



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Road

Yate

Bristol

BS37 5BG

Previous SIAS grade: Good

Current SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Bristol

Local authority: South Gloucestershire

Dates of inspection: 24 February 2015

Date of last inspection: 13 January 2010

School's unique reference number: 113350

Headteacher: Jon Bird

Inspector's name and number: Daphne Spitzer NS No 37

School context

St Mary's Church of England Primary School serves the town of Yate and surrounding areas close to the city of Bristol. It has 308 children on roll arranged in 11 classes. The vast majority of children are from white British heritage families. The numbers of children with special educational needs/or physical disabilities are in line with the national average and those eligible to be in receipt of the Pupil Premium are below. Since the last inspection there has been a period of significant staffing mobility including the retirement of the long serving headteacher. The new headteacher was appointed in January 2015.

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

- Christian values such as friendship enhance children's personal development and well being
- Opportunities to explore spiritual development in all aspects of school life make a good contribution to children's learning as well as their personal development
- The commitment of the headteacher to the development of the school's Christian character, as exemplified by the school's new Christian vision has

united the whole school community

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the school's core Christian values are rooted in Biblical teaching and monitor their impact on children's learning, personal and spiritual development through the ethos committee and involving the whole school community
- Provide opportunities for children to plan and lead worship on a regular basis so that they develop a greater understanding and ownership of worship
- Develop a programme of visits and visitors from other faiths in order to widen children's experience and understanding of people from diverse communities as well as enriching the religious education curriculum

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

St Mary's is a warm and friendly Christian community. An established set of twelve core Christian values have a good impact on children's academic achievement as well as their personal and spiritual development. This is because the values promoted meet the children's needs well. For instance, children say that the Christian values of perseverance and truthfulness in particular are important in helping them to learn. Calm classrooms focus children's minds on the value of peace and help them reflect on their learning. As a result, spiritual development is promoted very effectively. Times for prayer which may be said, sung or rapped are an enjoyable and meaningful part of the day. Relationships at all levels are outstanding. This is reflected in the importance of the Christian value of friendship as a strong feature of all interactions. Regular family days, when children are grouped across age ranges to work together, have a very positive impact. Family group activities, often with the involvement of parents, include making Christingles clearly promote the school's distinctive Christian character. Children say friendship is important in school because Jesus was a good friend, which demonstrates their good understanding of friendship as a value linked to Christian teaching. However, this is not the case with most of the school's other core values. This demonstrates that they are not yet rooted in Biblical teaching. Children are developing an understanding of Christianity as a world-wide faith, such as through the work of the local parish's partnership with a parish in Uganda.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is an important part of daily life at St Mary's. Children feel it is special because they say it is a 'time to talk about God together'. Worship promotes Christian values well such as how the value of forgiveness has been closely linked to Christ's story of the unforgiving servant. The use of lit candles and simple liturgical responses, with different coloured altar cloths to represent the church's seasons, contributes to the children's developing understanding of Anglican practice. A recent review of collective worship by staff and children has highlighted the need for greater participation by children. This has been addressed through the introduction of class worship which has proved very successful in increasing children's spiritual awareness. This is evident in the comments that the classroom is a 'calmer and cosier place to worship', where they can

speaking in a secure atmosphere with 'class friends' knowing they 'won't laugh'. In this way children are gaining confidence to lead worship. A time of prayer and guided reflection at the end of worship is effective in reinforcing the message of the worship theme at a personal level. Prayer and reflection are integral to daily life and reflection spaces within classrooms, and the central prayer nets hung with candle prayers, are well used. Planning for collective worship by the coordinator is good. It includes detailed support for staff with clear learning outcomes. Planning meetings are now held between the school leadership and the local clergy assembly team which ensures a cohesive approach to the worship programme. Children now assist in evaluating worship. However the role of governors in monitoring and evaluating collective worship is underdeveloped. As a result, opportunities to identify where improvements could be made, such as developing an understanding of the Trinity, are missed.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards attained in religious education (RE) are good. They are at least in line with national expectations. Children make good progress from starting points that are in line with the national average to achieve above average attainment at the end of Year 6. This is because the teaching of RE across the school is good as verified by the subject leader's accurate monitoring. Children enjoy the subject and find it relevant to their lives. This is reflected in a child's comment that 'it gives us a better understanding of the world and people's views'. Children's knowledge and understanding of Christianity is good. The curriculum meets the children's needs well. However, a recent review of the curriculum has highlighted the need to incorporate a greater focus on enquiry methods and this is now being addressed. Religious education promotes spiritual development very well. For example, older children were able to give deep insightful comments, empathising with Christ's contrasting feelings during events in Holy Week. Children say that they enjoy the opportunities the subject provides to share their beliefs and enjoy the subject because 'there is no right or wrong answer'. The church and local vicar are well used as a resource for learning about Christianity. However, a programme of visits and visitors, setting other faiths in a real life context, has not been implemented. Religious education is led very well by the coordinator who is part of the school's senior leadership team, reflecting its importance within the curriculum. She ensures her training is up to date, as well as that of the staff and tracks the progress of all children to maximise their potential. The involvement of governors in monitoring and evaluating the subject is underdeveloped.

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

The recently appointed headteacher has made an excellent start in promoting the school's distinctive Christian character. In a very short time he has developed a new Christian vision for the school following full consultation with the whole school community. The vision is widely known and understood in the daily life of the school. Children as well as staff and parents feel valued and included due to the headteacher's open, consultative style of leadership. Parents say they notice how the Christian values of forgiveness and friendship ensure that interactions between children are very positive. Governors show a good understanding of the way in which the school's values impact on the children's good academic achievement as well as the whole of school life. For example, they appreciate how compassion is shown in relation to attendance

issues. However, governors' knowledge has been acquired from informal monitoring and discussions because systems for self-evaluating the school as a church school are at an early stage. Following the recent restructuring of the governing body, an ethos committee has been formed to monitor and evaluate the school's distinctive Christian character; but its work has not yet started. Governors in general, however, have not participated in training over the recent period. Partnerships between the school and church are strong. This is evident, for instance, in the close involvement of local ministry team in school worship and the contribution of the school choir to church services and life of the church; and most particularly the strong contribution of the headteacher to the recent parish Education Sunday service. Links with the diocese are good and of mutual benefit.

SIAMS report February 2015 St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Yate, Bristol, BS37 5BG