

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England Primary School			
Address	Queen Street, Kingswinford, Dudley DY6 7AQ		
Date of inspection	16 January 2020	Status of school	Voluntary Controlled
Diocese	Worcester	URN	103837

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 Judgement	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Excellent

School context

St Mary's C of E (VC) Primary School is a school with 220 pupils on roll. The vast 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 and/or disabilities is slightly above national averages. The headteacher has been in post for four years and is supported by a deputy head and two middle leaders.

The school's Christian vision

Our mission statement is 'Learning to Live Life in all its Fullness' John 10:10. St Mary is on our logo, not only as our school name, but because she brought hope and joy to the people of the world and we aim to bring hope, joy and aspiration to all our children.

Key findings

- The exceptionally strong leadership of the headteacher has created a vibrant Christian learning community in which every member flourishes. Dedicated staff and highly skilled governors share the Christian vision which inspires and directs all aspects of school improvement.
- The school has developed exceptional partnerships with other schools and has an impact on non-church schools within a collaborative group of four local schools.
- Through innovative practices and strong links with schools in other countries, pupils learn the importance of respecting all and celebrating difference and diversity.
- Inspirational and challenging religious education (RE) enables all pupils to engage with the big questions of life with confidence and integrity.
- Highly inclusive acts of collective worship are inspirational and allow pupils to reflect deeply upon their growing understanding of Christianity.

Areas for development

- Enable pupils to develop an even deeper understanding of the Eucharist so that they appreciate the significance and importance it plays in the life of all Christians.
- Extend the involvement of pupils in planning worship by allowing them to explore different experiences of worship. This will enable them to fully understand the different ways in which Christians worship.

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

The school has a deeply embedded Christian vision, with a well-defined biblical basis effectively underpinning it. The longstanding vision shapes its Christian and inclusive service to all pupils, staff and the wider community extremely well. The school is a beacon of exemplary practice in church school education. The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors work proficiently to ensure that the vision is woven into and drives forward developments. For example, it enables innovative choices about the curriculum to be made, guides decisions about financial matters, and inspires choices for ongoing staff training and professional development.

The Christian vision and values of courage, compassion, respect, peace, humility, trust, friendship, forgiveness and honesty underpin all practices and policies of the school, resulting in a broad and rich curriculum which enables all to flourish. A pupil explained that the vision was to help him 'live the life I want to live.' Parents comment on the love and compassion shown to all and talk about specific instances when the headteacher and staff have 'gone above and beyond' for their children and themselves. When discussing the values one parent remarked that the children 'don't pity, they show compassion.'

Governors are passionate about the work of the school. Through regular monitoring visits, they have a clear idea of school performance, achievement and the way in which the vision is being lived out. Governors speak of how the vision influences all their decisions. An example given was their decision to provide extra funding for the development of the nurture room. This is a room which gives support to all vulnerable children and thus clearly links the vision of giving all pupils the aspiration to flourish regardless of ability. The diocese values the contribution the school makes in its support for other church schools within the diocese.

St Mary's lives out its vision through partnerships of exceptional depth and effectiveness which allows pupils to flourish within the community. An initiative set up between the school and Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) has led to a group of children trained as Junior PCSO's who now work alongside the police to tackle local issues including dangers associated with car parking near school, bullying and litter retrieval. This is greatly appreciated by local residents and reinforces the understanding by the pupils of the values of respect, courage, trust and friendship. Firmly embedded partnerships exist within a group of four local schools, including, non - church schools. This includes an inter-school pupil council who have worked together to host an event for elderly people to help combat loneliness. The school is generous at sharing its expertise with many schools and staff are co-opted to work within other schools to aid improvement.

Links with St Mary's Parish Church are very strong. The parish priest and foundation governors provide excellent support to all stakeholders. The church hosts 'Sticky Church' and the school participates in services at the church, such as Harvest, Christingle and Easter. Following requests from parents, the format of some services have been changed to allow more involvement by the children thus emphasising a link between church, school and community which is valued and appreciated.

