

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St. Mary's Church of England Primary School

Vision

'Investing in the uniqueness of each individual'

St. Mary's is an inclusive Christian family learning and growing together.

We invest in the uniqueness of each individual, which is firmly rooted and is the golden thread running through everything we do.

'I am fearfully and wonderfully made' - Psalms 139 v14

St. Mary's CE Primary School is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. It has the following notable strengths.

Strengths

- The school's Christian vision is well-embedded and underpins relationships throughout the whole school community. It enables staff and pupils to celebrate difference, collaborate well and support each other.
- The school's Christian vision is reflected in the curriculum, which prepares pupils to be change makers in a diverse world. Pupils with additional needs, or who are vulnerable, receive bespoke support, enabling them to flourish.
- Collective worship is central to life at St. Mary's offering a valued time to pray, listen, reflect and respond. It inspires both pupils and adults to consider how they can serve and support themselves as well as others.
- The school's commitment to wellbeing comes directly from the Christian vision, 'Investing in the uniqueness of each individual.' Leaders care, enabling pupils and adults to feel valued and of equal worth. Pupils and adults across the school naturally articulate the values of acceptance and respect.
- Religious education (RE) is a high priority for this school. Pupils enjoy their RE lessons and make good progress.

Development Points

- Develop spirituality across the curriculum. This is to enable pupils to deepen their understanding of spiritual development.



Inspection Findings

St. Mary's CE Primary School is a caring community, which wholly embraces its Christian vision. A firm commitment to respect and celebrate the uniqueness of each individual prevails. This is underpinned by the knowledge that everyone is '...fearfully and wonderfully made.' This results in strong relationships and a resounding sense of trust that the school accepts people for who they are. Within this small school, adults and pupils know each other well. Parents rightly value this and appreciate the support leaders give to them, as well as their children. They feel confident to approach the school and know they will be heard. Leaders passionately pursue all avenues to enable the flourishing of adults and pupils within their community. Academy councillors are a regular presence within the school. They lead worship, help out in lessons and spend time getting to know the pupils and adults as individuals. Regular monitoring from the academy council and the multi-academy trust provides effective support and challenge for leaders. As a result, they ensure that the school's Christian vision is a lived reality.

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is deeply rooted in the school's vision. It encourages all pupils, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to develop their unique talents. There is a key focus on raising aspiration for the future. Teachers choose resources with care to reflect a diverse world. Thoughtfully planned topics empower pupils to take action to make their world a better place. Extra-curricular activities allow pupils to celebrate their individual talents, as well as opening them up to new experiences. Staff relish the opportunity to run after school clubs as it enables them to use their own God-given gifts. As a result, both pupils and adults flourish. Rich opportunities for spiritual development are a regular part of life at St. Mary's. A representative from the local church comes to school each week to deliver 'Prayer Space' activities. These creative opportunities encourage the children to consider big questions about life, themselves and others. Following support from the diocese, the school has adopted a shared language to talk about spirituality. This is understood and used by adults and pupils. Moments of awe and wonder are shared on the classroom 'wow windows'. However, planned times to ask and ponder on big questions are not intrinsically built into curriculum subjects. This means that opportunities for spiritual development are missed.

Collective worship is a highly valued part of the school day. A strong partnership with the local church enriches this. Leaders carefully plan worship to allow Christian values to be explored in depth. Pupils and adults enjoy this special time. Pupils are confident to participate, for example through joyous singing, spontaneous prayer or by dramatising a Bible story. Pupils meaningfully link the stories they hear in worship to their own lives. Each week everyone records their personal reflections on worship and the ways in which it inspires them. This demonstrates the powerful impact of worship on the spiritual growth of both adults and pupils. One example of this among many occurred recently, following a worship on the theme of compassion. A pupil was motivated to arrange a toy collection because, 'no child should wake up on Christmas Day without presents.' Pupils aspire to join the 'worship crew,' who assist leaders in planning, delivering and evaluating worship. They also support leaders to carry out suggested actions resulting from worship. This means that collective worship remains fresh, engaging and relevant to the school community. The spiritual life of the school is further enhanced by 'GodZone.' This brings the whole school together in the church each half term. Supported by members of the church, pupils and adults connect deeply with a meaningful theme, through prayer, activity and song. The most recent theme was around aspects of justice. Pupils imagined how it would feel to be a refugee. As a result of such reflection, pupils talk passionately of a desire to make the world a better place.



St. Mary's is a community where a vision-infused sense of care is plain for all to see. Leaders live out the school's Christian vision through a perceptive understanding of the adults and pupils in their community. This means that staff feel valued and enabled to grow professionally and personally. Leaders show tenacious love and support for parents and their children. This enables pupil and adult flourishing, even in the most challenging of circumstances. Pupils respect one other and play and learn well together. As a result, the playground and the classrooms feel calm and nurturing. Pupils new to the school settle in quickly. Leaders take strategic decisions to ensure that there is good support for mental health across the school. This includes facilitating the professional development of an emotional literacy support assistant. Pupils value the worry boxes in each classroom. These allow them to let teachers know when they need to talk about a problem. Support from the trust further strengthens the culture of wellbeing and inclusion for pupils and adults, including leaders.

Pupils and adults at St. Mary's have a strong sense of justice and responsibility. Through their curriculum design, leaders encourage pupils to make a difference in the world. This is reinforced through collective worship. A commitment to justice is clear to see in pupils' personal responses to the recent 'Godzone' activity in church. Pupils of all ages write of their wish to help the homeless, feed the hungry and bring an end to war. Pupils and adults articulate a strong desire to make a difference in their community. The youngest pupils regularly go litter picking on the village green. The whole school recently engaged in a project to collect crisp packets. Pupils wrote messages of support on them before they were gathered in. Staff took them and helped to turn them into sleeping bags for the homeless. The school collects food for the local foodbank at Harvest. The worship crew deliver it and volunteer at the foodbank, sharing their experience with the rest of the school. Through such meaningful opportunities, pupils are enabled to be change makers and articulate that this, 'makes us feel good.'

RE is highly valued and strongly led at St. Mary's. The curriculum is engaging. The RE lead regularly reviews it to ensure that it remains relevant to the context of the school. Attendance at termly network meetings keeps the school up to date with current issues and practice. Pupils enjoy their lessons and appreciate the importance of learning about religious and non-religious worldviews. They have a good knowledge of Christianity and understand that it is a global faith. Learning is enriched through a range of effective resources. This includes the excellent partnership with the local church. The RE curriculum encourages pupils to pause and look back before moving forwards. Opportunities for reflection, discussion and debate engage and enthuse pupils.

Staff are well supported by the RE lead and the diocese, who both provide regular training. As a result, staff are knowledgeable and confident in their RE teaching and standards across the school are high. A consistent approach towards assessment means that gaps are identified and addressed. This rigour enables pupils to make good progress. Monitoring by the RE lead, academy councillors and the trust ensures that RE retains a high profile.

Information

Address	The Green, Long Newton, Stockton on Tees, TS21 1DL		
Date	16 January 2025	URN	146449
Type of school	Voluntary Aided	No. of pupils	106
Diocese/District	Durham		
MAT/Federation	Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Learning Trust		
Headteacher	Michael Piper		
Chair of Trust	John Taylor		
Chair of Governors	Keith Hissitt		
Inspector	Helen Tait		