

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

### St. Mark's Church of England Primary School

St. Mark's Close, Bishopton Road West, Stockton-on-Tees, TS19 7HA

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Durham</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	July 2017
Name of multi-academy trust	1Excellence
Date of inspection	26 March 2018
Date of last inspection	14 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary Academy 144551
Headteacher	Valerie Hall
Inspector's name and number	Richard Goodman 889

#### School context

St. Mark's Church of England Primary School converted to academy status in July 2017. A multi-academy trust (MAT) was created with a community primary school. The headteacher, who has been in post for a significant period, is now also the chief executive of the 1Excellence MAT. Most pupils are of white British heritage. The percentage of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding and those with a special education need are broadly in line with national averages. Ofsted visited the school in June 2017 and judged the school as continuing to be good.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Mark's Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school's Christian vision and values are at the heart of all decision making which ensures that they have a significant impact on the personal development of all pupils.
- Regular pupil-led worship provides valuable opportunities for pupils to engage with Christian values and to consider how they link to their lives.
- Effective support from the religious education (RE) lead empowers staff thus ensuring the delivery of high quality teaching within RE.
- The headteacher passionately believes in, promotes and practises the school's Christian vision, which in turn has generated a culture amongst all staff to live out the Christian values.

#### Areas to improve

- Continue to embed and increase confirmation classes and Eucharist practices to aid pupils on their spiritual journey.
- Utilise existing supportive relationships with the local parish church to maintain the Christian ethos of the school during the potential growth of the trust.
- Maximise the use of external space for prayer and reflection to provide further opportunities to enhance pupils' spiritual development.

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

This is an extremely inclusive and loving school where all pupils, regardless of their differences, are welcomed and made to feel part of the community. The drive to welcome everyone as Jesus did is exemplified through the school being home to an additional resource base for children with social and emotional difficulties. All pupils are encouraged to put the school's motto, 'whatever you do, work at it with all your heart' (Colossians 2:23) into practise. This motivates learners to reach their full potential. Considerable time and energy has been invested in developing pupil confidence and aspiration through the adoption of a 'growth mindset' model across the school. Underpinned by Christian values such as trust, endurance and koinonia (Christian community) this has led to the emergence of confident learners who are becoming resilient in the face of challenge. Consequently, this has had a positive impact on pupil achievement with end of key stage 2 tests showing many pupils meeting or exceeding national expectations. Christian values deeply impact on the wellbeing and personal development of all pupils. Values, such as compassion, are modelled by both pupils and staff, ensuring they inform how children relate and act towards each other. Pupils articulately express how Christian values help them to behave and work with others on a daily basis. The school acted decisively to put effective strategies in place to improve attendance, particularly for the most vulnerable. The work of the pupil welfare officer is rooted in love and compassion. Positive relationships have developed with families, resulting in tangible improvements in attendance. The curriculum is varied and has been enriched by initiatives such as Kidsafe, a programme designed to keep children safe from all forms of abuse. This, along with a wide scope of extra-curricular opportunities, such as 'Inspiration and Aspiration days', supports the deep spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils. The weaving together of RE, personal, social and health education (PSHE), relationships and sex education (RSE) and Christian values significantly contributes to the Christian character of the school. The RE lead ensures that topics are based on Christian values and are linked to Bible teachings. There are extensive ways for pupils to reflect on what the values mean and how they impact on their lives. Although the vast majority of pupils are white British, a proactive approach has been taken to promote understanding of and respect for diverse communities. Christian values of friendship and compassion are used as a basis to develop awareness that all people, regardless of difference, should be treated in a loving way. The work undertaken in becoming a Stonewall champion showcases the commitment to this approach. The RE curriculum provides further chances for pupils to learn about other cultures and faiths, particularly in relation to Islam and Judaism. Pupils and staff speak enthusiastically of an inspirational Muslim teacher who uses her real-life faith experience to enhance pupils' understanding of Islam.

