

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mark's Church of England Primary School			
Address	Ramslye Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN4 8LN		
Date of inspection	9 December 2019	Status of school	Voluntary controlled primary
Diocese	Rochester	URN	118613

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Good
Additional Judgement	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good

School context

St Mark's Church of England School is a primary school with 323 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Some pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national averages. The school has grown since the previous SIAMS Inspection and is now two-form entry in all year groups.

The school's Christian vision

At St Mark's Church of England Primary School, we ensure that our children are flourishing, building strong foundations, making excellent all-round progress and reaching their potential. We open up horizons of hope and aspiration, nurturing and guiding pupils to fulfilment. We develop the skills, relationships and qualities of character for a changing society.

Key findings

- In line with its Christian vision and biblical underpinning, the school has built strong foundations. However, the impact of the vision on the strategic direction of the school's governing body is not always totally evident and pupils are also less clearly able to articulate its impact.
- Religious education (RE) across Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage 1 (KS1) is strong. There is evidence of a more challenging approach to RE developing in Key Stage 2 (KS2).
- Collective worship is inclusive and impactful on pupils' lives; the messages and themes are memorable, however there is limited leadership and planning by pupils.
- Through regular visits and dialogue, the school is developing a positive working relationship with the church.
- The school has a tangible charitable and compassionate ethos, although pupils are not given opportunities to engage in social action.

Areas for development

- Refine the vision to make sure it influences strategic decision making and that its impact can be expressed by everybody.
- Ensure pupils are given greater opportunities to choose and engage with social action so as to increase their involvement in and understanding of courageous advocacy.
- Enable pupils to increase their leadership and ownership of collective worship so that pupils are given increasing opportunities for further spiritual growth.

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

School leaders have developed a vision reflecting the local context which the school serves. Since the previous denominational inspection, leaders have addressed the recommendations made and pupils are able to use the indoor and outdoor reflective areas. A clear biblical narrative is used to support pupils' and leaders' understanding of the school's aims. Pupils are given opportunities in collective worship and during reflection time to reflect upon the school's Christian values, resulting in a clear understanding of the importance of these. The vision is present in many of the school's policies, however its role in driving the strategic direction of the school's governing body is limited. Pupils and staff know the school's associated Christian values, however they are less clear on the vision and its meaning in everyday school life.

A key feature of St Mark's school is that every pupil is viewed and treated as a unique individual and the school is fostering a culture of nurturing for all children, as expressed in the school's vision. Progress data for Key Stage 2 in recent years is in line with or better than national results, including those for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs or disabilities. The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum, meaning that pupils enjoy learning and questioning. Pupils benefit from teachers' tailoring of the curriculum to best meet the abilities and needs of all children.

In line with the school's vision, there is a tangible culture of aspiring to be the best that you can be. The pupils understand the school's motto of 'Aspire, Believe and Succeed' and consider that aspire means to aspire to live like Jesus. In conjunction with the school's Christian values, this supports pupils with their academic learning and developing their social interaction skills. Leaders, parents and pupils work together to run multiple and successful fundraising events (including charitable work) for all members of the school and local community. Links with the local foodbank have also been developed in response to pupils' requests. The school has begun to give pupils further opportunities to think globally and to develop links with organisations abroad, through donating clothing to a Ugandan charity. However, there are not enough alternative opportunities for pupils to engage in courageous advocacy and challenging injustice.

Behaviour throughout the school is good and the supportive relationships between all members of the school community are evident. Through developing the school's behaviour management to include restorative justice, pupils are given opportunities to seek forgiveness and reconciliation. The school has very positive systems for supporting and nurturing pupils to promote positive mental health and wellbeing. Making mistakes is considered an opportunity to learn, which helps build pupil confidence and resilience. Staff feel supported by leaders and the school has a positive culture towards promoting staff wellbeing, although this is not yet fully attributed to the school's vision.

In line with the school's vision, all members of the school community, regardless of background, disability, identity or religion, are welcomed and treated with dignity. Incidents of bullying are low and pupils report that these are dealt with fairly by staff. Pupil attendance is very high and children enjoy coming to school. A culture of mutual respect is developing, allowing pupils to express their views safely in some lessons. Parents comment that the school has an 'open door' approach and that staff and leaders are always available for support.

Collective worship is inclusive and provides a safe space for pupils of all faiths to feel welcomed and valued. Prayer is a growing aspect of pupils' experience of worship. Pupils value the numerous spaces for prayer and reflection and understand how these are used. Pupils also appreciate opportunities to reflect on the school's Christian values and how they impact on their learning and behaviour choices. Acts of collective worship are memorable and impact upon pupils' lives within and outside of school. There is variety in the content of worship, including appropriate liturgy, song, prayer, scripture and teaching. However, pupils are not aware of the role or importance of the Eucharist within Christian practice. Acts of collective worship follow a thematic approach and enable pupils to encounter the teachings of Jesus and their modern-day application. The local church is regularly involved with collective worship and is developing a positive working relationship with school leaders. Pupils are given opportunities to assist with assemblies and to evaluate some acts of worship, but are not regularly involved in its planning or delivery of worship. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship by governors is also limited.

Pupils engage well with religious texts and discuss key theological ideas, developing good religious literacy. The introduction of the new RE curriculum has enabled enquiry skills and text analysis to be a prominent feature of pupil learning in EYFS and KS1. These skills are developing across KS2. Prayers are written as part of RE learning and as such there is not a clear distinction between RE and collective worship in all year groups. Pupils are able to give thoughtful accounts of how RE prepares them for life in modern Britain as a valued member of society and contributes to their individual character development. Teachers monitor pupils' attainment in RE through the school's assessments system, and moderation of teacher judgement in RE is developing. Assessment data leads to evident differentiation in lessons and opportunities for pupils' thinking to be challenged. The RE subject leader has access to continuing professional development and is supported by school leaders. The school leader for RE has had subject specific training and has begun to share this with staff.

Headteacher	Simon Bird
Inspector's name and number	Matthew Harris
Quality Assurance Assessor	Marcia Headon