



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

St Mary's Road, Tetbury

Gloucestershire GL8 8BW

Previous SIAS grade: Good

Current SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Gloucester

Local authority: Gloucestershire

Date of inspection: 23 June 2015

Date of last inspection: 15 July 2010

School's unique reference number: 115700

Headteacher: Jo Woolley

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

School context

St Mary's Tetbury is a larger than average size primary school with 275 children on roll. It is the only primary school serving the town. Children come from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds and the majority are from a white British heritage. The number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the number receiving pupil premium support. Attendance is broadly in line with national averages. There have been significant changes in staffing since September 2013 including a new senior leadership team. The school has had three changes in leadership of governors since 2013. The recent Ofsted judged the school to be good.

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

- Bible stories make a significant contribution to the children's understanding of the school's core Christian values.
- An open and trusting environment helps children to talk with confidence about matters of faith and belief
- The commitment of school leaders to the school's church foundation means that its Christian ethos is continually moving forward.

Areas to improve

- Develop the depth of the school's current understanding of spirituality so that it has meaning and purpose for the children's learning as well as their wellbeing.
- Provide more regular opportunities for children to take greater ownership of how messages from collective worship are explored.
- Ensure that religious education (RE) provides greater challenge for children by allowing them to explore their learning in more depth.

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

The school has made good progress in developing a Christian ethos that has meaning and purpose for the whole school community. The school community has together identified five core values that are seen by all as being Christian in nature and a reflection of the church foundation. These five values have become embedded in the life of the school and make an impact on the children's learning and wellbeing. Respect, responsibility, creativity, perseverance and friendship are referred to in lessons to support the children's learning and children themselves use them to talk about the progress they make. They are also used when helping children with relationship issues and behaviour and dealing with personal development. Children understand how these values link to the school's Christian ethos because they are rooted in biblical teaching. They articulate with considerable maturity how all of the core values link with a range of Bible stories. For the children, these links are natural and obvious. Children are also clear about the relationship between the core Christian values and the three qualities that comprise the school motto: caring, curious and courageous. As children explain, 'it's when the motto links to the core values that they work at their best'. The result is evident in the rise in standards over the last two years and current attainment which is at least in line with national expectations. The school is developing its understanding of spirituality and is exploring an interpretation that best reflects the needs of the children. This has not yet been fully developed so that a shared understanding makes an impact on learning as well as personal development. Relationships are excellent and based on care for each child as an individual. Children at St Mary's are encouraged and celebrated for being themselves. The school works hard to ensure that children develop their appreciation of different cultures and faiths through its charity work and social education.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The quality of collective worship has improved since the last inspection and it is making greater impact on the lives of children. There are several reasons for this. Planning is more thorough with a clearer focus on Christian values taught through Bible stories. The headteacher and vicar regularly meet to plan themes that have clear messages based on developing a moral sense of justice and knowing right from wrong. These are supplemented by more overt celebrations of Christian festivals both in school and now more regularly at the church. The weekly contribution of the 'Open the Book' team is much enjoyed by children who remember the Bible stories and talk about them with enthusiasm. Worship is also making a greater impact because acts of worship are more interactive which children say makes them 'more fun'. Children appreciate that worship is a central aspect of being a church school. They refer to it as 'service' and say that 'gathering together' every day helps them all to 'learn about the values'. Children have regular opportunities to participate in worship and are increasingly becoming involved in its planning and delivery. As yet, they have fewer opportunities to take ownership of the direction in which worship messages are explored as themes are developed throughout the week. Collective worship is distinctively Christian and includes simple words of liturgy and symbols that reflect an Anglican tradition. Children have a good understanding of the meaning and purpose of these symbols, such as the different colours that reflect times of the church year. Prayer is an important part of the everyday life of the school both within worship and around the school. The interesting prayer tree, reflection areas in classrooms and prayer times at lunch and end of day are regarded by children as integral parts of school life. Children have a mature understanding of the purpose of prayer and the difference it can make to a person's life. A focus on celebrating festivals such as Pentecost is helping children develop their understanding of the nature of the Trinity. They talk with confidence about God as Father and Jesus the Son. Older children in particular have a growing appreciation of the Holy Spirit. There are good procedures for gathering feedback from children about their views on worship. Through the developing role of the ethos committee, evidence from children is increasingly being used to inform future improvements.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards in RE have improved in recent years and attainment for most children is now in line with national expectations and sometimes exceed them. Achievement in RE compares favourably with other core subjects and most groups of children make good progress. Children's learning in RE has improved because there has been a move away from teacher directed lessons to a more child centred approach with greater emphasis on active learning. This is making a positive impact on the children's attitudes towards the subject and their enthusiasm to engage and respond in lessons. For example, younger children were very excited when they experienced a re-enactment of the Last Supper and enjoyed the time to reflect on its real meaning but also simply to share a meal together. Similarly, older children were encouraged to understand the significance to Jews of celebrating Shabbat. Children respond to these opportunities with respect and a willingness to appreciate differences. Lesson outcomes are not yet sufficiently challenging to facilitate greater depth to the children's exploration of a topic so that they are able to use what they have learned and link it to their own experiences. However, children do have a very secure knowledge of a range of faiths and use this to make links between their learning. Teachers and children have a particularly good knowledge of Christianity and confidently apply this when comparing with other world religions. Marking of children's work is regular but teachers' comments do not always refer specifically to an RE learning outcome. Assessment is effective and provides sufficient information for the school to level the children's attainment and progress. The school has addressed the area for development from the previous report and works hard to give children first hand experiences of different places of worship as well as visitors to school representing a range of religions. Leadership of RE has been effectively managed by the headteacher since January 2014, as an interim measure, with a new RE leader due to begin in September 2015.

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

The headteacher, together with senior leaders and staff, have successfully improved the quality of teaching in the school and raised the level of children's academic achievement. At the same time, they have been committed to the development of the distinctive Christian character which has a higher profile throughout the school community and greater meaning for the children. The headteacher has been fully supported by governors in developing the church foundation. The headteacher has a very clear understanding of the high expectations of being a church school and has led the leadership and management through an accurate self-evaluation of where they currently are and the areas needed to continue to improve. The school has an excellent capacity to move forward as a church school. There are good procedures in place to effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of the Christian character. Governors have a good understanding of the school's values and how they impact on learning and wellbeing. An ethos committee is developing its role in monitoring RE and collective worship and through such activities as learning walks is improving its ability to evaluate the impact of the school's core Christian values. The committee has a clear grasp of how it can continue to develop. The involvement of senior leaders in the ethos committee and other areas of Christian distinctiveness, is giving them a good opportunity to develop their understanding as future leaders of church schools. Links with the church are a particular strength of the school and have grown significantly through the leadership of the headteacher and vicar. The vicar plays an integral part in the life of the school and is well known to the children whether in school or around the town. Children, and their parents, consider that the church is a part of the life of the school and that the 'Open the Book' team, made up of church members, are friends of the school. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report June 2015 St Mary's CE VA Primary School Tetbury GL8 8BW