

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| St Marys Church of England Primary School, Bitteswell | | | |
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| Address | The Green, Bitteswell, Lutterworth, LE17 4SB | | |
| Date of inspection | 29 March 2019 | Status of school | Primary academy inspected as VA. Inspiring Primaries Academy Trust |
| Diocese | Leicester | URN | 144116 |

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

School context

St Marys is a primary school with 108 pupils on roll. The school has a very low level of religious and cultural diversity and 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 above national averages. In 2017 the school became part of Inspiring Primaries Academy Trust. The headteacher has a teaching commitment of two days a week.

The school's Christian vision

'LEARN, LOVE AND BELIEVE' - Within our loving school family everyone is valued for being unique, learning from each other. The **love** of God shapes our school enabling us to grow together, developing our talents and characters through struggle and success to **believe** in ourselves and others. At the heart of our school is a love of **learning** and appreciation of the world so that all can safely flourish, surrounded by God's love, now and on the journey ahead. "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up" I Thessalonians 5:11

Key findings

- The school's Christian vision has grown out of its local context and is articulated well by school leaders. It is based on biblical text and impacts on the life of the school but how a biblical understanding informs the vision has still to be embedded across the school.
- There is a strong emphasis on wellbeing which results in pupils and staff feeling well cared for. The inclusive nature of the school enables its pupils to flourish.
- Work on 'character muscles' is pervading all aspects of the schools work and is linked to the school's Christian vision and associated values. These are having a positive effect on enabling all to flourish.
- Leaders have developed mutually beneficial partnerships with the multi academy trust it is part of and the local church, enabling its vision to be reflected in links with other schools and the community it serves.
- The 'big questions' within the RE and creative curriculum enable pupils to reflect upon and consider different points of view, as a result they are developing an awareness of ethical and spiritual issues.

Areas for development

- For Leaders and governors to continue to embed the vision and build on existing processes that evaluate the effectiveness of the school as a church school so that they are rigorous, effective and comprehensive.
- To develop the leadership of collective worship through the 4:13 committee and church partnerships so that pupils have regular opportunities to take a considerable lead in the development of worship.
- To build on a range of partnerships locally, nationally and globally so that pupils can continue to develop beneficial links that enable them to develop a greater understanding of diverse faiths and engage in meaningful dialogue with a range of religions and worldviews.
- For the school to develop a clear understanding of spirituality in all subjects which is shared by all staff.

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

St Marys is an inclusive school that staff, pupils and governors refer to as a 'family'. Over the last year, the school has revisited its vision which has been built around its Christian values and reflects its context as a small school which offers encouragement and support to everyone. This is not fully embedded and articulated by all. There is a powerful sense of community within the school. The school has very strong church and village links and these are seen as mutually beneficial. Regular events in church such as the recent musical concert enable children to feel very comfortable in church.

Since its last inspection, the school has become part of Inspiring Primaries Trust a multi-academy trust (MAT) that is wholly supportive of the school's Christian distinctiveness. Recently, the music coordinator arranged a musical event for pupils across the trust based on love and friendship. The religious education (RE) leader who is new to the role and school has benefited from support from RE colleagues in the trust and through training events provided by the diocese.

Leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the school taking into account the views of groups across the community. Although the monitoring informs school improvement it is not yet systematic or rigorous. The school has acted on recommendations since the last denominational inspection and implemented an effective assessment system in RE. The RE leader has shared good practice and pedagogy within the school. Statutory obligations in RE are met and RE is in line with the Church of England Statement of Entitlement.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and topics are built around questions which enable pupils to explore ethical issues, for example, the question 'Who was to blame?' enabled pupils to explore issues in relation to the Titanic and also discuss social justice in relation to passengers travelling in first and third class on board the ship. Parents appreciate the school's vision being about 'the whole child' and staff are proud of how they celebrate the achievements of all. The Forest School ethos, an emphasis on outdoor learning and varied musical opportunities provide pupils with many different opportunities to flourish. Leaders spoke of the importance of developing confidence and character development forms an important part of the school's vision. Attainment in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2 is high and pupil's progress in reading and maths is in line with national expectations. Pupils in receipt of pupil premium make expected progress. There are opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to develop spiritually, however, the school's understanding of spiritual development is not yet shared by all staff.

Character development has been a focus for the school and it has obtained a 'Routes to Resilience' award for its work on developing character traits that support learning and the ability to make positive choices. Several of these relate to the school's Christian vision and associated values. Pupils say how 'the character muscles help you do the right thing' and that 'empathy puts you in someone else's shoes.' The school involves itself in a variety of charity work and pupils are supported to engage in social action projects out of a concern for justice. The older pupils are often advocates for change and have initiated some of these projects themselves. The school has links with Chambourcy twinning society. It has yet to establish mutually beneficial global partnership links in order to further widen pupils' horizons.

Pupils behave well and parents praised the way older pupils cared for younger ones. This was affirmed by the pupils who said that they enjoyed having friends across different year groups and that they were like 'a little family.' The curriculum provides many opportunities to discuss different viewpoints. In an RE lesson pupils were considering moral dilemmas and being encouraged to offer a variety of viewpoints. When conflicts do arise pupils are encouraged to think about 'what Jesus would have done'. Several pupils mentioned the importance of conflict resolution. Staff are appreciative of the support given to them by the senior leadership team and feel valued. The school places a high emphasis on nurture and wellbeing and an emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) is employed to support pupils. Pupils who have joined the school other than in the Reception class have settled into school well due to the care and support given to them by staff.

The inclusive admissions policy, reflective of the vision, welcomes all children. A peer review conducted by partnership schools in the MAT refers to the welcoming inclusive atmosphere of the school. The school's anti-bullying policy refers to understanding and respect for others and also self-respect. Pupils respect differences between people and are aware of the dangers of stereotyping. They mentioned the importance of 'loving your neighbour as yourself.'

Worship is invitational and reflects the school's Christian vision providing a place for all to consider their lives and that of others. One staff member said collective worship 'provided peace in the day and allowed them to take stock'. After worship based on forgiveness a child was overhead in the playground to say 'It's ok I forgive him.' Pupils are aware of the importance of the Eucharist to Christian worship and some pupils explained the connection between the Last Supper and what you might see in the local church on a Sunday. Pupils participate in collective worship and recently the 4:13 group has been established to enable pupils to become more involved in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of collective worship.

The lighting of a candle provides a focus for collective worship and the pupils explained its symbolism as 'representing Jesus, the light of the world.' Pupils were able to speak of the value of prayer and relate it to their own lives. The local church community is regularly involved in collective worship both in the church through visits from the local vicar and regular 'Open the Book' worship.

RE is well planned with opportunities for pupils to develop age appropriate skills of enquiry, critical analysis and interpretation. Pupils are able to work creatively through art, drama and outside learning. The creative approach to RE allows all pupils, including those with individual needs, to have a safe place to discuss and debate the big questions around which the RE curriculum is built. RE is given a high profile within the school. A new assessment system has been put in place in collaboration with the MAT. Pupils demonstrate an awareness of a range of religions and are respectful. Their depth of knowledge and understanding of religions other than Christianity however is limited. Pupils have opportunities to visit a range of places of worship but limited opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue with a range of religions and world views.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

Standards in RE compare well to standards in other subjects and children make good progress. The use of big questions in teaching and the opportunity to debate enables all pupils to flourish academically in RE. The new RE leader, supported by the headteacher, accurately monitors teaching and learning in RE.

Headteacher

Hazel Maher

Inspector's name and number

Angela Dewes 945