

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England Infants' School, Baldock	
Address	Saint Mary's Way, Baldock, SG7 6HY
School vision	
<p>‘We aspire to be a community living life in all its fullness. We share, care, learn and love with God, valuing the dignity and respect of all humanity and creation. Through the power of the Holy Spirit Jesus’ Kingdom comes and everyone can flourish together.’</p>	
School strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Christian vision is well known and valued by pupils and staff. It inspires all aspects of provision in this well ordered, calm and highly inclusive Church school. • Collective worship is at the heart of each school day, and contributes very effectively to the spiritual flourishing of all those present. Pupils listen carefully and reflect thoughtfully about the impact of biblical teaching on their own lives. • Leaders and staff are committed to the personal development of pupils. This is highly valued by parents, who are grateful for the compassionate and nurturing care which is given to each pupil. • Religious education (RE) has a high priority at St Mary’s. The well-planned and resourced curriculum ensures that pupils’ knowledge is developed sequentially. • Relationships at all levels are strong and supportive. This is exemplified by school leaders and inspired by the Christian vision. Staff and pupils treat each other very well so that all are able to flourish holistically. 	
Areas for development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine current systems for monitoring the impact of the Christian vision, so that their findings explicitly inform the strategic direction for St Mary's as a Church school. • Expand pupils' age-appropriate understanding of injustice in the world around them. This is so that they begin to see wider opportunities to make a difference. • Continue to develop the RE curriculum through a further focus on key skills. This is in order for pupils to have a richer and deeper experience of the subject. 	
Inspection findings	
<p>St Mary’s is a life-affirming school which seeks to love and serve the pupils and families in its community. The Christian vision, carefully crafted following consultation with stakeholders, sits at the heart of the school’s provision. Pupils recite the vision with actions, which helps them to understand its meaning and relevance in their lives. They say that it is ‘special’ because it explains how each of them can live and learn well together. The linked Bible story about Jonah and the whale</p>	

inspires leaders. They describe being called to St Mary's, so that they can help to enrich lives and release the potential of pupils. They outline many ways in which the Christian vision drives the school's strategic development. For example, work to improve school attendance is a priority. This is inspired by the conviction that attendance is fundamental in equipping pupils to 'live life in all its fullness'. A governor and staff group meets regularly to discuss the impact of the vision on provision, and consider possible future developments. For example, the group planned the development of the school's 'spiritual garden'. Consequently, the school's Christian vision continues to be a driving force.

Relationships are a considerable strength in this school. Parents are grateful for the empathetic support of members of staff, especially during difficult times. Behaviour in classrooms and during social times is calm and well-managed. Pupils demonstrate their understanding of the needs of their peers through impressive sensitivity and generosity of spirit. They treat each other very well. Poor behaviour is rare, but when it happens, adults listen and help to resolve problems. Twelve Christian values guide the behaviour of pupils, staff and governors. These are considered in collective worship and in conversations in classrooms. However, some pupils do not understand the meanings of all of these key words. Groups such as the 'pupil parliament' ensure that pupils can share their views about different aspects of school life. Consequently, they know that their flourishing is important.

Communication between the school and parents is excellent. It enables parents to feel well informed about their child's learning and personal development. Local partnerships enrich the school's provision and care for pupils, families and staff. A mental health professional, art therapist and family support worker ensure that needs of vulnerable pupils are effectively supported. Staff are grateful to be part of a team where everybody cares and has time for each other. As a result, they work closely together and are proud of the positive impact they have on young lives. Regular surveys ensure that leaders understand the views of all staff members on a variety of themes. Leaders know their staff well. Professional development is prioritised, and staff also have access to externally provided wellbeing support. Consequently, staff know they are valued, and are able to flourish in their roles.

The development of the curriculum is inspired by the Christian vision, and reflects the needs of pupils. Leaders have introduced a curriculum which prioritises high levels of knowledge. They have also introduced a range of experiences which engage and inspire pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. Teachers ensure that pupils with a variety of needs access learning effectively. For example, the acquisition and use of new vocabulary is a focus, in order to support pupils' speech and language development. This ensures that pupils can continue to learn successfully. The school has worked with the diocese to develop provision that nurtures pupils' spirituality. Plentiful opportunities to be still, reflect and express feelings are woven into the school day. They effectively contribute to pupils' spiritual growth. Some pupils do not understand the relevance of spirituality for people of all faiths and worldviews. Governors and leaders monitor the impact of the vision in subjects across the curriculum. However, processes and systems which ensure the impact of effective monitoring are not consistent.

Collective worship is an important aspect of school life. It provides an opportunity for all present to explore the vision, and takes place at the beginning of each day. This is so that pupils can be inspired to 'share, care, learn and love with God' throughout the day. The atmosphere is calm and respectful, and pupils value opportunities to lead aspects of worship. They describe how worship is for everyone, and are justifiably proud to play their part. Age-appropriate resources enable pupils to understand Biblical teaching, and leaders create inclusive opportunities for pupils to share their responses. Stillness, guided reflection and prayer provide pupils and adults with valuable opportunities to grow spiritually each day. Local clergy are involved in leading worship each week and the whole school worships in the church together each year. Parents appreciate opportunities

be part of collective worship during the year. The worship life of the school has a notable and positive impact on the relationships within the school community.

RE has a high profile across the school, and is knowledgeably led. The focus on provision and learning is reflected in the purchase of new resources, and in RE displays around the school. Pupils enjoy lessons, and enthusiastically describe enrichment opportunities such as a recent speaker and visits to the church. The diocese has provided valuable supported in the development of the RE curriculum, as well as professional development for staff. The curriculum is structured so that pupils revisit themes in order to build on prior learning. Books evidence pupils' developing knowledge and their understanding of specific vocabulary. However some pupils find explaining their learning, and discussing big questions difficult. Learning walks and observations are used to evaluate provision and plan future training. However, these activities are not systematically drawn together to evaluate the impact of the curriculum on learning over time.

The 'agents of change' programme inspires pupils to make 'little changes so that big changes happen'. Pupils are encouraged to identify ethical choices in caring for the world around them. Activities such as recycling, and taking part in a national birdwatch encourage all pupils to play their part. Parents describe their children's confident eco awareness and the beneficial impact of this at home. Pupils do not have a wider understanding of their capacity to effect change through a concern for justice.

The inspection findings indicate that St Mary's Church of England Infants' School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
Inspection date	30 April 2024	URN	117384
VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary controlled	Pupils on roll	112
Diocese	St Albans		
MAT/Federation			
Headteacher	Verity Edey		
Chair	Ben Hodson		
Inspector	Nicola Flower	No.	2224