

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Burkitt Road, Woodbridge, Suffolk , IP12 4JJ	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>St Edmundsbury and Ipswich</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	1 February 2016
Name of multi-academy trust	St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust
Date of inspection	15 March 2018
Date of last inspection	November 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VA Primary 142598
Headteacher	Karen Read
Inspector's name and number	Gillian Holmes 849

#### School context

St Mary's is a one form entry primary school that converted to an academy in 2016 as part of the diocesan Multi-academy Trust (MAT). The majority of pupils live in Woodbridge but some come from the surrounding villages. The school has below average numbers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities but has an average number of pupils with a pupil premium entitlement. The school has close links with St Mary's church and has a strong working relationship with other schools in the MAT. The headteacher was new to the school in September 2017.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's as a Church of England school are good

- The school is on a journey working to effectively support pupils to become deeper thinkers.
- Pupils are proud of their school and have a developing understanding of the Christian faith and how it impacts upon their lives.
- All areas of school life contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.
- Religious education (RE) and collective worship are valued by all pupils and together play a significant role in driving forward the school's Christian ethos.

#### Areas to improve

- Introduce more robust systems for monitoring collective worship for all stakeholders so that pupils, staff, governors and parents all share an active role in the worshipping community at St Mary's.
- Support the school's work on the understanding of diversity and difference by providing further opportunities for pupils to visit places of worship of people of a variety of faiths.
- Provide opportunities for all stakeholders to discuss and reflect in order to develop a shared understanding of spirituality to further support the school's Christian ethos.

### **The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners**

At St Mary's the Christian character is both implicit and explicit and has a very high profile around the school confirming its strapline 'learning with faith'. There are RE and Christian values displays in every classroom and in central areas. The displays serve to engage visitors, governors, staff and pupils in discussion and reflection on the school's Christian character. The strong promotion of Christian values has a direct impact on pupils' excellent behaviour and their SMSC development. The 'special mention' book and celebration worship are used to reinforce pupils positively demonstrating the values in action. The school's Christian values ensure that the school strives to be inclusive, including supporting children with high medical needs. Relationships between pupils, between staff and pupils and between home and school are excellent. Pupils enjoy coming to school and so attendance is good. Pupils are encouraged to resolve disagreements through negotiation and reconciliation and as a consequence there have been no recent bullying incidents. Attainment is well above the national average. The school is in the top 1% of primary schools in the country for writing. Most pupils make progress in-line with national expectations. The school are using the strong relationships and excellent behaviour to provide more challenge for all groups in order to accelerate rates of progress. Skilled teaching assistants work with teachers to deliver targeted support where needed for all pupils including providing greater challenge for the most able. The school works effectively to promote pupils' personal development and as a consequence pupils work hard in class and are proud of their achievements. Pupils are excited by and enjoy RE and collective worship. Both areas contribute effectively to the whole-school ethos and to pupils' very good SMSC development. Pupils speak knowledgeably about supporting charities at home and abroad as a way of demonstrating the Christian value of responsibility. Christian concepts are covered well in RE and contribute to pupils' understanding of the Christian character of the school.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Worship is well planned by the worship lead in consultation with the headteacher and representatives of the foundation governors. Worship is distinctively Christian, biblically based and used to develop pupils' understanding of the school's Christian values. Worship forms the focus for the day for all staff and pupils and has the objective to 'gather, engage, respond and send' All staff attend daily worship and share in leading worship. There is a strong focus on the life and teachings of Jesus. The rector of St Mary's, leaders from a number of other local churches and an 'Open the Book' team all regularly lead worship in the school. This variety of Christian worship helps to inspire and engage pupils and has taught them about different Christian traditions which has helped to promote the pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. Pupils talk about how St Mary's is their church and this is due to a very strong relationship with the rector and parishioners of St. Mary's church. Twice a term the staff and pupils join parishioners for their mid-week communion service. Parents are invited to join the school and many attend. Parents also enthusiastically join with the school in the church for festival and end of term celebrations enabling them to feel part of the worshipping community. At these services pupils take an active role in reading, singing and acting. Through these services pupils have a growing understanding of Anglican worship and liturgy. The Bible is used in daily worship and pupils have a wide biblical knowledge. They talk confidently about the three parts of the Trinity: God the father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and about all the major Christian festivals. Governors regularly attend worship in school and at the church. However, there is not a robust system of monitoring in place which involves all stakeholders and can be used to impact on future worship planning. The Faith Council, a group of Year 6 pupils are actively involved on a daily basis in planning, leading and reviewing worship. Other pupils have more limited opportunities however, all pupils participate fully in answering questions, singing enthusiastically and joining in the responses and prayers and annually plan and deliver a class worship. Pupils understand the importance of prayer and are encouraged to pray together and as individuals. They are supported in class where there are opportunities to write and to share prayers. The prayer space in Year 1 is enabling pupils to focus on quiet reflection and other classes are engaged in creating their own spaces. Pupils increasingly look for areas where they can sit quietly and reflect and as a result a reflective garden is under construction.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

