

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy

Vision

We believe our school is a friendly and vibrant community where all of God's children flourish and gain the knowledge, wisdom and skills needed to care about themselves, their community and their world.

'The wilderness shall rejoice, and shall flourish like the lily.' Isaiah 35 v1

Strengths

- The vision and underpinning Bible verse inspires the school's strategic development. The desire for all to 'flourish like lilies' is transforming the lives of staff and pupils.
- The vision is at the centre of carefully planned curriculum activities and an engaging extracurricular programme. This generates an enthusiasm for learning within staff and pupils. Pupils with a variety of needs are provided for effectively.
- Worship is a clear expression of the Christian vision. It is a joyful celebration drawing the school community together. A culture of reflection provides spiritual nourishment for pupils and adults alike. Links with local churches add a tangible depth to the quality of worship.
- The vision and associated values inspire a community that cares for each other. Strengthened by respectful relationships and loving interactions, pupils and staff are known as individuals. This forms a nurturing and harmonious school environment.
- Adults and pupils develop an outstanding knowledge of injustice through an exceptional range of opportunities. Pupils are equipped to be change makers and understand the importance of making a difference. Their practical approach to service is impacting on themselves and the wider community.

Development Points

- Governors to extend their rigorous system of monitoring to include religious education (RE) and collective worship. This is so that they continue to evaluate the impact of the Christian vision. In this way they will sustain an independent view of the work of St Mary's as a Church school.
- Embed the developing assessment system in RE. This will enable staff to more effectively know what, and how well, pupils learn and secure appropriate challenge for all pupils,



Inspection Findings

St Mary's Primary Academy is a school that is thoroughly underpinned by its vision, linked values and associated Bible verse. The ability to ensure that everyone thrives is seen as a collective endeavour fortified by strong and supportive relationships. This creates a loving and compassionate school community with pupils at the heart of decision making and leadership thinking. There is a clear understanding of the shared vision. This drives the school's journey, creating an environment where pupils and staff are known as individuals and enabled to thrive. In this way the vision creates a strong sense of belonging. It is central to strategic planning and transforming the lives of adults and pupils. The values of friendship, service, forgiveness and compassion are lived out and demonstrated at every opportunity. They are an integral part of a shared language and bring cohesion to the daily life of the school. Governors have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the school's needs. Their monitoring is detailed and challenging. However, this does not extend to the specific areas of RE and collective worship.

Guided by a desire to enable each pupil to flourish like lilies, the school has created a curriculum that is engaging and stimulating. Activities are planned to involve pupils practically, for example through an exploration of local history. As a result, pupils are enthused by their lessons. Governors have made funding decisions to enable pupils to access learning. For example, the Tigers class provides bespoke provision for vulnerable pupils. In this way they can learn and enjoy school attendance. Pupils' spirituality is effectively developed within the curriculum through 'stop, notice, wonder'. Therefore, pupils display a distinct openness to exploring the mystery of their world. Furthermore, they are motivated to ask their own big questions. Wider opportunities through a range of extracurricular activities stimulate interest in life beyond the classroom. The on-site forest school generates a growing sense of awe and wonder in the natural world. It also encourages self-confidence in pupils, as well as a developing ability to work with others. The school has fostered partnerships with other local schools with regular collective book scrutiny and the sharing of best practice. In this way ongoing school development across the curriculum is nurtured.

Collective worship is a special time of the school day. It draws the school community together around the vision and values. The whole school feels included and recognises the transformational impact it has on their lives. Bible stories about Jesus encourage an understanding of how to be kind and compassionate. This in turn leads to loving relationships across the school with pupils demonstrating an ability to learn and play together well. Prayer and reflection are an integral part of worship and foster spirituality effectively. Inspirational themes, often involving pupil participation, thoroughly engage pupils. Singing is enthusiastic and draws the school together in a sense of joy. Staff equally value the worship, appreciating the moments of peace and calm that are provided. At the same time, they recognise the benefit of the shared experience of worship with the pupils. Themes and ideas in worship are applied within the classroom, spurring pupils to greater heights in their learning and continued character development. A range of local churches strengthen the worship provision in school. An 'Open the Book' group fuel a deeper knowledge of Bible stories. Others share messages from the Bible in engaging ways and inspire charitable giving.

St Mary's is a community that lives well together. It is founded on mutual respect with loving and kindly interactions consistently modelled by staff towards pupils and between each other. Pupils recognise how this then 'snowballs' across the school. Staff are happy in their work as they know that their professional needs are met as much as their personal needs. The school has fostered the mental health of staff and pupils. It has prioritized the provision of counsellors and has put in place specific support during times of difficulty. This creates a safe community that identifies the worth of individuals. Any behaviour issues are managed with forgiveness and kindness. Through the curriculum pupils gain a deep compassion and understanding of difference. They show an exceptional ability to talk about individuality, the need to be tolerant and to accept



others for who they are. This ensures that the vision is a living reality and creates a consistently harmonious and loving school environment.

Influenced by the vision, the school leadership has acted decisively to review the RE curriculum, its sequencing and delivery. This has enabled them to ensure that RE is a core subject. Its status is affirmed by the team of RE leaders who participate in training from the diocese and supportive links with other local schools. This has led to aspirational targets for the development of RE. As a result, successful changes have been made to create a well-balanced curriculum. This is ensuring that coverage is consolidating and deepening learning over time. In this way it is more accurately meeting the learning needs of pupils and thus they make good progress in their learning. Staff training is in place fostering greater confidence in teaching RE. Actions taken by school leaders to strengthen the teaching through book scrutiny and lesson monitoring are having an impact. This is evident in books and pupils' growing knowledge about world faiths and religions. Pupils enjoy their learning. They particularly relish the more creative opportunities to interpret themes and ideas, such as through art and drama. Big questions engage pupils and stimulate deeper thinking. They value the safe space in the classroom to discuss their own opinions and listen respectfully to those of others. In this way their growing understanding of world religions and worldviews is enabling them to respect diversity within our world. Assessment processes are evolving identifying pupils' knowledge against specific learning targets. It identifies those pupils who make greater than expected progress and those where further support is needed. This enables staff to monitor pupil progress in RE and identify where this is good. It is also allowing staff to identify where teaching can be more challenging, especially for the more able.

Pupils and adults have a profound understanding of justice and how they can be agents of change individually and collectively. A wide range of activities within the school council, the curriculum and 'global council' ensure that pupil voice is recognised and valued. Pupils are empowered to make a difference to their community. For example, they successfully petitioned for the removal of sugary drinks in school. Involvement in global learning hubs enables pupils to gain a deep understanding and empathy for the lives of others. The hubs nurture an understanding of a wide variety of cultures. For example, pupils shared Diwali celebrations via a live link with a school in India and learned traditional Indian dances. Links with a school in Ukraine resulted in fundraising for stationery to help the children in very difficult circumstances. This means that pupils develop hugely compassionate hearts with a desire to do the best for their neighbour. At the same time, they have an expansive vision of the world and confidence that they can make a difference.

Information

Address	Warren Road, Folkestone, Kent CT19 6QH		
Date	17 September 2024	URN	139310
Type of school	Academy	No. of pupils	415
Diocese	Canterbury		
MAT	Folkestone St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy		
Headteacher	Amanda Wolfram		
Chair of Governors	Emma Lane		
Inspector	Elizabeth Pettersen		