



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Littlegrove, East Barnet, Barnet EN4 8SR

**Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Current inspection grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: St Albans**

Local authority: London Borough of Barnet

Dates of inspection: 16 July 2015

Date of last inspection: 06 May 2010

School's unique reference number: 101324

Headteacher: Mel Adams

Inspector's name and number: Judith Ruff 528

#### School context

The school is a one form entry primary school serving the suburban village of East Barnet. It is both popular and over-subscribed. Within the school there is a diversity of ethnic and faith backgrounds. Since the previous inspection, two job-share deputy headteachers have been appointed. The parish church of St Mary's is within walking distance and the school worships at the church on a weekly basis. There is a formal ecumenical partnership in place between the local Anglican and Methodist churches. The number of pupils with special educational needs and /or disabilities is above average.

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

- The inspirational headteacher, whose nurturing, caring approach to leadership is deeply rooted within her own Christian beliefs and values provides an uplifting example to all
- The inclusive Christian values lying at the heart of the school, enable pupils to explore, wonder and debate the impact of these on their own and others' lives
- The outstanding commitment of the whole staff team to children's holistic development, results in levels of excellent pastoral as well as academic achievement rooted in Gospel values
- The strong and effective partnership with the local church communities enables pupils to understand first-hand the diversity and richness within the Christian faith
- A highly developed interpretation of spirituality is established across the school through exemplary leadership and the focus on this area results in spiritually aware pupils

#### Areas to improve

- Safeguard the future sustainability of this outstanding church school by ensuring that all senior leaders and governors understand how this level of excellence is achieved

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

'This is a precious school in a society that does not offer this type of schooling to many.' This parental comment sums up the sense of pride and gratitude that is felt about what St Mary's offers to its local community. The Christian values 'are in the air that we breathe, they are who we are' said a senior staff member of many years standing. These deeply embedded values shape and define pupils' personalities as they travel through the school. The depth of Biblical knowledge, which the children can talk about with mature levels of confidence extending beyond their years, is very impressive. They know that Christians are called to forgive and love each other. One parent described how two girls who had fallen out with each other on the way to church reconciled after the rector had spoken about the importance of forgiveness. Behaviour of all pupils is exemplary, rooted in pupils' understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation. Pupils have a wonderful sense of empathy with those less fortunate. This is demonstrated in the poetry written about local soldiers killed in World War I and the 'It's Not Fair' writings on child exploitation across the world. It results in hugely impressive acts of thoughtfulness and kindness, through charitable giving such as the 'Shoe Box Appeal' or the raising money for 'Water Aid'. Attainment across the school, including that of vulnerable groups is high, with progress rates rapid. No child is excluded in this school, as the headteacher states 'every child is a child of God with a right to be loved and cared for unconditionally'. Spirituality is deeply embedded within the school, through the class reflection areas, constantly changing to meet new themes and topics covered. In Year 1, children enjoy sharing thoughts about others' good deeds through the 'Pot of kindness'. Children know that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith. They enjoy sharing the experiences of others, such as the child visiting his grandparents' church in China and listening to opportunities to worship in a Nigerian church. As a consequence their understanding and respect for the diversity of the Christian faith is exceptional. They learn about it day by day from each other and from all the Christian leaders of the denominations represented within school. RE has a major role in shaping the Christian character of the school. It enables pupils to compare and contrast the Christian faith with other world faiths. It provides them with high quality opportunities to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding through opportunities to debate, discuss and reflect on the impact of faith and belief in people's lives.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.**

In this school, staff and pupils know that they can worship at any time of the day with the help of the reflection and central worship table available. Collective worship is at the core of school life, valued by both staff and pupils. 'We find worship both comforting and uplifting' said a staff member. On the inspection day, the whole school walked to the church for the end of term Eucharist. This was such a special occasion, accompanied by beautiful singing, readings and prayers. The number of pupils receiving communion was very large, from Anglican, Methodist, Greek Orthodox, Catholic and Free Church backgrounds. All pupils received a blessing and they are clear that to worship in such a beautiful and ancient church is a great privilege. Pupils have had frequent opportunities to plan worship. For example, a group of Year 1 pupils as part of their RE unit on 'worship' prepared an act of worship for the reception class. Over the year, one of the themes has been 'Who was this man?' Through exploring this theme, pupils have come to a really deep understanding of the person of Jesus. 'I feel close to God when I am learning about Jesus' one child said. Prayer is deeply rooted within the school and pupils pray with earnestness and faith. For example a Year 6 pupil wrote, 'Thank you for giving me seven years of wonderful friendships and encouragement to guide me through the next stages of my life'. Pupils are beginning to understand the concept of the Holy Trinity using images such as an egg. 'The shell is God protecting everything, with the yolk being Jesus, surrounded by the white which is the Holy Spirit.' The leadership of collective worship is very strong with senior leaders planning and delivering high quality experiences for children and staff. The Anglican- Methodist partnership works very successfully with both denominations leading the Eucharist service. Monitoring of collective worship is effective, with all stakeholder views providing an insight into how worship opportunities can be further developed. For example, the rector has recently spoken to pupils about the Trinity to strengthen their understanding of this concept. The presence of so many governors at the Eucharist service demonstrated to all their commitment to the school as a church school.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.**