RE has a very high profile in the school. RE lessons are collaborative, interactive and creative and as a consequence all pupils make at least good or even better progress. RE teaching is consistently outstanding and teachers deliver lessons that are exciting and challenging. RE is taught through the Emmanuel Project which has an engage, enquire and explore approach. It encourages pupils to question and reflect, to ask big questions and develop a greater depth of enquiry. RE is very well led and managed by the enthusiastic and competent subject leader. Rigorous termly tracking and assessment is well embedded using a new assessment system. This ensures that all pupils are making progress. The RE subject leader monitors planning, assessment and the quality of teaching to ensure that the highest standards are maintained. The school engages with events led by the cathedral staff. An example of this was the

recent 'Pilgrim's Progress project' when pupils learned more about travelling on a spiritual journey. RE teaching is supported by workshop days. For example pupils participated in a range of activities during inter-faith week and visitors from other countries were invited to share with the children about traditions in worship from around the world. This has significantly supported pupils' understanding of diversity and difference despite the limitations of the location of the school which has restricted the opportunities provided to take pupils to visit places of worship of different faiths. The curriculum allows opportunities for pupils to compare and contrast Christianity with other faiths. It also significantly supports pupils' SMSC development through providing opportunities for discussion, role play and reflection. There is less focus upon written work and greater time is taken on discussion and providing pupils with time to record responses on post-it notes. These are kept as evidence of pupils' growing understanding and are collated in a class RE 'scrapbooks' along with photographs of practical, creative activities that have been used to support the delivery of the RE curriculum. Pupils' progress is not dependent upon their literacy and therefore those who may have additional academic needs are less disadvantaged. This method of recording is being tried in the other local MAT schools as it enables all pupils to have a voice which is valued and respected as well as being an effective indicator of pupils' understanding and progress. Governors monitor RE through class visits, discussion with the RE subject leader and reports on pupil progress. Their feedback supports the continuing positive development of RE, maintains its high profile with the governing body and ensures that it contributes towards the Christian ethos of the school.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good**

The school's vision statement was established a number of years prior to the appointment of the headteacher and initial plans are in place for the new headteacher to involve all stakeholders in revisiting the statement. At present the school has 13 Christian values and these too are to be revised, choosing the five values that most represent the school's ethos. These plans have been put in place in order to provide the opportunity to address a shared understanding of the Christian vision and values of the school. As a founding member of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Multi-Academy Trust, the school works collaboratively on school improvement within a Christian framework. The MAT works closely with its schools to ensure strong succession planning; examples of this include the appointment of the current head from another MAT school and the secondment of one of the senior teachers to an acting-headship at another school within the MAT. The RE subject leader is sharing her expertise by supporting other schools in the MAT. Arrangements for RE and worship meet statutory requirements. Self-evaluation leads directly to school improvement planning. Staff are well-supported and regular monitoring is leading to increased pupil progress and enjoyment. Professional development is tailored to staff needs as well as whole-school issues. This promotes teachers' skills and knowledge which in turn enhances pupils' progress. It also ensures an ongoing focus on developing the Christian distinctiveness by all the staff, in keeping with the school's Christian vision. The headteacher and the teacher responsible for worship together effectively lead worship. The action points from the previous denominational inspection have been addressed well. An example of this is the focus on effective recruiting and induction of new staff who will contribute to the Christian ethos of the school. Governors fulfil their role of strategic partners in leadership well. They effectively employ self-evaluation strategies to further school development. They make strategic decisions which identify areas needing attention aimed at addressing specific improvement. For example governors together with the headteacher and senior staff have supported the development of RE and raised its profile within the curriculum. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school. They have an effective programme for monitoring all areas across the curriculum and fully embrace the development of the Christian distinctiveness promoting the school's values and vision which underpin all strategy and policy. There is an agreed interpretation of spirituality which staff refer to when planning reflection opportunities across the curriculum. However this is not securely understood by governors and therefore monitoring does not consistently take account of its impact on pupil personal development. All members of the school leadership take seriously their responsibility for helping other schools as illustrated by St Mary's vice chair of governors becoming chair at a neighbouring school where the role needed filling. The leadership works hard to maintain and develop effective relationships with parents. This has strengthened the links between home and school and is in keeping with the school's caring Christian ethos. Parents praise the school for its 'open door' policy. They are kept well informed about their children's progress and are supported through the provision of workshops. All stakeholders' views are frequently sought and valued. The school's parent association supports the school through fundraising and many of these events are open to the community. This supports the relationship between the school and its wider community in a spirit of Christian welcome and hospitality.

SIAMS report March 2018 St Mary's C of E Primary School, Woodbridge IP12 4JJ.