



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### St. Mary's Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Queen Street  
Kingswinford  
DY6 7AQ

**Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Current inspection grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Worcester**

Local authority: Dudley

Date of inspection: 4 March 2015

Date of last inspection: 26 March 2010

School's unique reference number: 103837

Headteacher: Linda Perkins

Inspector's name and number: Angela Deakin 796

#### School context

St. Mary's is a smaller than average sized primary school with 222 pupils currently on roll from Reception to Year 6. Pre-school provision has been introduced at the school since the last inspection, operating morning and afternoon groups. Most of the pupils are of White British background. The school is situated in an urban area a distance away from St. Mary's Church but still within walking distance.

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

- The Christian distinctiveness of the school is openly and publicly demonstrated making it explicit that Christian values are at the heart of the school.
- The commitment and enthusiasm of the headteacher and her leaders driving the Christian ethos of the school enables all pupils to achieve academically and personally.
- Time for reflection is normal practice for pupils of all ages; learning to consider God's world, exploring their own thoughts and feelings and the life and practice of others.
- The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are of a high standard.

#### Areas to improve

- Establish regular involvement of pupils in the planning and leadership of collective worship to enable them to experience and celebrate ownership.
- Increase regular outdoor opportunities which are planned to enhance the pupils' own personal spiritual development and their understanding of spirituality.
- Analyse pupils' attainment in religious education (RE) to enable comparison between RE, Maths and English.

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

At St. Mary's, the distinctive Christian character permeates everything the school does throughout the day, within the curriculum and beyond the school building. Displays of Christian values, created with pupil involvement, are prominent within the school and in its grounds. They also appear on the home page of the school website with a clear explanation of what the value means at St. Mary's alongside a photograph of the value in practice. This makes the meaning of each Christian value explicit. The school encourages quiet times for pupils to reflect on and clarify their own thoughts and feelings as well as those of others, often relating them to stories in the Bible. As a result, pupils learn to create and use space for their spiritual development in today's busy world. Young pupils at Forest School are actively encouraged to go silently to find a place among the trees and logs. In doing this, they are encouraged to think about such things as how Jesus would have felt in specific situations. Older pupils have limited opportunities outdoors which the school is addressing to provide pupils with spiritual experience and understanding in the natural world. The school's Christian character can be seen at all levels; for example, pupils and adults will openly share comments relating to the love in the school and how they are special. They also relate to how they have a responsibility to help look after God's world. As a result of the high profile of the school's distinctive Christian character, there is a calm atmosphere in which attendance is good and pupils show they are happy to be at school. Pupils demonstrate confidence in the fact that if they have an issue it will be resolved quickly and effectively, using the Christian values of honesty and forgiveness; this belief is also shared by parents. Pupils are well motivated, understand the need to do their best and demonstrate their awareness of how to improve both academically and personally, appropriate to their age. They are proud of their school's Christian character and are eager to share their thoughts and connections with many displays and areas around the school. The explicit and implicit teaching of Christian values gives pupils a clear understanding of Christian attitudes and behaviours underpinned by Bible stories. For example, teaching related to forgiveness was evident when a pupil talked about falling out with a friend and said: 'I forgave him, that's what Jesus would have done.' Parents feel welcome at the school and recognise the work that is being done on Christian values. They are invited to various activities at the school and encouraged to give feedback either in person or via questionnaires. Their children often talk to them about the current value and what it means and try to reflect it at home. Parents therefore recognise the impact on pupils' attitudes and behaviour at home, especially with regard to kindness, sharing, forgiveness and respect. The school has close links with St. Mary's Church and the vicar is a regular visitor taking part in various activities. The school has strong, sustained links with a Hindu School in Tanzania, resulting in increased boundaries of the pupils' understanding of God's world and direct links with members of another faith community, developing increased respect and understanding. RE lessons are valued. In the Reception class, pupils love the 'sparkly carpet' that is put out just for that lesson and feel that it is a special time. Pupils of all ages enjoy RE lessons proudly sharing books, displays and ideas demonstrating their developing understanding of Christianity as well as learning about other faiths. Visits, such as to the Islamic Centre in Birmingham, enable pupils to gain a valuable insight into beliefs and practices of other religions.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

