

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Littlehampton	
Address	Brookpit Lane, Clymping, Littlehampton, BN17 5QU

School vision

Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in the Lord.
Psalm 31:24

We are a small school with a big heart at the centre of the community. Christian faith is taught, experienced and lived as we seek to provide a firm grounding from which children grow into compassionate, active and courageous citizens in a diverse world. We believe that children should learn in a happy, secure and stimulating environment where a thirst for understanding and the embracing of challenge is instilled. Acceptance, nurture and hope empower each child on their journey of academic, spiritual and emotional growth to dream big and aim high.

School strengths

- The Christian vision is central to everyone at St Mary's. It is lived out with integrity and has a huge impact upon pupils' lives, allowing them to flourish.
- The remodelled curriculum incorporates and supports the vision. It utilises the environment and the community in an imaginative way. It encourages pupils' curiosity and understanding. It also instils into pupils the aim of the vision that they can succeed and 'dream big and aim high.'
- Relationships within the school are exceptionally strong. Leaders are totally dedicated to the welfare of the pupils and staff. They set a high bar in the way in which they model the aims of the vision. They ensure everyone is treated with dignity and Christian values of hope and encouragement are followed. Staff are well cared for with extensive opportunities for professional development. Pupils are kind and care for one another. They recognise the need for compassion towards others less fortunate.
- Highly effective partnership working is a feature of the school. It builds upon the belief that the school must give to all as well as receive help. Links with the local churches and with the diocese are strong.
- Collective worship is a strength of the school. Pupils are involved in many ways. It has a significant impact on their daily lives.

Areas for development

- Ensure the governing body formally and systematically conducts its monitoring against the vision of the school. This will enable them to help leaders have a deeper picture of how the Christian vision is enabling pupils and adults to flourish .
- Develop a greater understanding amongst the pupils of what spirituality means both within the curriculum and in the wider life of the school. As a result, pupils will be able to talk about it with more confidence.
- Embed a greater consistency in the quality of teaching in religious education (RE). This will enhance pupils' understanding and ensure all pupils make good progress in RE.

Inspection findings

The Christian vision, along with its biblical underpinning from Psalms, infuses every aspect of St Mary's School. It directs the work of leaders and governors and has a very significant impact on the lives of the pupils. Leaders' ambitions, as expressed in the vision, are well known throughout the school community. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the impact the school is having upon their children. They strongly approve of the raised aspirations and the values that the vision has brought. Pupils flourish at St Mary's as they learn in a happy, secure and stimulating environment. They rise to the challenge to do the best they possibly can. The relatively new governing body has quickly gained a good understanding of the work of the school. It is ambitious for it to succeed. Through regular visits and receiving comprehensive reports from the headteacher, it monitors the school. Currently, the governing body is working to formalise a more systematic approach to monitoring.

The remodelled curriculum endorses the vision. Teachers use the unique environment which surrounds the school extensively. They use it to make learning purposeful, vibrant and enjoyable. Projects develop pupils' cultural understanding and nurture curiosity. Exciting opportunities exist such as building model houses of the type present in London at the time of the Great Fire and then burning them. This engages and enhances learning and deepens understanding. A myriad of memorable experiences such as visits to the Maritime Museum and the local planetarium add to the curriculum. This chimes with the vision aim of developing a thirst for knowledge. Everyone is included. Special care is taken to ensure that those pupils deemed to be vulnerable are given equal opportunities with everyone else. The school is fully inclusive, and all are nurtured. Pupils proudly point to a board in school which they had created from pebbles on the beach. It says, 'We may all be different but, in this school, we swim together'.

In line with the vision, pupils in the school are kind and compassionate and respectful. Without asking, they provide comfort to their peers if they are upset. Older pupils 'buddy up' with their younger peers, and this creates meaningful relationships. Leaders show care for all in the school. Staff are listened to and their wellbeing is of importance. As one member said, 'Each day I come to school I feel lucky to work in such a caring place'. Parents echo that their children are treated exceptionally well. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are provided for well.

Partnership working is very strong in the school. Leaders have made a determined effort to ensure that the school is the centre of the community and lives out its Christian vision of service. In this they have been totally successful. Their belief is that they are not just there to receive, but also to give. They model this for the pupils. They, in turn know they have a part to play to help others and to act compassionately. They wrote and delivered Christmas cards to all in the community whom they identified as being alone. They worked with parents on opening the school grounds as part of a National Open Garden scheme to allow the community to visit their school for free. Excellent links exist with the local church. The vicar is a regular visitor not only to class collective worship but as a sounding board for anyone who needs to talk. The group of schools in the local deanery support each other and the diocese provides valuable ongoing support to the school.

There is a shared understanding amongst the staff of the importance of spiritual development and what this means in practice. The school has mapped where this can be found both in the curriculum and extracurricular activities. Teachers use unplanned moments to develop spirituality. For example when the running club were on the beach, they stopped to marvel at the wonders of nature. Many aspects of collective worship lead to spiritual flourishing. Worship leaders light candles at the beginning of each worship to signify this is a special moment. Worship is totally invitational and there is plenty of opportunity for pupils to reflect. Pupils are introduced to a variety

of Anglican traditions through visitors who regularly come to the school. This broadens their understanding of the variety of Anglican tradition. Children sing joyously and join in with the school prayer which they know well. However, pupils do not talk about their spiritual development with confidence.

The vision encourages pupils to take responsibility within and outside school. This they do willingly. Worship leaders, team captains and eco-warriors play an active role. Pupils fundraise for charity and help with events for the marginalised. They are about to help tidy the war graves in the local cemetery. Pupils understand the importance of rights and justice and the influence people have on society. They talk passionately about the impact people can have. In the past they have written letters to the MP about issues such as river pollution. However, they are less aware of how they themselves can act as agents of change globally.

The RE curriculum encompasses the teaching of Christianity and world faiths. It meets the requirements of the Church of England. It is well resourced. The recently appointed subject lead is taking her role seriously. She is participating in diocesan training both for the teaching of RE and for being a new subject leader. The RE curriculum is generally well sequenced and allows pupils to ask big questions as well as developing their knowledge. Pupils enjoy RE. Older pupils can recall well what they were taught previously, although younger pupils are more hesitant about this. Assessment is developing. It is the same system used by other subjects in order to make sure everyone understands it. It identifies those pupils who make exceptional progress and those where further support is needed. Progress for most pupils is good overall. RE has been monitored by school leaders who have looked at pupils' books. However, the quality of teaching in RE is not totally consistent. Work is not always matched enough to the ability of the pupils. As a result, some pupils show less knowledge and understanding than others.

Information			
Inspection date	20 October 2023	URN	126024
VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary aided	Pupils on roll	92
Diocese	Chichester		
MAT/Federation			
Headteacher	Justin Murray		
Chair	Kate Beacher		
Inspector	Marcia Headon	No.	761