

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England VA Primary School, Dover	
Address	Laureston Place, Dover, CT16 1QX
How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	
Overall grade	Good
The impact of collective worship	Good
The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Good

School's vision
Learning for life with God as our guide. Through the loving example of Jesus Christ, we strive to provide opportunities for all members of our diverse school community to flourish within a caring, aspirational, spiritual and inclusive environment. We aim to create successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens ready to take the next steps in life.
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Christian vision and values underpin and permeates the curriculum. Leaders of the school are ambitious for all pupils. • Underpinned by the Christian vision and accompanying biblical narrative, a focus on strong pastoral care and the nurture of positive mental health, ensures that the needs of this diverse school community are well met. • Pupils are nurtured in becoming responsible citizens within their school community. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to embrace advocating, instigating and organising social action for themselves. • Focused on the school's vision and values, collective worship is a treasured time within the school day. It draws the school community together and ensures the involvement of all. • Times of stillness and reflection support spiritual development. However, there is not currently a shared understanding of spirituality, and how it can be further fostered across the curriculum. • The enthusiasm, expertise and support of the religious education (RE) lead has been instrumental in the development of the subject. At present some opportunities for pupils to think more deeply in RE are missed.



Areas for development

- Develop a shared understanding of spiritual development that can be fostered within worship and across the curriculum so that all are able to flourish fully.
- Broaden opportunities for pupils to engage in social action and to actively challenge injustice so that they are inspired to make a difference in the world in which they live.
- Ensure that questions for deeper thinking within RE allow pupils the opportunity to reflect on the impact Christianity, and other faiths, has on their lives and the lives of others.

Inspection findings

St Mary's is a school where the Christian vision and values are used to underpin all strategic development. The accompanying biblical narrative inspires this diverse community to be shining lights individually and collectively, reflecting the Christian values and the example set by Jesus. Regular references to this generates high aspirations for everyone, forming a cohesive thread to the work of the school.

Enabling all to be shining lights, whatever their personal challenges or circumstances, creates a space where wholeness and affirmation are central. At the core of this is the creation of a safe place where mistakes can be made, issues discussed and resolved in a non-confrontational manner. Driven by the school's Christian values, adults consistently model trust and respect in their interactions with pupils. All are treated with dignity. This impacts on how pupils treat each other and are motivated to see themselves as agents for change within their school community. They take responsibility for the success of friendships and speak confidently about being a 'voice for the voiceless'. This creates an inclusive environment where new pupils are welcomed, no pupil is left out and discrimination and unkindness of any sort are not tolerated by pupils or adults. All cultures are embraced within the school community, with a real sense that there is an excitement in learning from each other.

The unique value of each pupil and adult is at the heart of the school's pastoral care. Staff have been deployed to support the regular attendance of specific pupils, as well as their kindly nurture and care once in school. This extends to the care of families who have been supported through bereavement and ill health, as well as during times of financial hardship. The support for families during the recent pandemic, the provision of food parcels and support with school uniform fosters a school community that is a shining light and safe haven for families. Staff feel equally nurtured within the school community, both professionally and in their wellbeing. This helps generate loyalty and commitment to do the best for each pupil. Pupils are seen as partners in developing the school community. They embrace a range of leadership roles such as within the school council. Following the lead taken by adults, pupils take an active part in fund raising for local and national needs. At present their personal involvement in instigating and planning for social action, through an understanding of injustice is limited.

A curriculum has been devised that enables all pupils to shine. High value is placed on the use of curiosity, imagination and reflection to develop pupils as successful learners. Specific 'wow' moments planned within topics, as well as practical experience ensures that the needs of all are met. The use of artwork is a vital form of expression that stimulates creativity and enthusiasm in learning, as well as inspiring discussion and language development. Governors have made sensible and conscious decisions to use the budget to enable all to flourish within the curriculum. This includes the appointment of an extra member of staff to teach smaller groups in the upper school. Elsewhere in the school extra adults have been employed to meet the specific learning and emotional needs of some pupils. Budgeting has also enabled the school to widen the range of activities within the local area for all pupils. This includes annual visits to Dover Castle and the use of the forest school. This extends pupils' life experiences enabling them to flourish beyond the classroom. The success of the academic provision is paralleled by a drive to personal wholeness. This is exemplified in pupils' perseverance within tasks. They know when to gain strength from within and when to seek help from a friend or an adult. This in turn helps them to become successful learners.

Collective worship is a treasured time at the start of the school day when the community gathers. It is fully inclusive allowing those of religious faiths and none to participate. Worship




is led very effectively drawing the school together around Bible stories and the school's vision and values. The intrinsic value and worth of everyone as being a shining light is a key message shared through worship. Enthusiastic singing is a notable strength of the worship and contributes to a great sense of wellbeing. Stories illustrating the loving example of Jesus inspire pupils to conduct themselves in a respectful and caring manner towards each other. Prayer and reflection are an integral part of the school day, both within the classroom and in the outdoor reflection areas. However, it is times of stillness and quiet within worship that provide an exceptional point of reflection on personal lives and provide profoundly spiritual moments for all. This impacts on a sense of calm and on positive behaviour through the school. A celebration of the 'wow' moments in life during worship, such as images of beautiful autumn leaves, as well as a consideration of the 'ow' moments and how to overcome these foster a growing spirituality within worship and beyond. Although senior staff understand spiritual development this is not understood by all, nor how this can be nurtured further with pupils. Pupils gain confidence from their partnership with the adults in leading school worship. Valuable links have been established with the local church who support the worship leadership, as well as provide a sacred space for special services and festivals.

RE is led with enthusiasm and commitment. This inspires good teaching through the school. As a result of relevant training from the diocese, staff are informed and knowledgeable about Christianity and world faiths. As confidence grows, they express a love in teaching RE. RE is regularly monitored and a clear action plan has been created to sustain improvements in the teaching of the subject. Enquiry-based learning allows pupils to explore big questions within the lessons. The discussions are challenging and allow deep and reflective thinking. Within the safe place of the classroom the pupils are able to thrive and freely express their opinions. This helps pupils inform their views on life and respect for the feelings and values of all, particularly those in their school community. At present, however, there are more limited opportunities for them to apply this to their own lives. Pupils are fully engaged in the creative and imaginative interpretation of themes and take pride in their work. The local vicar visits RE lessons, making a valued contribution to discussion and reflection on the themes.

The school's vision and values and accompanying biblical narrative are enabling pupils to thrive in this caring and aspirational community. The intrinsic worth in everyone to be a shining light is contributing to creating a flourishing environment for all.



	The effectiveness of RE is		Good
	Standards in RE are in line with other core subjects. The quality of teaching and learning is good, so that pupils of all abilities make secure progress within the subject. Pupils are frequently challenged within RE, and are growing in their understanding of different beliefs, reflecting on what they and others understand.		
Information			
School	St Mary's Church of England VA Primary School, Dover	Inspection date	12 October 2022
URN	118748	VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary aided
Diocese/District	Canterbury	Pupils on roll	178
Executive headteacher	Helen Comfort / Matthew Lamprell - Head of School		
Chair of Governors	Elizabeth Fisher		
Inspector	Elizabeth Pettersen	No.	557