

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Farnham Royal Church of England (VA) Primary School

Church Road, Farnham Royal, Slough, SL2 3AW

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Oxford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Date of inspection	21 March 2017
Date of last inspection	19 January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VA Primary 110435
Headteacher	Vania Eaglen
Inspector's name and number	Sandra Symms 805

School context

St Mary's C of E Primary School is a larger than average primary school with 325 pupils on role. A quarter of the school's pupils have English as an additional language and over half are from minority ethnic backgrounds. There has been an increasing trend in the number of pupils receiving free school meals which is now above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is slightly lower than the national average but above the local authority average. The school moved from requires improvement to good in the latest Ofsted inspection in November 2015.

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

- The vision and drive of the headteacher, supported by staff and governors promotes an inclusive Christian ethos and a nurturing school environment.
- The clear vision of 'Faith, Family and Future' drives the school forward and enhances the Christian character of the school.
- The caring family feel to the school leads to supportive relationships between all members of the school community, good behaviour and strong teamwork.
- Religious education is given a high priority and makes a positive contribution to the Christian character of the school and to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Collective worship includes teaching about Jesus Christ and pupils show an impressive understanding of his important place in worship.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the school's values are known as distinctively Christian and that all members of the school community can talk about how they affect the daily lives and achievements of the pupils.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship so that they can clearly identify the distinctive features of Anglican traditions.
- Further develop assessment procedures in religious education so that they inform all aspects of teaching and learning to meet the needs of all learners and particularly the more able.
- Involve all groups in the school community in formally monitoring and evaluating collective worship and Christian distinctiveness so that effective strategies are in place for further improvements which meet the needs of all pupils and staff.

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

St Mary's Farnham Royal Primary School is an inclusive, caring community which lives out its vision of being 'founded in faith, focused on family and fulfilling future potential'. This vision is made explicit through displays and art work throughout the school so that staff, pupils and governors are clear about the school's journey and the part they play in it. Pupils talk about having faith in themselves, their teachers and each other. They say that faith helps them in their learning and 'if we work hard, we can achieve things; everything that you do is linked to the future'. The vision is woven throughout the fabric of the school and as a result pupils' achievements have improved over time. The strong focus on the school being a caring family leads to good relationships. Parents say that they choose St Mary's because it is a church school. They value the sense of community, the thoughtful teachers and feel welcome and included. Leaders support staff, pupils and families who are going through challenging situations in a respectful, loving way which reflects the ethos of the school. The Christian character of the school also informs its approach to issues of attendance and exclusion. Good attendance is celebrated and rewarded. Attendance issues are dealt with in a helpful, bespoke manner linked to individual circumstances so that families are supported and attendance improves. This strong sense of family with everyone looking out for one another results in a kind community where behaviour is at least good, bullying is rare and pupils feel secure and safe. The values of faith, family and future are central to the school's ethos and support the pupils to believe in themselves so that they achieve well and have aspirations for the future. However, not all stakeholders recognise the distinctive Christian characteristics of the values or the impact that they have on school life. Staff say that respect for diversity is huge and it is understood by all that everyone is entitled to their own beliefs. Pupils reinforce this view when they say that it is important to learn about other faiths as 'we need to learn more about each other so that we can understand and respect one another'. Consequently, pupils see the importance of learning about and from Christianity and other world faiths such as Judaism and Islam. The use of questions such as 'How should people care for the world?' ensure that RE contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and has a high profile in the school. Experiences such as taking part in Remembrance Day give pupils the chance to show empathy and reflect on sacrifice. Termly church services and enjoying moments of quiet reflection in the school's learning garden support pupils' spiritual development. Consequently, pupils are developing their ability to express their spiritual thoughts with more confidence and depth.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship has an important place in the life of the school family. Holy communion, led by the vicar for staff and governors at the start of each term reinforces the ethos of the school being a family. Staff say that worshipping together sets the standard for the new term, reinforces the values and renews their faith in themselves and one another. Pupils say that they enjoy gathering together in fellowship and see their school worship as important because they feel safe with God. Staff and clergy work closely together to plan themes which reflect the liturgical year such as Candlemas, Lent and Easter. Themes such as 'Showing Resolve' also link to pupils' learning behaviours. Pupils are encouraged to be brave learners and have another go if mistakes are made, 'pressing on towards the goal'. As a result, worship contributes to the pupils' spiritual and moral development as well as having an impact on behaviour and attitudes in the classroom. Recommendations from the clergy have led to improved Bible links. Bible stories such as The Good Samaritan provide a moral compass and inspire pupils to be pro-active in serving others. Pupils enjoy serving and entertaining the elderly at The Third Age lunch and are keen to fundraise for charitable causes, especially those linked to the needs of their school family. Pupils enjoy worshipping in a variety of settings such as the hall, classrooms and the local church. They contribute to the evaluation of worship in an informal way such as deciding on class worship themes and choosing relevant songs. Staff evaluate worship plans informally by adapting them to the needs of their class. However, pupils and staff do not monitor and evaluate worship formally so that their views do not inform development planning or identify where improvements are needed. Worship includes some aspects of Anglican practice such as joining in with the greeting and dismissal and saying prayers. Pupils show an understanding of the purpose of prayer when they say that prayer is a time to get to know God, to get closer to him and to say thank you. Some pupils say prayers at home before meals or at bedtime and sometimes at the start of long journeys when families pray for safety. Older pupils enjoy contributing to worship by getting the hall ready and being good role models for their peers. However, they say they would like more opportunities to plan and lead worship to feel more involved. This would also help them to identify distinctive features of Anglican traditions. During worship pupils reflected on what the cross means to them saying that it is a symbol of Jesus and a reminder of his sacrifice. Pupils talk about Jesus being the Son of God who 'suffered to forgive us our sins' showing a good understanding of His place in worship. Older pupils also show some understanding of the Trinity when they talk about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit drawing upon their understanding of the shamrock as a symbol of St Patrick's Day to illustrate this.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious education has a high profile around the school with displays of pupils' learning in all classrooms. The curriculum supports pupils to learn about Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Islam and pupils say that they enjoy their RE lessons because it is important to learn about each other's beliefs in this diverse school. They are developing their ability to enquire, evaluate and reflect on the impact of religion on believers when they ponder on questions such as 'Do clothes express beliefs?' Year 2 pupils reflect on the question 'Is Easter important for the church?' and show a good understanding of the events of Holy Week. Some open-ended questions such as 'What does holy mean?' support pupils to deepen their thinking. The school's values of faith and family are enhanced through RE topics such as Rites of Passage, Celebrations and Festivals. RE also contributes to the concept of future when pupils are asked to apply their learning in RE to their own lives and to the wider world. Consequently, RE makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as well as to the values of the school. Assessment procedures are in place and show that the majority of pupils are working at age related expectations with some pupils working above. Planning shows that learning is differentiated and feedback and marking includes a moving on comment which pupils respond to, so that marking is reflective and helps to develop progress. The RE leader uses the outcomes from data analysis to support teaching and learning where necessary. Where gaps are identified, the RE leader offers support such as team teaching and staff inset to further support progression in RE. The school identifies the need to further develop assessment procedures so that assessment informs all aspects of teaching and learning to meet the needs of all learners and particularly the more able. Focused monitoring of RE includes strategies such as book looks, learning walks, listening to pupil voice and teaching and learning audits. Strengths are identified such as pupils having a good knowledge of Christianity and other religions. The strong RE leadership has a relentless focus on raising standards and action plans identify where improvements are needed such as ensuring that pupils with special needs are supported in RE so that they make good or better progress. The RE leader has a close working relationship with the RE governor who challenges and supports where necessary. The leader keeps up to date with current developments by attending network meetings and diocesan training and leads her subject with enthusiasm and drive so that colleagues feel supported. She effectively communicates her expectations to leaders, staff and governors and models good practice so that teaching and learning continues to develop leading to raised standards and improved progress for all.

