

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

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

Address Church Road, Yate, Bristol, BS37 5BG

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

**Overall grade** **Good**

**The impact of collective worship** **Good**

**The effectiveness of religious education (RE)** **Good**

#### School's vision

The vision of the school is 'explore, enjoy, excel together; be amazing'. It is about being the best that we can be, celebrating who we are made to be, growing and nurturing our unique skills and talent together as a community. The vision finds its root in Psalm 139: 'I will praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made'.

#### Key findings

- Leaders, staff and pupils know and are inspired by the school's vision. The vision is both simple and profound and is lived out daily in the life of the school.
- Inspirational leadership results in staff being highly committed to the vision, the associated values and the care of pupils and one another. Consequently, the school, even in the recent challenging times, is a cohesive, happy and flourishing community.
- A rich curriculum, driven by the vision and which includes religious education (RE), excites the staff and motivates pupils to learn deeply and to apply their learning to real world situations as 'brave changemakers'.
- Partnerships play a central role in the success of the school. The close relationship with their partner primary school is enriching for both pupils and staff. The partnership with the local church is of mutual benefit and it ensures that the practical outworking of the vision is emphasised.
- Staff and pupils highly value collective worship and RE as opportunities to reflect on the vision. Older pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to explore RE issues in depth in their writing. Leaders do not directly hear pupil voice enough on collective worship.

#### Areas for development

- The RE subject leader to support class teachers with the structuring of RE lessons to ensure that the older pupils have opportunities to complete extended pieces of writing.
- Leaders, including governors, to establish formal opportunities where pupil voice on collective worship can be acted upon.
- Leaders to equip teachers to identify further opportunities, both planned and spontaneous, for pupils' spiritual 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

Inspirational leaders at St Mary's have developed over time a vision that is simple enough for all to understand and profound enough to promote a culture of reflection and continuous improvement. Leaders, staff and pupils relate 'explore, enjoy, excel together; be amazing' to their situations in and out of school and are motivated to strive to be the best they can be at all times. The grounding of the vision in Psalm 139 gives a tangible sense of both the call and the love of God for each member of the school. Consequently, St Mary's is a school where all flourish, even during the times affected by the pandemic. The aspirational vision, the engaging curriculum that raises horizons, along with outward looking collective worship and RE all serve well the community of St Mary's now. They also prepare pupils for contributing actively to wider society in the future.

Experienced and committed leaders are excited by the school's vision and monitor its impact effectively, in formal and informal ways. Many school policies have an introduction stating the vision and relevant values. They are less certain in weaving the implications of the vision into the body of the policies.

The school's vision has led to a rich and engaging curriculum. Pupils explore themes that are relevant to their current and future lives, developing 'brave changemaker' (courageous advocacy) skills. Tackling 'big questions' and reflection are at the heart of the learning, as are the school's values. Pupils are developing their knowledge as well as seeing the connections between topics. There is an effective emphasis on pupils writing for a purpose throughout the topics. Older pupils do not demonstrate as much confidence orally. Pupils take opportunities to explore spirituality in the 'connected curriculum', in RE and in collective worship. They produce interesting reflections on, for example, whether love and kindness are the same thing. However, there is not an agreed definition of the core elements of spirituality in place and leaders do not provide sufficient guidance to staff on how to plan for pupils' spiritual development.

Pupils speak convincingly about being resilient in their learning and this is one impact of the vision. Pupils with additional needs are served by experienced and able teaching assistants and are given challenging targets for improvement, which they reach. Excellent communication draws in families and results in pupils being at the centre of the learning process at school and in the community.

Many partnerships enrich the school. The partnership with St Helen's primary school has led to the dynamic 'connected curriculum'. It enables staff to have opportunities for leadership development in a church school context and pupils to have ready-made audiences for their work. This partnership worked particularly well during lockdown as there was pooling of resources and memorable videoed acts of collective worship showing collaboration between leaders and clergy. The Diocese of Bristol helped with the formation of this partnership and their contribution to RE training and Church school development is much appreciated by leaders. The school is increasingly contributing to diocesan networks, such as in sharing its expertise on provision for vulnerable pupils.

The clergy from the local church contribute hugely to the school. They host and lead collective worship and RE lessons. They also serve as particularly active governors and champion the quality of the vision and the energetic and supportive community it produces. Especially impressive is their commitment to school staff, offering one day a week of valued chaplaincy support.

Staff exercised very deep pastoral care during the lockdowns. Practical and emotional support was offered to pupils and their families. The vision was also applied to both learning and other activities during this time. The theme of 'being the best you can be' led to an incredible fundraising effort for the local NHS trust, based on doing something personally challenging. Pastoral care across the school is deepened by a house system. This links pupils across the age range and provides a vehicle for the collecting and receiving of rewards. Class teachers celebrate the school's values in practice by nominating two pupils weekly for values certificates and praising them in their own words at the celebration assembly. This ensures that Christian values are owned and understood by all.

Pupils and staff demonstrate mutual respect and care for each other at St Mary's and there is a tangible sense of joy throughout the school. On the rare occasions when relationships go wrong, staff are skilled in restorative techniques and pupils are quick to recognise the error of their ways.

Collective worship is fundamental to pupils and adults furthering their understanding of the vision and to putting it into practice. It is well planned and well-resourced. Pupils appreciate the variety of leaders and the opportunities given for prayer and reflection. Staff and clergy helpfully base their worship around the value for the term and around a core Bible story. Pupils like their participation with liturgical elements like the lighting of candles and the making of poems for church services. There is a school prayer, to which is added a sentence relevant to the Bible passage each term. Pupils do not have the opportunity to say the prayer together. Pupils lead worship confidently in their classrooms weekly. The class reflection book demonstrates deepening understanding of the key value and of how pupils are interacting with the theme. Pupils, via the ethos group, staff and governors monitor and evaluate collective worship to good effect. These groups do not have an opportunity to meet and to plan improvements together.

Class teachers teach RE, underlining its importance to the school. They are well trained and use a good mixture of the local syllabus and Understanding Christianity. There is a rich diet of scripture, sacred text, visual stimuli and poetry, covering major world faiths and beliefs. Particularly noteworthy is the contribution of a professional artist who helps pupils access material in a creative and not so literary way. The recent hope arch made a deep impact on pupils. The termly 'big question' brings RE and spiritual development into the rest of the curriculum and allows pupils to wonder and debate freely rather than to feel they must give pat answers. The oldest pupils are not always given opportunities to go sufficiently deeply into the specific RE questions in their written work. Leaders, including governors, monitor all aspects of RE and provide appropriate support and challenge to the adept subject leader. This monitoring ensures that pupils can demonstrate how RE is relevant to each element of 'explore, enjoy, excel together'.



**The effectiveness of RE is Good**

The carefully planned RE curriculum leads to both breadth and depth of learning. Staff teach effectively and pupils are given a variety of ways to record and to reflect on their learning. They learn well in paired discussion work. Pupils, including those with SEND and the most able, respond well in RE and make good progress. Older pupils respond well to the teaching methods but have insufficient opportunities to do extended writing in RE.

### Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	15 October 2021	URN	109264
Date of previous inspection	24 February 2015		
School status	Voluntary Aided	NOR	330
Name of MAT/Federation	Not applicable		
Diocese	Bristol		
Headteacher	Andrew Spens, Executive HT. Bethan Scriven, Head of School		
Pupil profile	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 is above national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)	St Mary's is in a contractual partnership with St Helen's CE Primary, Alveston where they retain their governing bodies but share strategic leadership.		
Inspector's name	Simon Stevens	No.	953