All pupils take an active part in collective worship, including actions and music, demonstrating the positive effect of worship. There is very large three dimensional, colourful cross in the school hall which is lit up for worship. Pupils were involved in its creation resulting in pupils and staff feeling that it is special to them. This cross acts as a prominent focus for collective worship. Other Christian artefacts such as smaller crosses, a candle, the Bible and written prayers are also often present during daily worship whether in the classroom or in the school hall. Pupils happily point out Christian artefacts around the school and can articulate their significance. A Reception pupil nailed two pieces of wood together to make a cross to go on

their special table because the one on the table was broken and he knew it was important. There are high expectations of personal attitudes and behaviours across the school resulting in an atmosphere for collective worship which is reverent and respectful. Collective worship is well planned to support the pupils' growing understanding of Christianity and Christian values with opportunities to reflect on the content and ask questions. This can be within the act of worship, afterwards in comments for the 'Worship Wall', during activities in the classroom or in their own personal 'spiritual diaries'. The spiritual diaries are respected as being personal and are not open to staff unless pupils choose to share them. This ensures that pupils have some thinking time to help them make sense of what they hear and experience in collective worship. Pupils plan and lead some acts of collective worship but these are limited. Prayer is an important part of everyday life at St. Mary's and there are a variety of ways in which pupils are actively involved in prayer. Group prayers are used throughout the day. Pupils have the opportunity to write their own prayers for private use or they can be written by individuals to share with the school community; these are put in a prayer jar. The pupils are then invited to say their prayer from the prayer jar during whole school collective worship. Pupils can articulate a growing understanding of the Trinity and can relate to the different aspects as referred to in 'Our Trinity Prayer' used at the school. Consequently, pupils demonstrate their growing awareness of the importance of prayer, plus their willingness to confidently share their prayers with the school community. The vicar of St. Mary's Church is a regular welcome visitor to the school. The 'Open the Book' church team leads collective worship once a month giving the pupils further opportunities to reflect on Bible stories presented by the local community, resulting in a deeper understanding of and respect for the Bible and the Church. The school has worked hard to involve the wider community in collective worship especially parents who now value the opportunity to attend assemblies and church services. Parents recognise that collective worship and Christian values are important to their children and now look forward to attending collective worship at the school and at St. Mary's Church.

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

Over recent years, St. Mary's has been on a difficult journey of change and improvement. It now clearly demonstrates the positive effects of strong leadership by the headteacher and her leaders founded on Christian ethos and values. The clear Christian vision, including 'servant leadership' and 'realising the potential of every single person's God-given gifts', actively promotes the wellbeing of all school members. It has also ensured positive development in all areas, including academic standards of achievement. These are now good in the majority of instances, or improving in the rest, for pupils of all backgrounds and abilities. Governors feel that there is a 'massive connection between church and school' which has a two way positive effect. Governors are involved in monitoring the impact of the Christian character of the school including completing collective worship observation sheets. They are now developing their evaluation process to further inform future development. The school's links with St. Mary's Church, the Diocese of Worcester as well as many other school partnerships, are all fully supported by the governors and recognised as being valuable to the school. The chair of governors is actively involved in the Mothers' Union, which also has close links with the school's Tanzanian partner school, so there are often joint ventures. All of these partnerships enhance the richness of activities within the school. Staff and governors are willing participants in diocesan training and have found the information and support invaluable in moving the school forward as a distinctive and effective Church of England school. The strong leadership of the school ensures that staff are constantly being supported in developing their knowledge, skills and expertise, facilitating the ability for staff to step up should the need arise. Everyone endeavours to do their best in disseminating the Christian ethos and in the teaching of RE to support the vision of effectively equipping all pupils for their future education and life.

SIAMS report March 2015 St. Mary's CE (VC) Primary School, Kingswinford, DY6 7AQ