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

The focus and enthusiasm of the headteacher, supported by staff and governors ensures that the school's vision of a community founded in faith, focused on family and fulfilling future potential drives the school forward. Leaders are ambitious for the school and say that the values of faith, family and future have brought about renewed attitudes. They say that pupils and staff reflect the Christian ethos leading to a school community built on compassion and understanding. Because of this, pupils feel secure and loved and take risks in their learning. Self-belief is at a high level within the school and one governor said that, 'God gives us confidence in who we are and in St Mary's school it's alright to be you'. Leaders have a good understanding of the school's performance and are swift to address gaps such as using assessment procedures effectively to ensure that all children make the expected progress in line with the national average. Governors work in close partnership with school leaders and challenge and support where necessary. This leads to improvements such as Early Years children having worship daily and access to more Bible stories. Leaders do not involve all groups in the school community to evaluate Christian distinctiveness however close and effective links with the diocese have supported the school in effective self-evaluation of the school as a church school. This resulted in a detailed, ongoing development plan which has led to improvements, particularly in raising the profile of RE which has led to raised standards. As a result, the Christian distinctiveness has greatly improved since the last inspection and development points have been largely addressed. The RE leader is well supported in carrying out her role. Regular leadership time has been put to good use to support colleagues and pupils. Diocesan training is cascaded down to staff so that assessment and teaching and learning in RE improves. Distributed leadership supports the headteacher to move the school forward such as the Family Links Co-ordinator attending Jesus and Me (JAM) meetings at the local church which further strengthens community links. The school is well supported by the local church. Services both in school and at church benefit the pupils' spiritual development. Pupils also benefit from visits to the local Baptist church to learn about Christmas Unwrapped or Easter Cracked. Parents help to raise funds for the school and the values of faith and family were enriched further when Sikh and Hindu parents shared their family practices and beliefs on the whole school India Day. Links with the wider community such as the British Legion, celebrating India Day and supporting charities such as Red Nose Day contribute to pupils' understanding of local, national and global issues. The vision of faith, family and future continues to be a guiding light for the school and as one governor said, St Mary's is 'an exciting place to be'.