

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

### St. Mary's Church of England Junior Academy

Swan Lane Long Stratton Norwich NR15 2UY	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Norwich</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	17 August 2011
Name of multi-academy trust	Stand Alone
Date of inspection	4 October 2017
Date of last inspection	8 November 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Junior VC 137311
Principal	Alison Cullum
Inspector's name and number	Pat George 845

#### School context

St. Mary's is a two-form entry junior school in the village of Long Stratton near Norwich. It became a stand-alone academy in 2011 and currently has 217 pupils on roll, 3 form entry from September 2017. The majority of pupils feed from the nearby infant school. The OFSTED inspection November 2016 graded the school good. The vast majority of pupils are White British and the school has a high proportion of vulnerable pupils including looked after children and those with special needs. The school takes its name from the parish church.

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

- Positive relationships based on distinctively Christian values, are deeply embedded in the daily life of the school. All adults model and support living the values in school.
- Leaders are clear about the impact of the vision and values on pupils and school life. This enables the school to be highly effective in meeting the needs of individual children including disadvantaged pupils.
- The Christian values are supported through worship and contribute to pupils' positive behaviour, attitudes and social, moral spiritual development (SMSC).

#### Areas to improve

- To broaden, at an age-appropriate level, pupil understanding of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit so that the characteristics of each part of the Trinity are understood and its place in worship more prominent.
- Further enhance pupil awareness of Christianity as a multi-cultural, world-wide faith and of the difference and diversity within the church and other Christian denominations so pupils have an improved understanding of their place in the wider Christian family.
- To further develop pupil involvement in worship in school, providing opportunities for them to develop the confidence and skills to independently plan and lead complete acts of worship.

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

The whole school community can articulate the impact of the distinctive Christian values which are deeply embedded and explicit in the daily life of the school. These values are prominent in the corridor. However, although there is a section on the website on Christian distinctiveness the values do not have the prominence that reflects their impact in school and the role of the Christian values in supporting the delivery of British values is not made explicit. The Christian character makes a positive contribution to learners' personal wellbeing through developing self-esteem, responsibility and confidence. Trends for progress and attainment are positive and disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Christian values support the children well, consequently pupils are clear the values help everyone look after each other and know how to behave.

Pupils speak positively of the new behaviour support system which is based on restorative justice and the Christian values. Pupils are well supported through this and the Nature for Nurture program. Pupils are clear the values show them the right things to do. Pupils contribute to school life through the school council, the eco council and learning ambassadors. Although they show a clear understanding of the roles, they are not yet making explicit links to the influence of the Christian values on these roles and responsibilities. They are proud of their 'love' heart display showing how values are at the heart of their school, they 'help you know what to choose to do and to think about'. The school council are developing a spiritual garden in the grounds and pupils are connecting this to the spiritual space in school. The links with the church are very strong and pupils are enthusiastic about their visits to church and Messy Church and Holiday Club run by the church are well supported.

Learners are aware that Christianity is a worldwide faith but are still developing their depth of knowledge about this. Some pupils are aware of other denominations, however their understanding of this is underdeveloped. Religious education (RE) is taught through the school's own curriculum based on the agreed syllabus. The input of RE into the distinctively Christian character of the school and its impact on SMSC is clearly evidenced by pupils. They enjoy RE and speak of how it helps them understand similarities and differences between religions and can relate Christianity to their worship and the values. The Christian character supports a focus on responsibility and service, including fundraising for those in need from the wider community, having a positive impact on pupil SMSC development.

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

Worship is firmly focused on values, distinctively Christian and linked to world events and pupils' lives. For example, the school used worship themes of love and forgiveness to help pupils understand the Manchester bombing. Worship is planned around Values for Life and last year incorporated themes from Fruits of the Spirit. Learners are aware of the major Christian festivals and these are celebrated in school and church. The whole school community view worship as an important part of the school day. Pupils feel that their school would not be such a happy place without worship and that it brings them together. Worship follows a regular format with a Trinity display and a candle as focus objects and the peace greeting. Pupils are confident to support adults delivering worship; however, their opportunities for planning, leading and delivering worship independently are limited at present.

