

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Windmill Lane,
East Grinstead,
RH19 2DS

Previous SIAS grade: Good

Current SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Chichester

Local authority: West Sussex

Date of inspection: 6th May 2016

Date of last inspection: June 2010

School's unique reference number: 126055

Headteacher: Rachel Thorne

Inspector's name and number: Pamela Draycott 161

School context

St Mary's is a smaller than average primary school. The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion for whom extra funding is received due to social disadvantage is below average. The proportion with some sort of special educational needs is around average. Most pupils come from Christian backgrounds. There is a small but growing proportion of families who attend church regularly outside of involvement through school. Since the previous denominational report (2010) changes to headship, including interim headteachers, has occurred. The current headteacher was appointed in January 2016 having worked in the school since September 2014.

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

- The headteacher is providing aspirational and ambitious leadership for the school based on its reviewed Christian vision, aims and values. This impacts positively on the good and improving academic attainment and progress made by pupils.
- The school is an inclusive and happy place. This expresses its caring and supportive Christian ethos.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is increasingly explicitly linked with the school's Christian ethos and values. This makes a good contribution to pupils' personal wellbeing and academic development.

Areas to improve

- Develop assessment procedures in religious education (RE) in order to support pupils in knowing the specific steps they need to take in order to improve further.
- Review the worship and RE policies so that they accurately reflect the school's foundation as a voluntary aided Church of England school.
- Develop appropriate reflective areas within the school grounds. This action is from the previous denominational inspection (2010) which has not been carried out.

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

The school's vision statement, aims and values, introduced in September 2015, draw their inspiration from its Christian foundation. The school is working effectively to encourage pupils to be 'curious, creative and resilient learners; to be aspirational and flourish in the world God has given us'. Its values of, for example, friendship, generosity, forgiveness and peace, are in the process of being understood in Christian terms by pupils. These values are impacting positively on pupils' lives both inside and outside of school. Many pupils know what the values are, but some cannot consistently explain their links to the Christian faith. The school is working well to support pupils of all ability levels to make good progress, both academically and personally. This leads to pupils achieving and making progress at or above the national average. Reflecting the school's commitment to Christian service to all, it is an inclusive and happy place. Relationships are strong and pupils and staff are proud to belong to their school. Pupils are treated as individuals and their varying needs are taken into consideration. Consequently, attendance is above the national average and pupils' behaviour is very good. The school expresses its Christian care in a number of ways including, for example, through its behaviour and anti-bullying policies. These are clearly based on Christian values and consistently applied. As one pupil commented, 'There isn't much bullying but if it happened teachers would deal with it straight away. It's (ie bullying) not a loving thing to do'. High quality and vibrant display celebrates the school's core values and enhances the learning environment. Pupils' SMSC development is good and increasingly linked well to the school's Christian ethos and values. Pause days, stations of the cross, prayer stations and charitable giving are rightly recognised as part of Christian service. However, the school has correctly recognised the need to extend the range of multi-cultural opportunities provided for pupils. This includes exploring in more depth Christianity, and indeed Anglicanism, as a worldwide faith. Firm plans are in place to do this. Worship and RE make an important contribution to leading this provision. Pupils enjoy RE and see its importance in helping them to understand and respect, 'God, Christianity and other religions'. Pupils are increasingly able to express their own opinions and beliefs whilst respecting the beliefs and practices of others.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The worship programme plays a valued and positive part in expressing and supporting the school's Christian foundation. It extends pupils' spiritual and moral development very well. Through worship, suitably linked to RE, pupils have a good, age-appropriate understanding of the central place of Jesus for Christians. They engage with a range of biblical stories and ideas which encourages their understanding of Christian beliefs, including of the Trinity. The daily programme includes weekly worship in Church and at principal Christian festival times. This successfully helps pupils develop understanding of the Christian year and aspects of Anglican worship and practice. A worship point in the hall, which includes a cross, statue of the Virgin Mary and a candle supports pupils in developing an understanding of Anglican traditions, as does the use of opening and closing sentences with responses. Planning is detailed and includes an increasingly effective focus on the school's Christian values. Pupils rightly recognise the community feel of worship - 'It brings us altogether'. They correctly link the worship programme to the school expressing its Christian ethos and values. They enjoy worship, especially singing and prayer. They celebrate each other's achievements and recognise each other's gifts and talents in keeping with the school's Christian and inclusive outlook. This is expressed by pupils being given the option to join in with prayer or to listen respectfully if they feel they cannot do so. Many pupils engage in prayer during worship by either saying their own prayer or reading one that has been written by another pupil. The Lord's Prayer is said regularly and pupils have a increasing understanding of its importance for Christians. Each classroom now has a well-used reflection and prayer area: a significant improvement since the previous denominational inspection. Pupils know that there are different types of prayer. 'Prayer is important because it is talking to God and it helps you feel quiet and peaceful inside'.

