

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St. Mary's Church of England Primary Academy

Hamstead Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B20 2RW

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Birmingham
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	February 2013
Name of multi-academy trust	Standalone Convertor Academy
Date of inspection	21 March 2018
Date of last inspection	21 November 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 139041
Headteacher	Jo Booker
Inspector's name and number	Marianne Phillips 586

School context

St Mary's is a larger than average primary with 401 pupils on roll. Numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) are above national average. The majority of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. The faith backgrounds of school families are representative of the main religions of the world. There are 68% of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Two pupils are in receipt of a statement or educational health care plan. The headteacher has been in post since January 2018. She was previously a deputy headteacher at the school. The school became a standalone convertor academy in 2013.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's Academy a Church of England school are outstanding

- Strong, spiritual leadership unites all faiths, cultures and groups into a harmonious supportive family, within the context of a Church of England school, and nurtures the relationships which exist, at all levels.
- The effective approaches underpinning daily life develop an understanding of Christianity as a global religion that embraces other religions and cultures, creating an environment where all are welcome.
- The shared vision and core values actively generate respect for all faiths, and strong links with the church.
- The emphasis on professional development and training, as a distinctive church school enables all to be supported, with loving care to, 'aspire to be the best that they can be'.
- The outstanding behaviour of all pupils is guided by a language of choice, that is strongly influenced by the core Christian values of 'Love, Peace and Hope', and nurtured through a focus on forgiveness.

Areas to improve

- Fully establish the work of the worship committee to embed their roles and responsibilities as leaders of worship to further support the spiritual life of the school.

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

As you enter St Mary's Academy, you are greeted by a wealth of vibrant, colourful displays and symbols. These proclaim its Christian foundation and celebrate the wide range of faiths and cultures, which make-up the school family. These include Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism. The 'Story of Easter' and the crosses, designed by each class, emphasise that Jesus is central to daily life. Comfortable seating and resources create an area where pupils of all faiths come to reflect, throughout the day. The Christian values of Love, Peace and Hope, supported by all faiths, inspire all to live harmoniously and respectfully. In addition, they use these foundation values, 'as a vehicle to create excellence, within a democratic, British, school society'. The headteacher, although only in post from the start of this term, knows the school and its needs well. She understands the pupils and families from her time as deputy. Her strong spiritual leadership is effective in driving the aspirational vision, and creating a sense of team. In the words of the prefects, 'The school inspires us to achieve what we want to be now and in later life.' The inclusive, positive systems and structures promote an environment where pupils are nurtured as unique, gifts from God. They are guided to make responsible choices. They can apply for posts of responsibility as head pupils, prefects, council and committee members. These roles actively enable them to support their peers, school life and the close relationships that exist. Pupils have a strong voice and know they make a difference, by contributing to the school's success. Consequently, there is a sense of unity and shared purpose. All pupils questioned emphasise, 'Our core values help us to behave well, be better people and to play and live together, regardless of our faiths and cultures.' As a result, respect for all is modelled by every individual and behaviour is outstanding. Parents are certain that, 'This school is an extension of family. All staff and school leaders put children first. Each person's uniqueness is celebrated and consequently, our children grow in confidence.' Pupils displaying the core values, through their actions, are nominated for the 'Kind and Thoughtful Person Award'. These are presented weekly and displayed prominently. Pupils feel safe, happy and want to come to school. Hence, attendance and punctuality is of a high standard. There are gold awards for classes above 97% and excellent attendees photographs are displayed. The headteacher and her team, have introduced rigorous monitoring and tracking systems, underpinned by the vision and values. During pupil progress meetings, individuals' learning is discussed to target support and intervention to achieve success. Government grants and the school budget are used to provide individual support through learning mentors, teaching assistants and resources. This ensures virtually all pupils progress rapidly, despite the fact that, for many, their starting points are well below national expectations. As a result, by the time they leave the school their attainment is in line or above expectation. Pupils of all abilities and faiths want to learn and are excited and challenged by the rich and exciting curriculum. Pupils' contributions, in high quality displays, evidence the variety of their experiences, through visits, residential stays and visitors. Also, the Dance Festival, Young Peoples' Parliament, sporting events, and the Royal Ballet are a few of many other examples on offer. Religious education (RE) is a very important part of the school and pupils of all ages recognise its importance. Creative teaching enables pupils to explore and apply their learning, about a range of faiths, in their daily lives. Marking in books is consistent and effective in guiding next steps. Very strong links with the church of St Mary's also support this learning. The pupils regularly engage with the Rector to discuss belief, the Bible and to worship. As the worship committee explained, 'The Rector is a character full of joy. He is entertaining and informative and he teaches us about Jesus.' As a governor he is also passionate and committed to foster the spiritual distinctiveness and success of the school. There are strong links between RE, worship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) lessons. Visits to places of worship, of all faiths, help to develop pupils' understanding of Britain as a multi-cultural country. Discussions, between all members of the school family, highlight the similarities across all faiths. This cultivates a sense of belonging to an inclusive, spiritual, global family. All groups questioned emphasise this fact. In their words, 'St Mary's is a very inclusive school family. Christianity and other faiths are explored to encourage understanding and respect of all faiths.' In so many ways, St Mary's is a school that strives to engage with its community, in all its rich diversity. However, it is proud of how its Christian tradition and witness helps its pupils to grow as caring, young citizens.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship holds a very special place at the heart of school life. Inclusive practices, provide a structure that is underpinned by the core values, that are agreed by all. The weekly worship includes whole school and class worship settings, led by staff and clergy. Pupils, of all faiths are keen to participate. They offer a welcome for all, whilst the candles of 'Love, Peace and Hope' are lit. The worship committee explain that, 'It doesn't matter if we have different beliefs. Our job is to make worship better.' Consequently, school leaders are working to harness this enthusiasm to establish worship committee members as leaders of worship. This is a priority, in the on-going drive to support the spiritual life of the school. As a school family they have discussed and shared their different visions of God. Their shared understanding of worship, as a spiritual experience, is influential in bringing everyone together to worship as a family. During worship they regularly learn about Jesus as a role model, who teaches each individual to 'treat others as they want to be treated'. They explore teaching from the Bible, core, Christian values and the 'champion