Pupils speak positively about Open the Book which clearly has an impact of pupil understanding of Bible stories and how they link to their everyday lives. They talk about how Bible stories help them understand the right things to do, 'they make us a better person'. They have opportunities to write and share their own prayers and are confident about times during the school day that they pray and the role of pray in worship. Pupils can readily explain some of the reasons why people pray, to talk to God and feel comfortable, for forgiveness, to say sorry, to give thanks and how prayer influences their choices. One pupil explained how they felt worship and prayers 'have changed my way of behaving and helped me deal with things'. Another pupil spoke of school worship helping them understand others' emotions. However, some pupils lack the confidence to fully articulate this and prayer is not prominent around school. Pupils speak enthusiastically of the activities they do in the annual prayer space day which contributes to their personal spirituality.

Pupil understanding of the Trinity is developing. They are clear about the concept of a three in one and can explain they are different but all God. However, their understanding and articulating of the characteristics of each God and the links to their experience of worship and prayer are in early stages of development. They speak of God the creator, Jesus spreading the word and the Holy spirit helping us to behave, repeating the Trinity display they see in worship. The church is very involved in the development of worship in the school and supports the yearly prayer spaces in school as well as Open the Book. The Incumbent is involved in the monitoring of Open the Book and collective worship and provides feedback to the governing body. Other governors, staff and pupils are involved in

monitoring worship but the impact of any feedback is not always effectively recorded.

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

Leaders articulate and promote a vision based on Christian values and governors, parents and children were involved in developing the values and vision. The headteacher’s strong vision for the school is shared by all stakeholders, who consistently uphold the Christian values and articulate the Christian ethos. This ensures that pupil SMSC is a priority and the impact across the school is evident in relationships. However, the ethos, vision and values are not clear in all relevant policies, including behaviour. The governing body doesn’t currently have a formal group which focuses on Christian distinctiveness; however, they monitor the distinctiveness at every full governing body meeting through a regular agenda item and decisions are taken with this in mind and they reflect on how these decisions have impacted on pupils. Governors regularly attend worship and carry out formal monitoring and evaluation. However, the format used to record monitoring doesn’t fully allow for the impact on school improvement to be evidenced and evaluated. The school council and learning ambassadors provide a mechanism for pupils to feed back to the governing body. In addition to this, pupils set questions for governors to focus on during learning walks, which include how the school is as a church school. Governors’ priority is to ensure Christian values are maintained at the heart of the school. The school is not yet using the Understanding Christianity materials in RE. However the chair of governors has undertaken Understanding Christianity training and the resulting feedback to the full governing body influenced the decision to implement the scheme to improve teaching and learning of Christianity.

Relationships between all members of the school community are excellent. Parents speak of it as a big family where everyone looks after each other. Parents and carers speak very positively of the confidence the Christian character gives their children, especially at times when they need additional support, and of the difference the ethos of the school makes to attitudes and behaviour. They feel the school gives their children additional values and a viewpoint they don’t get elsewhere. They view the relationship with the church as a positive. They value the impact of worship and religious education (RE) on their children. Pupil behaviour is good, which is indicative of the positive relationships and shared values.

RE and collective worship are well led and have a high profile, emphasising their importance to daily school life for all members of the school community. Leadership is committed to ongoing development of the role of RE and its links to other curriculum areas and worship. Parents and the local church play a strong role in the daily life of the school, through frequent visits, sharing their views and joining in with school and community events such as Messy Church, Easter experience, responding to survey questions. School has effective links with other local church schools and the diocese and benefits from diocesan training and professional development. Leaders have ensured the areas of development from the last inspection have been addressed and that the school has an ongoing vision for its development as a church school with actions identified in the school improvement plan.

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