The effectiveness of RE is good

RE is now regarded as a 'core subject' by staff and pupils. Consequently, its importance in school life is celebrated. It is more consistently taught across the school than has previously been the case. A new curriculum for RE is in the process of being developed which is based on the West Sussex Agreed Syllabus. There is an appropriate balance between Christianity and other faiths and between developing knowledge

and understanding, exploring the significance of faith and developing skills. The curriculum is appropriately extended by the recent introduction of whole school 'Pause days' which focus specifically on different aspects of Christianity. Consequently, they extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of important Christian festivals, beliefs and practices. In RE, pupils are encouraged to address 'big questions' and to engage actively in enquiry into beliefs and practices. This is contributing to improving learning and progress. Consequently, pupils make at least good, and sometimes very good progress from their various starting points. Activities overall are well matched to different ability groups. How pupils' progress is tracked is developing in line with developments in assessment practice locally and nationally. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and pupils are given some opportunities to respond to it. However, pupils do not consistently know the specific steps they need to take in order to improve their work in RE further. The proportion of pupils working at age related expectations in RE is equivalent, and sometimes better, than nationally. The standard of pupils' written work in RE is comparable with their written work in literacy which indicates the importance placed on it by staff and pupils. RE is very well led and managed by the headteacher who is successfully driving forward improvements.

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

The headteacher has successfully introduced a reviewed vision, aims and values for the school. These are explicitly based on its Christian foundation. Staff and governors support these developments well. Parents recognise that the school's values have a much higher profile now than even a couple of years ago. This is impacting on behaviour outside of school. Senior leaders, including governors, have detailed insight into school performance generally and specifically as a voluntary aided school. Therefore, self-assessment is accurate. This in turn leads to effective action planning for further improvement. The introduction of the 'Christian Distinctiveness Forum' has been a catalyst for improvements, especially across this academic year. Links with the parish church are very strong and evident in, for example, mutual links on their respective websites and weekly school services being held in church. This supports pupils' spiritual and religious development well. Parents are well informed about their children's education; they are appreciative of the school's approachability and care. This is recognised by them as clearly being part of the school's distinctive Christian and inclusive ethos. The school is increasingly outward looking and is rightly endeavouring to build stronger relationships with other churches and schools in the area, and further afield as appropriate. Links with the Diocese support school development well, through training for both staff and governors. Staff are encouraged to develop professionally whilst working within a church school. For example, new teachers take part in a specific training course provided by the Diocese on working in a church school. Whole school inservice training has taken place on improving planning in RE. Worship and RE both meet statutory requirements. However, neither policy document accurately reflects the basis for worship and RE within the voluntary aided sector. Areas for development from the previous denominational inspection have been mainly well addressed. One partial key issue for improvement has not been addressed. This is in relation to enhance the grounds of the school by providing some outside reflection space. Progress has been slowed by changes in school leadership. The most effective progress being made since September 2015 under the focused leadership of the current headteacher.

St Mary's CE (VA) Primary School, Windmill Lane, East Grinstead, RH19 2DS