From low attainment at entry pupils achieve well at St Mary's. High quality teaching is targeted well to meet the learning needs of all pupils. The carefully mapped curriculum, deeply rooted in the distinctive Christian vision and values, allows pupils to achieve the best academic outcomes. Pupils are excited by the creative curriculum which is enhanced by outdoor learning, educational visits and the provision of a variety of after school clubs. Staff have the skills to adapt the curriculum to allow pupils to become aware of current world issues or events. An example is how Early Years used their topic on 'Heroes' to explore and develop empathy with firefighters trying to control the bushfires in Australia. Vulnerable pupils, and those with special educational needs are well supported. As a result of the school's Christian vision staff are unwavering in their commitment to transforming every pupil regardless of their ability or background. The school identified that siblings of pupils with special educational needs often need extra support. The 'Clover Project' was created, which meets monthly to allow the siblings to play and have special time for themselves. The school invited other schools to become involved and five other schools now participate. This highlights the school mission of bringing hope, joy and aspiration to all. St Mary's has thought carefully about what spirituality means for them and uses this shared understanding to plan highly

effective experiences across the curriculum. The spirituality grids using the 'windows, mirrors, doors' approach clearly demonstrate that pupils acknowledge, grow and flourish in the appreciation of spiritual experiences.

Fundraising is seen as an important aspect of the Christian vision of the school. Through support for a local homeless charity, and other charitable giving, pupils understand the need, and have the ability, to put others before themselves. Strong links exist with a Hindu school in Tanzania and a school in Germany. Pupils in Year 6 annually experience an international visit to Germany. Reciprocal visits with the school in Tanzania have resulted in St Mary's staff providing training in phonics and writing and the Tanzanian staff painting animal plaques which are used as coat pegs throughout St Mary's. Pupils also have a close link with a Muslim school in Birmingham which has developed an appreciation of how people from different backgrounds can work together in a community. Through all these experiences pupils have an excellent understanding of diversity, difference and inequality.

The Christian vision, and associated values underpin relationships at all levels. Staff and parents remark that the school is like a family where everyone cares and supports each other. The headteacher is highly regarded by all and staff wellbeing is fully supported by her. A caring, Christian culture ensures all are treated with dignity and respect, resulting in everyone feeling valued. All adults within the school flourish because they are supported emotionally as well as professionally. Pupils are happy and hardworking. They feel safe and their behaviour is exemplary.

Collective worship is central to school life and is highly inclusive. It is distinctively Christian and uses a combination of traditional and modern practices. Acknowledged by the school is the need to incorporate new ideas from pupils to make worship more personal to them. Referring to the 'big frieze' from Understanding Christianity after every act of worship allows pupils to develop a coherent understanding of Christian belief and practice. A range of worship leaders offer children a rich and diverse experience of worship. Pupil involvement in worship is extensive. The worship committee is involved in planning and delivering worship and, along with governors regularly evaluates its quality and impact. The school identified that children in the nurture group are often unable to attend worship and so the parish priest delivers a special worship for them which is tailored to their needs. This demonstrates that all children are valued and loved regardless of their ability or vulnerability. Prayer is innovative and creative because leaders want pupils to be relaxed and comfortable when praying. Pupils are confident in saying prayers instinctively and know they can pray whenever and wherever they like. Headteachers from other schools regularly visit St Mary's to observe an act of worship which is inspirational, inclusive and invitational.

Pupils are inspired and enthused by RE. The RE curriculum is well planned and challenges pupils to explore their own beliefs and to deepen their understanding of the impact religion has on others. Use of the 'Understanding Christianity' materials ensures that the curriculum for Christianity is rich and deep. The RE lead is enthusiastic, knowledgeable, regularly attends diocesan training and has a clear action plan to increase the effectiveness of RE within the school. Imaginative approaches to teaching religions other than Christianity guarantee that pupils gain a good knowledge of a variety of faiths. They particularly enjoy this aspect of RE and recognise how important it is to understand what different people believe, so they can learn to live in harmony with one another. Assessment is detailed and informative, meaning that staff know exactly what their pupils understand and how they can challenge them to improve.

The understanding by all stakeholders that the school's Christian vision and values are lived out daily makes a truly transformational difference to the lives of pupils and adults.

Headteacher	Beverley Roberts
Inspector's name and number	C. Ann Stone 812

