

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

North Mymms St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Address Dellsome Lane, Welham Green, North Mymms, AL9 7NE

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Overall grade **Good**

The impact of collective worship **Good**

The effectiveness of religious education (RE) **Good**

School's vision

We are a welcoming Christian community where every child has the chance to flourish. We bring and share **joy, inspire** daily and creatively equip children for the future. We're **thankful** for all that God has provided; proud of where He has placed us; and excited at the potential to come.

Psalm 23: 'Overflowing with thankfulness, inspiration and joy'.

Key findings

- All members of the school community can confidently articulate the vision and give examples of how it informs and drives all aspects of life at St Mary's.
- Leaders are making good progress on their journey to ensure that the needs of all learners are met and that they reach their full potential.
- Governors are highly supportive of the school. They are aware that they need to provide an appropriate level of challenge to improve the attendance, attainment and progress of pupils.
- Collective worship is highly valued by the whole community. They enjoy an extensive range of experiences from moments of quiet reflection to being inspired to action by the times they share together.
- The rich and engaging RE curriculum flows clearly from the vision. Careful monitoring by the RE leader shows that pupils are gaining a deep understanding of Christianity and other worldviews.

Areas for development

- Ensure that governors provide an appropriate level of challenge to school leaders so that the attendance, attainment and progress of pupils is improved, enabling all to flourish.
- Ensure that all staff have a secure understanding and approach to spiritual development so that a range of opportunities are planned coherently throughout the curriculum and the wider life of the school.
- Ensure that substantial opportunities for pupils' understanding of inequality are provided so that they become courageous advocates for change locally, nationally and globally.

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

St Mary's is a warm and welcoming school where pupils and adults are cherished and nurtured. The distinctive Christian vision of 'overflowing with thankfulness, inspiration and joy' from Psalm 23 is deeply embedded in the ongoing life of the school. Since arriving in January 2019, the headteacher has worked tirelessly to address acknowledged weaknesses in teaching and learning across all year groups. She has now built a strong staff team who fully embrace the vision. As a result of their shared vision, low levels of achievement are no longer accepted. This means that, despite the serious disruption to teaching caused by the COVID 19 pandemic, children are now flourishing and making better progress in their learning. The school is receiving effective support from the local authority and the Diocese to ensure that the new staff team continue to drive these improvements forward. They are also working hard to appoint a new and inspirational headteacher for April 2022 so that the school continues on its journey of improvement.

All leaders were fully involved in the extensive consultation with the school community in Autumn 2019. This resulted in their shared vision and values. Governors have created an ethos group where they discuss the impact of the vision. However, they are now aware that they need to provide a more appropriate level of challenge to senior leaders so that the attendance, attainment and progress of pupils is improved. Parents and pupils (including those recently joining the school) agree that the vision encapsulates the essence of St Mary's. Each of the twelve values supporting the delivery of the vision are given emphasis and visibility as part of a planned two-year cycle. This ensures all values are known by everyone. Even the youngest pupils eloquently share their understanding of the current value of love with their parents. Despite extremely challenging circumstances, including those resulting from the pandemic, the school continues to find creative ways to meet the needs of learners.

Parents speak about the inclusive and nurturing environment in the school and attribute this to the vision. They give telling examples of how pupils overcome extremely challenging life circumstances with the school's support. Pupils state that behaviour is generally good and describe how staff quickly deal with any incidents of bullying. They feel safe in school. The individual needs of each child are known to staff. Pupils feel understood and cared for. Learning is carefully tailored to individual needs so that pupils are able to access the curriculum. Staff also feel extremely well-supported at St Mary's and describe 'Wellbeing Wednesdays' as being a real highlight. A strong culture of mutual trust has been developed in the school so that staff are able to support each other as well as receiving a high level of support from leaders.

Opportunities to explore issues of injustice are carefully planned into the curriculum. For example, pupils are passionate about buying fair trade chocolate so that growers get a fair price for their crop. They are very clear about treating everyone equally, irrespective of how people live their lives, and to actively celebrate those differences. Pupils in Year 3 and 4 have enjoyed being part of the Archbishop of York's young leaders' award scheme. It helps them to grow in confidence, look beyond the school and begin to serve their local community. Leaders are beginning to identify even more opportunities for pupils to further develop their understanding of inequality. This will enable them to become courageous advocates for change locally, nationally and globally.

Collective worship is valued highly at St Mary's. The 'Fish Club' love their role in planning, facilitating and evaluating worship and talk confidently about its importance in their lives. Pupils appreciate opportunities for quiet reflection and for prayer. A range of styles of worship enable pupils to appreciate that Christians worship in many different ways. The well-established reflection areas in each classroom are highly effective when pupils withdraw and take time out. During lockdown, daily worship continued to be provided remotely and both pupils and parents found this very helpful. Weekly worship led by the vicar is more personal again as meeting together is now possible. Pupils really appreciate these special times during the school day. The whole school community enjoys visiting the church three times each year for special occasions, when a large number of parents join them. Remote collective worship, despite its constraints, is also effective. Staff are able to support pupils to be more personally engaged in smaller groups and quieter pupils actually share their own ideas and thoughts at these times. Opportunities for developing spirituality are found throughout the school. Leaders are working towards ensuring that these are more coherently planned through the curriculum and the wider environment.

The RE leader carefully plans and monitors the rich and engaging RE curriculum. This intentionally flows from the vision and is now being used as a model for the planning of other curriculum areas. This convincingly illustrates the high profile which is given to RE in the school. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about core theological concepts. They ask 'big questions' and reflect critically on their own convictions. There is a significant investment in staff development in RE which inspires

them in their teaching of the subject. The Diocese of St Albans uses the RE leader to share his effective approach with other practitioners. Innovative practice such as the use of pictorial prompts and other ways of making helpful connections are being developed. These are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' religious literacy. St Mary's is a nurturing school with a strong and inspirational vision. The headteacher has worked assiduously to establish a shared sense of purpose with the whole community over the past three years. The leaders are now determined to continue this journey of improvement ensuring that 'overflowing with thankfulness, inspiration and joy', enabling all to flourish, becomes a reality.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

The carefully planned RE curriculum is well taught at St Mary's and pupils are gaining a deep understanding of Christianity and a range of worldviews. They discuss core theological concepts with confidence and enthusiasm. The RE leader monitors the teaching of RE through innovative methods and supports staff to improve their practice. Pupils make good progress as a result of the rich and engaging curriculum which is carefully tailored to pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	10 December 2021	URN	117497
Date of previous inspection	26 February 2015		
School status	Voluntary Aided	NOR	148
Name of MAT/Federation	N/A		
Diocese / Methodist District	St Albans Diocese		
Headteacher	Helen Melidoro		
Pupil profile	The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is above national averages.		
	The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)	The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The headteacher, who was appointed in 2019, will be leaving the school at the end of the spring term 2022.		
Inspector's name	Marion Standing	No.	971