

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England (A) First School

Address	The Heath, Utttoxeter ST14 7LX		
Date of inspection	3 October 2019	Status of school	Voluntary aided first
Diocese	Lichfield	URN	124344

Overall Judgement	Grade	Good
How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?		
Additional Judgements		
The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good
The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Excellent

School context

St Mary's is a first and nursery school with 190 pupils on roll and 34 children in the nursery. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is broadly in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is close to national averages. Several local churches support the school.

The school's Christian vision

Our Christian vision has its basis in 'the Good Samaritan'. The roots of our vision are embedded in love and respect, our core Christian values. From this central premise; that everyone is loved by God and that we should love one another. We enable our children to show love and respect for themselves, others and God's creation.

Key findings

- Pupils and adults are a living expression of an effective Christian vision. The entire school community is inspired by the example of the Good Samaritan to welcome everyone and to show kindness to others.
- While the vision is described by leaders, it is not yet explicit in documentation and the website and so not fully driving the development of the school as a Church school.
- Partnerships with families, local churches and the community are exceptionally strong and supportive of all parties.
- Religious education (RE) is a significant strength of the school and demonstrates the positive impact of the ongoing professional development of teaching staff.
- Pupil voice is encouraged, heard and used to improve aspects of the school day, for example, pupils' views on collective worship.

Areas for Development

- Sustain improvements by making the Christian vision more explicit in documentation and use the vision as a reference point to evaluate the school as a Church school.
- Develop formal systems for governors to regularly monitor the quality and impact of worship across the school in order to enhance the experience of worship for all ages.

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

St Mary's is truly blessed in the compassionate leadership of the headteacher. She binds the school community together and is unswerving in her commitment to ensure pupils feel loved and so able to learn. Due to her commitment, pupils grow into confident and caring individuals. Governors know the school very well. Many are deeply involved in its daily life, for example, leading worship and supporting pupils with their reading. While this has benefits, it also limits governors' ability to stand back and objectively evaluate the school as a Church school. For example, there are link governors for curriculum subjects, but not for collective worship. There are currently no formal systems for governors to capture evaluation of acts of worship and so identify what might improve.

The school's distinctive Christian vision is widely expressed by pupils as 'living like the Good Samaritan'. While this is understood as showing kindness to others, the deeper message of the parable, that of challenging prejudice, is less well-developed. Nevertheless, it is a wonderful testament to the pupils that they decided that the parable was the best text to root their vision in the Bible. Additionally, the two core Christian values of love and respect are seen at every turn. Both the vision and values are constant threads in the daily life of the school. However, the website and policies do not consistently reference the vision and leaders acknowledge that this is 'work in progress'.

The school is outward facing and very much at the heart of its community. St Mary's regularly supports local events. These include singing in the town hall and support for Uttroter in Bloom. Parents, pupils and staff have come together to help a local project, even at weekends. This is due to the wholehearted spirit of service in a community where all go the 'extra mile,' as Jesus taught.

Through the school's work with other local schools, it is leading the way, for example, through a lead teacher with a specialist qualification in Science. Leaders care for staff personally and offer support for their ongoing professional development, recently focusing on wellbeing of adults as well as pupils. It is clear that staff and leaders live out their vision. This means that St Mary's is often a Good Samaritan to others, or 'Samaritan-friend', as the children sing. Partnerships with the parish church and the Heath Church are mutually beneficial and enrich the lives those in school and in congregations. The school hosts 'Messy Church' each half-term and so acts on its vision of reaching out to others. Links with a school in Kenya give pupils an understanding of living in another part of the world.

The effectiveness of the vision is seen in the good progress the majority of pupils make in lessons. The curriculum is shaped to explore pupils' interests. Friday enrichment 'clubs' support this as pupils determine which activities are offered. Spiritual growth is woven into the school day as lessons include regular time for reflection while time for prayer punctuates the school day. Since the last denominational inspection, academic standards, notably in writing, have improved considerably. Progress is also clear for those who have additional learning or social needs. Sensitive support is provided by dedicated staff. Parents comment how well teachers communicate with them and nurture their children. The school is very inclusive. This is seen in governors' decision to maintain Nursery provision. Younger children and their families are warmly welcomed into the extended family of St Mary's. Nursery is oversubscribed and this confirms St Mary's high reputation in the town.

RE makes an excellent contribution to the flourishing of all pupils. The subject is popular, particularly when it involves discussion, drama or artwork. As a result of the 'Understanding Christianity' materials, pupils have an impressive understanding of concepts studied. In explaining the cross as distinct from a crucifix, one pupil said, 'the empty cross reminds us that Jesus has risen'. The support from a range of local churches enables pupils to know Christianity is itself a diverse faith. Visits and visitors enhance learning about a range of religious beliefs and customs. Themed RE days each term also enrich the experience pupils gain of different faith traditions. The subject is exceptionally well-led by a skilful and committed coordinator.

Positive relationships across all classes exemplify the impact of the vision based on love. Pupils are supported to

attend well, behave well and learn well together. When a problem occurs, pupils are clear that adults will help them resolve matters. Pupils often refer a problem to the vision. One said, 'even if someone is not my friend, I can be kind'. Adults too are united in their service to the school and to each other. As one member of staff commented, 'we have full trust in each other.' Most staff live locally and so they are totally invested in the success of the school. New members of staff are very well supported, including in understanding what it means to work in a Church school.

There are many ways pupils contribute to leading the school and so be Samaritans. Worship team members support this important time, where all come together. Subject ambassadors, including those for RE, brief governors on their subject. Improvements result, for example, in the choice of music, an issue which the worship team flagged up. Pupil voice from the school council added a chess club to the lunchtime activities.

Collective worship is an important part of each day. It gives pupils valuable experience of Anglican traditions of worship, including the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Older pupils gain insight into the Eucharist. All pupils celebrate the main festivals in the Christian calendar. The worship team helps set up resources, often selecting songs and reading prayers. The 'Open the Book' acts of worship give pupils a good understanding of Bible stories. Pupils express a wish to extend their role in leading worship to those lower down school as currently the worship team is recruited from Year 4. The prayer life of the school is developing. Pupils' own prayers occasionally feature in worship. Prayer spaces in classrooms are, however, designed and created by adults. Pupils have limited access to this resource. When indoor space for reflection is offered at lunch, this meets a need for quieter as well as more active playtimes.

St Mary's is a securely good Church school with several examples of excellent practice. Most notably is the outworking of the vision of being a Good Samaritan in the community. As such, the school gives its pupils secure foundations for now and into the future.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

RE is excellent because teaching, and so learning, are highly effective. There is clear impact of the 'Understanding Christianity' resource which supports pupils to make excellent progress. Assessment is robust so that progress is closely monitored, and the curriculum adapted to needs, so enabling all abilities to flourish.

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Inspector's name and number	Allyson Taylor 768