

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Address	West Hill, Charminster, Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 9RD		
Date of inspection	21 March 2019	Status of school	VC First
Diocese	Salisbury	URN	113784

Overall Judgement	Grade	Good
How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?		
Additional Judgement		
The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good

School context

St Marys' is a first school with 181 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below national averages. The headteacher is new to post since the previous inspection. There is a new religious education (RE) subject leader and a new lead teacher for collective worship in post.

The school's Christian vision

Nurturing deep, strong Christian roots, helping us grow and flourish
Love, Community, Hope
Matthew 22:36-39

Key findings

- Led by the dedication and commitment of the headteacher, supported by the whole school community, pastoral care in this friendly, family school meets the academic and spiritual needs of pupils and adults well, enabling all to flourish.
- The strong partnership between church and school enriches the worshipping lives of staff, pupils and their families in this Christian community.
- Music is a strength of this school which makes a significant difference to the depth of experiences enjoyed by all.
- These young pupils articulate well what their Christian vision and values mean to them in the community and how they help inform the positive choices they make. The biblical underpinning of their vision is still in its infancy.
- Annual RE days are helping pupils to grow in the depth of their response to social, environmental and global challenges.

Areas for development

- Embed the formal monitoring of RE and collective worship by the governors to robustly inform and shape the ongoing journey of this school towards Church school improvement.
- Extend pupils' leadership roles in collective worship to nurture spirituality and to inform planning and development.
- Enable pupils' awareness and understanding of Christianity in other countries and their encounter with people of diverse faith and beliefs to nurture spiritual and cultural development.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

Given there are new senior leaders in post and the school's chosen vision and values are also new, the whole community tells its story very well. St Mary's young pupils eagerly explain the symbolism of each part of the growing tree, enabling all to flourish. This includes the governors who visit and the church team who help, as well as parents and the community who support them. Above all, the three core values of love, community and hope are integral to the life of the school. The biblical underpinning of 'nurturing deep, strong roots, helping us grow and flourish' is still to be explored with the whole community. The vision is about nurturing adults as well as pupils. Staff, including the newest members, confirm they can flourish here too and are 'happy and proud to be part of this supportive journey'. This is because St Mary's is a place which 'celebrates each other's good news'. It is also where 'some of the heartiest laughter is heard in the warmth of the staffroom'. St Mary's leaders work closely with the diocese, so all benefit from training and support. This means all staff and governors are well appraised of Church school development. The strong partnership with St Mary's Church, through the clergy, nurtures the spiritual journeys of the whole community well.

Undoubtedly, pastoral care for the individual, whether pupil or adult, is meeting their academic and spiritual needs well, enabling all to flourish. This includes the most vulnerable pupils, who are very well supported with personalised learning in smaller groups. Staff know pupils very well. The dedication and commitment of the headteacher, supported by the whole of this friendly, family community, is enabling everyone to grow in self-esteem. This is because there is hope for every child to flourish as an individual, regardless of the standards they may reach. Working closely with parents, endurance is also nurtured alongside love, hope and community. This results in many success stories, with all pupils making good progress from their starting points. Some vulnerable pupils are able to feel they can 'climb a mountain' or are freed from worries in their learning. Others find particular strength and support in music or in forest school. For example, they grow in confidence so they can speak in worship or sing a solo at a concert.

Pupils enjoy their roles of responsibility, including those of the Year 4 ambassadors, who play an active part in the life of their school. They are growing in the depth of how they can respond to social, environmental and global challenges, often through annual RE days. As part of the school's cross curricular work and eco awareness, 'looking after God's land or environment is very powerful'. For example, several classes felt passionate about the reduction of plastics to protect marine life. They chose to focus on this in collective worship. The school also sent harvest gifts to children living in the refugee camps in Calais.

Parents affirm the sense of belonging stems from love in this nurturing environment. This is important for their spiritual development to take place. Mental health and wellbeing for all is a priority. Here forgiveness and reconciliation is practised, with pupils supporting each other well through the buddy system. Recently, pupils have worked with community police to monitor the speed of motorists near the school. St Mary's Church offers a weekly gathering on Tuesdays, T@SM, which is well attended by pupils and their families.

Dignity and respect is a huge part of the ethos of the school. Youth Space Trust have been instrumental in helping pupils and staff with training about diversity and different ways of being family. As one young pupil shared with her parent, 'It doesn't matter what you are like on the outside, it's what's on the inside that counts.'

Music is a strength at St Mary's which pupils affirm as helping to make them unique. It makes a significant contribution to the invitational and inspiring collective worship here which brings everyone together and is inclusive of all. The school choir often sing in worship, with music strengthening the links to biblical teaching. Pupils say that following Jesus' teaching, such as in The Good Samaritan, 'helps people to be kind'. Pupils' own prayers often commence with, 'Creator God..' as they are now thinking more deeply. Their prayers focus on loving one another as they move forward and learn with each other. They explain in their own words how 'God helped us and sent down his own son to sacrifice himself for us so we could live'. Evaluations from pupils are used to plan RE days and worship.

A variety of worship leaders, including the local 'Open the Book' team are regular and welcome visitors to

school. Whilst pupils are actively involved in worship, extending the role of pupils to planning and leading worship is currently limited.

Annual RE days have become a feature at St Mary's and have included a focus on Trinity and Pentecost. Such cross curricular and all-encompassing approaches to RE, with pupils working across age ranges, help to build a stronger community. This enables all, including any who may be vulnerable, to flourish. Pupils discuss religious and spiritual issues and 'think about other people and what they believe in'. Pupils have been helped to see the bigger picture of how Bible stories 'fit in with God's great plan' by making their own big frieze. Pupils are able to explain the big Christian story in their own thoughtful way. Pupils' knowledge of Christians in other countries and their encounter with people of diverse faiths and beliefs, such as Judaism, is currently limited. Governors do monitor RE and worship. However formal monitoring of these two key areas to robustly inform the school's ongoing journey as a Church school, is currently limited. Areas from the previous inspection have been addressed and there are clear priorities for action which are integral to the school development plan.

Headteacher	Suzanne Garner
Inspector's name and number	Lizzie McWhirter 244