Standards in RE are in line with national expectations and a significant number of pupils achieve beyond this. Progress is at least good, supported by thorough teacher marking of work, which challenges and extends pupils' thinking. Pupils with special educational needs attain well because of high quality differentiation of learning tasks and both adult and peer support. Outstanding teaching was observed during the inspection, in line with the subject leader's monitoring outcomes. Pupils are challenged to think deeply. For example pupils in Year 5 were writing 'life mantras' such as 'I take your hand today, so you can take mine tomorrow'. In Year 6, pupils were presenting in groups about different world charities, exploring their roots and comparing their motivations, whether from a faith base or not. Questions asked were thoughtful and reflective demonstrating high quality listening skills, levels of empathy and the ability to compare and contrast ideas to form their own views and ideas. RE is taught creatively and innovatively, enabling pupils to apply their learning to real life examples, often leading to charitable giving to organisations such as 'Mission Africa'. The very high profile of RE across the school results in well informed, curious learners, who understand the importance of acceptance and respect for other faiths and belief systems. Assessment is through a variety of means, such as oral responses noted down or formative marking encouraging next steps in learning. As a consequence learners' progress is accelerated successfully. Pupils are able to learn through high quality first hand experiences of visits out to a Hindu temple and a Jewish synagogue as well as many visitors coming into the school. These are recalled in great detail by pupils and they use this information to enhance their discussions and reflections. Opportunities for reflection and the development, particularly of spiritual and cultural development are excellent. One teacher said 'Values are the life blood of spiritual development. It enables our pupils to meet challenges in their own lives with courage and hope. They shape our community and enable us to understand how important faith is to people of all religions'. In RE pupils' learn both from the Christian perspective and from other faiths, how the values that the school embodies are intrinsic to each of these religions. RE is led well by the headteacher. Thorough monitoring and evaluation systems identify where confidence and knowledge levels are low and offer first hand support through additional resources or time to discuss approaches. RE action planning leads directly and effectively from monitoring and evaluation outcomes ensuring an ambitious vision for RE continues.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding.**

In this school, the partnership with the local church communities is a key strength. Many opportunities have been created over the years for joint working. This enables pupils to understand that diversity within denominations is to be celebrated as enriching. The inspirational leadership of the long-serving headteacher has been the key driver in shaping this exceptional school into what it is today. 'She invests in people and encourages them to flourish. At the core are her Christian values. I have learned so much from her' said a senior staff member. Her vision for the school, shared and owned by all stakeholders, is that the school, secure in Christian values at its heart, will continue to grow organically in its service and mission to provide the very best for every child in the local community and beyond. Both RE and collective worship are led by the headteacher and they have a clear prominence and status across the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) is led by another member of the senior leadership team. She has worked extremely hard to ensure that all of these aspects are at the heart of school life, modelling outstanding practice to less experienced staff so that they can clearly see the impact of these aspects on pupils' development. Governors work in a close strategic partnership with the staff, attending summer term training days to evaluate all aspects of the school including church school distinctiveness, monitoring through learning walks and attending collective worship, all of which give them a good understanding of the work of the school. In terms of long term sustainability, the ability of both senior leaders and governors to fully understand why the school has been so exceptional as a church school over such a sustained period of time is less well developed. Self-evaluation is accurate and provides a detailed analysis of present strengths and future areas for development. Surveys of parents provide overwhelming endorsement of the school's success as a church school. 'My child has a strong sense of right and wrong and a strong moral compass, which is in no doubt reinforced by the school'. Pupil leadership is impressive, from the school council deciding on charitable giving to pupils leading worship with confidence and conviction. Links with the diocese are strong, providing opportunities for both training and advice from which the school has benefited significantly.

SIAMS report July 2015 St Mary's Church of England VA Primary School, East Barnet, EN4 8SR