values', chosen by each class. They learn to apply these experiences to guide their daily choices. For example, through the story of Zacchaeus, they learn that we are all loved and accepted by God. They are guided to reflect on the kindness, courage and love of Jesus as a focus for personal reflection. Beautiful singing, from groups of pupils and the congregation creates a wonderful atmosphere, throughout, that is inspiring. Worship songs, prayers and blessings are predominantly Christian, celebrating the school's Anglican traditions. However, worship also draws from music, faith prayers and stories of other traditions, which ensures all are able to participate fully. Prayer is a key part of worship, often led by the pupils. All pupils know the Lord's Prayer, the school prayer and other Anglican responses and engage with these respectfully. Prayer and reflection are also encouraged throughout the day. Classroom reflection areas, the foyer and 'story garden', facilitate pupil engagement and responses. As a result, the head pupils and prefects confirm that, 'As a multi-cultural school we pray together and don't forget any faiths. Our respect for each other creates a seamless blend of cultures that makes us unique.' The Rector of St Mary's, who is a governor, leads celebration worship weekly. During this worship pupils bring their books and examples of work to share with him and the parents attending. This weekly scrutiny is one of many ways school leaders and governors ensure standards are high and monitoring rigorous. The findings from this monitoring are shared with the standards committee, by the Rector. Staff and school leaders, attending worship, also share their views, both formally and informally. Worship follows weekly themes drawn from the school's shared values. After the RE leader attended training relating to 'Understanding Christianity' all staff and each class explored their understanding of 'The Trinity'. This led to a vibrant display of work created from each class's interactions and pupils' understanding of their learning. Services in school and Church follow the Christian calendar at Harvest, Easter and Christmas. They are very popular with all families and the local community and are well attended. The views of all groups of people, making up the school family, are gathered through questionnaires. Discussions, through parent workshops and their open-door approaches, also ensure the school knows the views of its stakeholders. Parents confirm, 'The community feels this is a great school, that is welcoming and respectful of all. It makes us want to come back when we leave and stay when we can.' As a result, through its distinctive approaches, St Mary's is making a difference to the lives of the families it serves.

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

St Mary's is a school that cares passionately about its school family. Its desire to welcome, care for and respect all ensures that every individual flourishes. The high expectations and strong spiritual leadership of the headteacher and her team drives the school vision effectively. She knows the school well, through her time as deputy and head of school. She is building on the legacy of the retired executive headteacher. The focus on the shared, Christian values creates an atmosphere where relationships are strong, underpinning a common purpose to succeed. Through its focus on learning, for adults and children alike, all are inspired, 'to be the best that they can be'. As a result, many adults questioned, who came as volunteers or trainees, have stayed. School leaders are committed to nurturing the unique gifts of every individual. Investment in the lives of children, staff, parents and community is building capacity and growing leaders of all ages. Confidence grows and aspirations are raised. This influences families at home as well as in school. As parents explained, 'Our children take their learning home. We are asked about our views on values they are studying and often to engage with prayers,' The partnership with parents is strengthened through workshops and the open-door policies. Parents appreciate that their views are important, they are welcomed and listened to. The new headteacher is highly respected and parents, 'have every confidence that she is caring, forward-looking and innovative and will continue to lead this school effectively as a multi-cultural community, where all faiths are respected'. Rigorous monitoring by school leaders and governors, underpinned by their Christian values of Love, Peace and Hope, is driving school improvement effectively. The Rector, as governor, monitors worship and RE weekly, as a member of the standards committee. Link governors, through regular visits, meetings and the headteachers' report, monitor all aspects of provision. This ensures they know the strengths and the needs of the school, and target their resources and actions accordingly. As a result, standards are very high. Leadership at all levels is strong and encouraged. This is particularly strong in RE, where the skilled new leader, is being supported through a 'team approach'. The provision for RE and worship meets statutory requirements. RE follows the Birmingham agreed syllabus and guidance from the Understanding Christianity training by the diocese. Links with the church and the diocese are very strong and supportive of the spiritual life of the school. Breakfast and after school provision extend the day and provide quality support and care for the pupils. The developmental points from the previous inspection have been met.

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