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

The school community is engaged in meaningful worship practices which have a clear impact on pupils' lives. Children are presented with genuine moments to reflect on Christian values and biblical teachings and are encouraged to consider how they inform the way they live their lives. Pupils speak confidently of how Jesus' teachings provide a template for the way they should live and act towards others. Varied worship leaders and styles, particularly through extensive pupil-led worship areas, further inspires the school community to reflect on the Christian values. Worship is held each week to celebrate acts of kindness and pupil achievement linked to Christian values. Pupils are encouraged to complete 'values shout outs' to nominate their peers. This motivates pupils into modelling Christian values on a daily basis. Collective worship is organised in such a way that it draws out pupils' understanding of Christian values, particularly through biblical links to Jesus' teachings. Through its strong biblical foundations worship enables pupils to gain a clear understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Worship is also planned around festivals in the Church's year with pupils accessing services at the local church at Easter and Christmas. There is a consistent approach to the use of hymns, Bible readings and practices such as the lighting of candles, so that worship is distinctively Christian in nature. The local vicar leads weekly worship in school, centred on the Eucharist, where members of the community attend. School leaders recognise the importance of embedding effective confirmation and Eucharist practices to aid pupils on their spiritual journey. Extensive opportunities are given for pupils to pray and reflect. Pupils are encouraged to create their own prayers through class worship areas and prayer books which are enthusiastically read out by pupils in worship. Children see the value and importance of prayer and can impressively articulate how it

provides benefits to their lives, particularly in responding to difficulties in their own lives. The headteacher is keen to capitalise on the recent completion of building work so that external prayer spaces are created to enhance pupils' spiritual development. Worship is well-led and managed. The headteacher and governors regularly monitor and evaluate the impact that worship has on the lives of the school community. Areas for development are identified and strategies are put in place leading to tangible improvements.

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

RE is regarded as a core subject and is considered essential in contributing to the personal development of each child. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their RE lessons and appreciate the extensive time it affords them in learning about Christian values and how they impact on their lives. The RE curriculum follows the diocesan syllabus and incorporates elements of Understanding Christianity. Considerable time is given for pupils to engage with theological concepts and to consider biblical teachings linked to Christian values, leading to a secure understanding of Christianity. The effective weaving together of PSHE and RSE within the RE curriculum provides further scope for pupils to relate Christian values in modern and relevant contexts. The quality of teaching in RE lessons is consistently outstanding in all phases of the school. Consequently, by the end of key stage 2 the standards attained by learners are extremely high. The use of questioning within RE is a notable strength. Open-ended and deep questioning is used to explore difference within religion and to push pupils' thinking further. Assessment is strong and is used by all teachers to inform the next steps in learning to ensure that further progress is made. Pupils' books and class RE scrapbooks highlight the variety of ways pupils apply their understanding of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Pupils and parents talk animatedly of what they learn in RE and that this stays with them throughout the day. This is brought home and related to real life situations. Extensive monitoring and support given by the RE lead maintains the high quality of teaching across the school. Regular learning walks, observation and work scrutiny allows the RE lead to gain a comprehensive understanding of the quality of teaching and learning. Strategies such as team teaching, staff training and support for new teachers, ensure that staff feel empowered and are confident in delivering high quality teaching. Since the start of the year the RE lead has been shadowed by a less experienced teacher. This proactive approach is helping to grow expertise within the department.

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

The headteacher passionately believes in and promotes the school's Christian vision and values. Staff regularly review these which in turn has generated a culture amongst the entire community to live out the vision and values. School leaders articulate this vision through the website, newsletters and exciting displays around school. The vision and values underpin all policies and are at the forefront of how decisions are made. Consequently, this significantly impacts on pupil achievement and on their personal development and wellbeing. Pupils of all phases understand what the vision and values are and use these as guiding principles for how they should commit to their learning and act towards others. Governors are a challenging and supportive body which ensures that the Christian vision remains at the heart of all school life. The evaluation of the impact that the Christian vision and values have on pupils is planned with precision. Regular learning walks and audits of Christian ethos, collective worship and RE are completed. This, along with pupil, staff and parental questionnaires, allow governors and leaders to gauge the impact of the provision. Emanating from this rigorous improvement plans are put in place which incorporate issues from the last inspection. These plans are regularly monitored leading to positive outcomes for all children. The process of academisation and becoming a MAT catalysed the headteacher's approach to securing future leadership as a church school. Effective professional development has been put in place, empowering leaders at all levels. This has had a notable impact on the experience pupils have across the school. Secure and mutually beneficial links exist between school, local church and community. Pupils regularly visit the church and the vicar holds weekly services in school. This adds to pupils' understanding of the Christian church and has led to increased attendance from families to church. Pupil engagement in community activities, such as the 'Big Soup' event and with the local food bank, further emphasises how they live out the Christian values. Regular newsletters, a readiness to ascertain parental views, and weekly celebration worships that parents are invited to, highlight the effectiveness of parental engagement and contribution to school life. The school clearly meets statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

