



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 Controlled First School

School Lane
Washington
West Sussex
RH20 4AP

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Chichester

Local authority: West Sussex

Dates of inspection: 17 November 2015

Date of last inspection: 11 May 2010

School's unique reference number: 125999

Headteacher: Gillian Leadbetter-Simms

Inspector's name and number: Rosemary Appleby 749

School context

St Mary's CE First School is smaller than the average size primary school in a rural setting with 87 pupils on roll. Many pupils live outside the catchment area. There are three classes with two year groups taught in each class. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Currently the number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national average, as is attendance. Most pupils come from a white British heritage.

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

- Christian values have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- The headteacher, staff and governors have a clear understanding of the Christian vision and are committed to its ongoing development.
- Effective links with the local church and the community are mutually beneficial and ensure that the school is seen as central to Washington village life.

Areas to improve

- Improve the effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation of St Mary's as a church school by creating more rigorous systems that ensure actions, by all stakeholders, lead to improvements across the school.
- Ensure that themes in collective worship have greater impact by developing a consistent approach to planning, monitoring and evaluation that more regularly and explicitly refers to Biblical material.

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

The impact of the Christian character of the school is outstanding because the school's Christian

values are consistently understood and clearly articulated by all members of the school community. This is evident in the excellent inclusive and positive caring relationships across the school community and the exemplary behaviour seen around the school. The Christian ethos underpins all areas of school life where learners say that they feel valued and safe. Parents, pupils, staff and governors clearly articulate the current focus on the Christian value of hope. This strengthens the consistency of understanding in the school community and is reinforced through stunning displays about hope in the indoor environment, in each class and discussions in collective worship. The ethos is underpinned by twelve Christian values chosen by the school community and developed over two years. This has promoted an excellent shared ownership and enabled the school to explore and strengthen its Christian distinctiveness. The ethos contributes significantly to pupil's achievement which overall trends indicate is above national average. Pupils speak proudly about their achievements and the many ways, such as the celebration board and invitations to the headteacher's tea party, the school affirms them. The school is particularly strong in promoting its distinctiveness through displays. A school banner promoting Christian values with a biblical reference to Galatians 5:22 – the fruit of the spirit greets you as you enter the school. A stunning display gives information about St Mary's link school in Sierra Leone and is linked to Christian values. Parents state that the school's Christian values provide clear guidelines and structure for excellent behaviour and respect for others and that they can consistently see these values in action at home, in school and in church. In a recent questionnaire nearly all of parents who responded agreed that the school 'reflects the ethos and practices of a Church school'. There are excellent mutually supportive links with the local church community of St Mary's. Pupils and parents spoke about a candlelit procession of the nativity through the village arranged by the church and school. Pupils experience a calm, happy and purposeful learning environment where they are motivated to learn. While the environment indoors is very explicit about Christian values, with many examples of Christian symbolism, this is not so evident in the outside areas and the school has rightly identified that this could be developed further. Religious education (RE) contributes very well to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Pupils learn about other religions in RE and explain that they learn about Hinduism, Judaism and Islam. Through this work pupils have great empathy for other cultures. Pupils are challenged to link Christian values to work in RE such as the hope and trust in God that Noah had as a prophet of God. Hope was linked to the wonder of creation when a baby was welcomed into class and hopes for the baby's future life were discussed.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is a special and distinct time in the school day when Christian values are effectively reinforced. Pupils value this time because they learn about stories and current issues that have relevance in their own lives. For example, worship sensitively explores difficult issues such as the recent tragedies in France but is linked to hope through Bible teaching. The understanding and impact of this worship was illustrated by a pupil drawing pictures for the people of France during wet playtime later that day. The quality of the pupils' personal prayer writing is developing as is the prominence of prayer throughout the whole school community. A governor leads a parent prayer group in school and external prayer groups actively pray for the school. Aspects of Anglican worship such as reciting the Lord's Prayer are well established and pupils can explain that looking at the candle reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world'. Pupils are engaged and respectful through participation in worship such as singing, reflection time and praying. The services at St Mary's parish church celebrating Harvest, Easter and Christmas reinforce Anglican tradition and increase pupils' understanding of the Christian year. Pupils lead worship at the parish church, for these services, which appropriately extends opportunities for them to be involved. Staff and clergy regularly lead collective worship. A local Christian group named 'Splash' are valued by staff, parents and pupils for their creative contribution to worship. Pupils have opportunities to develop their understanding of the Trinity and pupils talk about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit with a growing appreciation. Planning and evaluation of worship does not consistently involve a range of stakeholders and therefore programmes of worship do not always use the skills of all stakeholders. Pupils are starting to evaluate worship and are growing in their

evaluative skills; however they are not always reminded to complete the worship records. The programme of worship is linked to Christian values. However links between values and Bible teaching are not sufficiently demonstrated on a regular basis.

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

The headteacher, staff team and governing body clearly articulate a strong understanding of how the Christian vision gives direction for the whole school community. They have been proactive in addressing the key issues from the previous inspection. The current school development plan includes explicit action points linked to Christian distinctiveness. For example, this year, RE and worship are the focuses for an annual school exhibition thereby giving them a high profile. Governors are committed to the Christian ethos of the school and support the school well. They make visits to worship and school events throughout the year enabling them to know their school although evaluation of these visits is mostly informal and there is limited evidence of Christian distinctiveness being discussed formally at governors meetings. The leadership and school management is not outstanding because systems for monitoring and evaluation are not yet sufficiently rigorous in identifying areas for future improvement which consistently form an integral part of the overall school development plan. During staff interviews candidates are questioned about their commitment to the school's Christian distinctiveness to ensure that the school appoints staff committed to promoting a Christian ethos. Links with the local church community are strong and mutually enriching. Parents' and pupils' attendance at church services, celebrating major Christian festivals, result in a greater understanding of Anglican life and liturgy across the school community. Staff are well supported in their professional development through use of Diocesan training and this effectively increases the skills and knowledge they have to develop the school as a church school. The high standards of pastoral care and the development of a calm and focussed learning environment based on Christian values make an important contribution to pupils' progress. This helps them to achieve their best, including those with learning difficulties. Pupils are involved in decision making through pupil conferencing. Parents speak warmly of the school and the caring inclusive environment in which 'our children have received the best start in their education that anyone could ever expect or wish'. They value the family ethos of the school where pupils take on responsibility for helping each other as 'walking, talking friendship buddies'. The arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

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