement. Rigorous assessment procedures ensure that the needs of pupils, including those with special educational need and/or disabilities are met. Planning is thorough and assessments support next steps in learning. The school has addressed the area for development from the last inspection.

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