

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England VA Primary School

Vision

Confidently me; secure in our identity in Christ
Belonging together; union in Christ and fellowship in one another
Challenged to contribute; to communities near and far

We believe God is love and all people are loved by God. Our vision is to help children know this love within a shared sense of community where we can all contribute to the wellbeing of others. We believe this provides a strong foundation on which everyone can excel in learning and with God's help can become the people they were created by God to be.

Strengths

- Leaders have skilfully crafted a vision that responds to the needs of their local community and the context of the school. In doing so, they have created an environment where pupils and adults can flourish.
- The carefully planned curriculum offers a breadth of enriching opportunities that embolden pupils to become independent, reflective and confident learners. Pupils are encouraged to use their gifts and talents and are treated as unique individuals who can confidently be themselves.
- Driven by a belief that everyone is loved by God, leaders prioritise the mental health and wellbeing of the school community. This ensures that provision is clearly focused on those who need it, allowing pupils to thrive.
- Strong partnerships and relationships within the school and its community are built on a spirit of fellowship and mutual respect. Parents and carers trust leaders' decisions, appreciating how their children are valued, listened to and included.

Development Points

- Within the revised religious education (RE) curriculum, ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to explore different ways of believing, thinking and living. This is so that pupils develop a broad, deep and balanced understanding of a range of world religions and worldviews.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to respond to issues that they see as unjust. This is so that pupils understand how they can make a positive difference in the world, both within and beyond their local community.



Inspection Findings

St Mary's is a Church school where every child is valued for their unique gifts. Leaders accurately express how their school's Christian vision is relevant and responsive to their context. It is understood and lived out across the school community, enabling pupils and adults to flourish. In this large primary school, leaders work hard to ensure that pupils are noticed and valued, so that they can confidently be themselves. Community spirit is central in this school and opportunities for adults and pupils to work together are woven into daily life. Governors are supportive and highly involved, forging trusted links with the whole school community. Motivated by being 'challenged to contribute', they evaluate the school and vision effectively, leading to ambitious decision-making. For example, their bold move to previously amalgamate an infant school with St Mary's has deepened the shared sense of belonging.

The school's vision to develop confident individuals, secure in their identity in Christ, is at the centre of curriculum development. Leaders and staff work together to provide pupils with a broad curriculum that reaches beyond the academic. Inspiring learning opportunities are central to pupils' experiences. Pupils confidently articulate how these help them to grow personally, spiritually and academically. For example, older pupils worked together to perform a play, with everyone having an opportunity to showcase their talents. Brass music lessons, arts activity days and residential trips further broaden pupils' experiences. Parents and carers recognise the impact of the school's curriculum in supporting their children to flourish, both academically and spiritually. They value how the school prepares their children for the next stages of their education. Staff at all levels are determined that pupils will succeed. Leaders rigorously monitor the curriculum, enabling those vulnerable to underachievement to be provided with the support that they need to do well. The curriculum offers opportunities for deep thinking and reflection. The shared language of 'ows, wows and nows' provides pupils with a way of articulating these moments of spirituality. For example, using this language helps pupils reflect meaningfully on the impact of global issues on the lives of others.

Collective worship is thoughtfully planned. Focused on Christian values that support the school's vision, its impact permeates throughout the school, deepening spiritual growth. As such, pupils and adults see the relevance of collective worship in their lives. Worship often inspires them to use the school prayer boxes for personal reflection. Pupils recognise how the teachings of Jesus can help them make the right choices. As a result, collective worship deepens and enriches personal relationships. Staff are provided with the resources and support they need to ensure that worship is inclusive and inspirational. The strong partnership with St Mary's Church further enhances the spiritual life of the school. The local vicar regularly leads worship, bringing much-valued breadth to worship experiences. Members of the pupil 'faith team' enthusiastically lead worship, fostering spirituality in others. They evaluate opportunities for spiritual development, leading to deeper engagement. Collective worship forms an important part of how the school demonstrates its vision of 'belonging together'. For example, outgoing Year 6 pupils create gifts to welcome new pupils, which are presented in church. These collective worship experiences foster a sense of spiritual connection for pupils and adults.

There is a clear sense of unity within the school. Leaders ensure that each new school year begins with a focus on the Christian value of 'koinonia', or fellowship. Thus, pupils feel as if they are part of something special, and value how the school treats them. Pupils eagerly take on leadership roles, enabling them to recognise their importance in fostering a culture of care for others. Older pupils thrive on being role models to their younger peers. For example, friendships across the ages are nurtured through a popular 'reading buddies' initiative. Parents and carers recognise the efforts that the school makes to ensure that their children feel valued. One parent commented, 'At this school, it is not that some children do everything, it is that every child does something.' Leaders prioritise the wellbeing of staff, pupils and families. Staff feel valued and listened to. They appreciate how good relationships are fostered across their large team. Leaders provide systematic support for pupils and families in times of difficulty. Pupils know how and where to access help, including through drop-in



sessions with specialist staff. Calming and reflective strategies are embedded within the school day to promote self-awareness of good mental health. As a result, pupils are well-equipped to identify and manage their emotions and, consequently, are ready to learn.

School leaders, inspired by the vision for all to be ‘challenged to contribute’, have created a culture of justice and responsibility. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to find out more about the wider world. They thoughtfully discuss the events and issues taking place around them. Pupils are encouraged to share their ideas and views creatively. For example, they took part in the national ‘Spirited Arts Competition’, exploring their views on humans’ responsibility for the earth. Pupils receive a broad range of experiences to examine their place in the world and responsibility towards others. However, opportunities for pupils themselves to respond to issues that they see as unjust are limited. As a result, they do not fully recognise their own potential in making a positive difference within and beyond their local community.

RE is carefully planned and led well. A recently revised curriculum is given high status within the school. Leaders prioritise staff development, enabling teachers to feel equipped and supported to teach RE. Leaders have revised the structure of the curriculum so that Christianity and a range of other world faiths are systematically covered. Although only recently implemented, this new approach is helping pupils make sense of new knowledge. They can recall key elements of learning and have a grasp of core Christian beliefs. For example, pupils can explain how the story of Noah’s ark symbolises how God keeps his promises. Leaders have ensured that the new RE curriculum has balance. It addresses differences in beliefs, and in ways of thinking and living. However, it is in the initial phase of implementation. As such, pupils’ understanding of diversity within religions is in its early stages.

RE is effectively taught. High-quality training deepens teachers’ subject knowledge. Enthusiastic and knowledgeable teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to think deeply and reflect on their learning. For example, pupils effectively use agreed symbols to consider what they have learnt and explore further questions. As a result, pupils gain a good knowledge and understanding of core beliefs within Christianity and other world faiths. Leaders have thoughtfully refined assessment systems so that teachers have a precise understanding of how well their pupils are achieving. Teachers adapt lessons and target support to meet the needs of their pupils effectively. As a result, pupils value and enjoy the success they achieve in RE and make strong progress across the school.

Information

Address	Silkham Road, Oxted, Surrey, RH8 0NP		
Date	17 October 2024	URN	125194
Type of school	Voluntary Aided	No. of pupils	632
Diocese/District	Southwark		
Executive Headteacher	Sarah Lewis		
Chair of Governors	Richard Birkhead		
Inspector	Rosie Piper		