

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England VA Primary School	
Address	Windmill Lane, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 2DS

School vision

At St Mary’s, we inspire curious and resilient learners, who flourish in the world God has created. We have a responsibility to love and serve others, guided by the scriptures and the teachings of Jesus. We love because he first loved us (1 John 4:19)

School strengths

- The Christian vision of the school drives St Mary’s daily actions. This means that the school identifies those who might be vulnerable and astutely targets support so that they can flourish.
- Staff leaders know how to serve and love each other, so that everyone treats each other well.
- Partnerships, including those with the church, community and diocese are strong and supportive. This includes the collaborative approach to collective worship in school and in the church. These relationships enhance the Christian vision by showing where the school is rooted and what pupils could aspire to be in their future.
- The introduction of a new religious education (RE) curriculum leads to staff and children engaging with the challenge of big questions.

Areas for development

- To develop a shared language of spirituality for collective worship and within the curriculum. This is so that there is clarity for both staff and pupils in developing spirituality for each individual.
- Establish a consistent approach to assessment in RE. This is so that the school’s high expectations for RE mirror the best practice.
- Build on pupils’ current understanding of courage in their own lives. This is so that they act to make a difference in the wider world.

Inspection findings

St Mary's Christian vision plays a crucial role in enabling both pupils and adults to flourish. 'We love because he first loved us' is the inspiration from John 4:19. Leaders see pupils as 'seeds' in God's creation. They are effective in helping them to grow and flourish using the teachings of Jesus. The school leaders support children to be outward-looking to make sure that they have a positive influence on others. Leaders developed their vision collaboratively with input from pupils, parents, governors and local clergy. This means that there is a shared understanding of the vision. As there are well understood values, there is a strong moral code filled with love, together with an ambition for pupils to prosper. The governors have clear mechanisms in place to monitor the effectiveness of the school's vision. They have done this through the Christian vision working group and regular visits to the school. As a result, governors know their school well and make a valuable contribution to its Christian character.

This strong sense of 'togetherness' is tangible, and adults and pupils feel a sense of belonging. Leaders are committed to developing pupils to be confident, secure citizens whilst ensuring that they thrive academically. This has a direct impact on the flourishing of pupils at the school, particularly those who are most vulnerable. Strategies and interventions are inclusive, ensuring that those pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Parents praise the school for the personalised care offered by staff, who go 'above and beyond' to meet the needs of each individual. Pupils value all the opportunities that their school offers for them to enhance their learning. For example, on listening to their views, leaders introduced a wider range of extra-curricular clubs. When possible, learning is enhanced by carefully chosen visits. Both the choir and gardening experiences on offer are well-attended and valued. Although leaders have explored ways to support pupils' spiritual development through the curriculum, these are underdeveloped.

Collective worship at St Mary's fosters a sense of belonging and awareness of those 'close to us'. The end of week celebration is supportive in reflecting on themes drawn upon in the week. The school community is guided by the scriptures and the teachings of Jesus in their worship. Pupils express joy and love in their singing. They communicate a desire to take more leadership of aspects of worship. Pupils and adults attend St Mary's church for major Christian festivals where they meet local Christians in worship. These adults reinforce the school's distinctively Christian vision and associated values. However, there is no shared language for spirituality. As this is missing, spontaneous opportunities for developing spiritually are limited, both in collective worship and within the curriculum.

The Christian vision at St Mary's fosters a culture where both adults and pupils are treated with care and respect. St Mary's is both calm and welcoming. Behaviour is good and any issues are dealt with effectively and promptly. Parents talk proudly of the good behaviour and caring nature of pupils when they are out in the community. The school demonstrates a proactive approach to mental health support, for staff and for parents. Pupils feel safe and well supported. They value the school's emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) and the provision that is offered when they need it. Pupils talk positively about 'Be the jellyfish' as an intervention to help them calm and about sensory circuits to help them refocus.

St Mary's creates and promotes a sense of responsibility for pupils. The values create an active culture of responsibility. Pupils advocate for different charities, showing compassion and passion for making a difference. The values ambassadors speak compellingly of their serving of others through worship but also in their developing of prayer spaces. Links have been established for raising funds for a wide range of charities. Although this is the case, pupils cannot fully link this to the importance of showing courage to improve lives.

RE is effectively planned to ensure that it is well-balanced, sequenced and diverse. As a result, pupils have a good understanding about the religions that they study. The RE leader is working to fully embed the updated RE curriculum consistently across the school. Pupils show engagement in lessons and talk positively about their learning experiences in RE. They retain what they have learnt and can talk about their prior learning experiences. They are respectful when sharing their learning about a range of beliefs. Creative teaching enables pupils to confidently access the RE curriculum. ‘Big’ questions, are used in RE lessons, enabling pupils to have a safe space in which to debate. In a lesson debating the question ‘Would people act differently if God were seen to be in all things?’ the teacher acted as skilful guide. They use their teaching to link thinking across a range of opinions. By the end of the primary phase, pupils have well-developed ideas and views, based on their secure knowledge and understanding.

Strong support and training is accessed by the RE leader from the diocese. As a result of this collaboration, a new assessment system has been implemented. Teachers are not yet using these assessments consistently to identify next steps for pupils’ learning nor to inform future planning. Diocesan support enables the RE lead to stay updated on developments and maintain the effectiveness of the curriculum.

Leaders foster a growing understanding that everyone matters, that all are loved by God. Classrooms are filled with energy and drive, with mutual respect and love. Pupils and adults know that they are valued and that their individuality is encouraged to shine.

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

Information			
Inspection date	15 March 2024	URN	126055
VA/VC/Academy	VA	Pupils on roll	209
Diocese	Chichester		
MAT/Federation	NA		
Headteacher	Rachel Thorne		
Chair	Chris Searle and Kyle Smith		
Inspector	Liz Savage	No.	CR 23.24