

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

HADDENHAM ST MARY CE VC FIRST SCHOOL

Aston Road, Haddenham, Bucks. HP17 8AF	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Oxford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A
Date of inspection	18 October 2017
Date of last inspection	12 December 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled infants 8253073
Head teacher	Karen Collet
Inspector's name and number	Rev Tim Harper 827

School context

St Mary's is an infant's school serving the large village of Haddenham and the adjacent rural community. The majority of pupils are White British. 4.5% have special educational needs. The school has this year moved to two form entry, from one and a half forms in the last three years. This is providing new school places to match the needs of housing developments. Pupil numbers have risen from 89 at the last inspection to 159 this term. Four new classrooms have been built. The head teacher has been in post since 2011.

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

- The Christian ethos of the school makes an outstanding impact for good on the academic, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils.
- The school's distinctive Christian values are made explicit and permeate all areas of daily school life with a consequent highly beneficial effect on relationships and behaviour.
- The committed and inspirational leadership of the school has delivered a programme of development and expansion that has transformed the interior learning environment of the school for good.
- The exterior learning environment, the spiritual garden, 'Farm to fork' food programme and Eco Classroom, are exemplary and ensure excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) provision for pupils.

Areas to improve

- Enrich pupils' spiritual experience further by involving them even more fully in the delivery, planning, monitoring and evaluation of collective worship.
- Ensure that in a rapidly changing and diversifying local society the school's outstanding celebration of diversity remains a focal part of the school's distinctive Christian ethos.

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

The school's distinctive Christian character is outstanding because the well embedded Christian ethos of the school ensures that pupils of all ability levels make excellent progress regardless of their starting point. They achieve this successfully through the application of the Christian values of respect, honesty, hope, compassion, perseverance and community in the classroom and curriculum. There is close tracking of pupil progress with an emphasis on the individual child, with the result that pupils of all faiths and none are highly engaged and happy to learn. The pupils commented that, 'The teachers help us; they look after us and teach us new things.' Christianity is actively promoted and underpins the life of the school, contributing to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of the pupils. At the same time, teaching about diversity is fundamental to all school development plans and underpins the curriculum. Religious Education (RE) teaches about and from other faiths and their festivals, and these are linked with collective worship (CW) and class activities. Consequently, the pupils understand that while people have different religious beliefs, shared values can enhance mutual understanding. The distinctive Christian values of the school are well embedded and articulated by all key stakeholders, with a consequent highly beneficial effect on relationships and behaviour. The staff and pupils speak of how they use the core values to guide their path through life. A governor commented that 'The values of the school do not stop at the children being polite.' A highly effective behaviour policy, actioned sensitively, ensures that bullying is rare. This reflects best practice as detailed in the Church of England's guidance, 'Valuing All God's Children.' As a result, attendance is good, conflict and complaints are resolved quickly and compassionately. The Christian faith as understood in the Anglican tradition is taught and reinforced weekly by the parish clergy and a wider denominational view given by visitors from other churches at collective worship. In this way, pupils have developed a good understanding of Christianity and other faiths in the context of diverse British society and its values. Parents comment that, 'Church and school feel like extensions of each other.' RE makes an outstanding contribution to the curriculum, with a highly beneficial effect on the social and spiritual development of all learners. This can be seen in the way the subject is rigorously monitored and tracked by the subject leader using an evidence based approach. In addition, an important element of self-assessment by the pupils using iPads, the 'Purple Polishing', ensures that SMSC embeds the school's values in all learning. As a result, reflection contributes greatly to spiritual growth and pupil wellbeing. This can be seen in the way pupils value opportunities to consider themselves, their learning and the impact of their choices. For example, pupils know they have a choice when praying, 'We can say amen or not at the end of a prayer.'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective Worship is outstanding because a very ambitious whole school weekly programme is well planned and delivered. It fully engages pupils, parents and staff in up to six events each week. The Open the Book programme is led by three teams. These and the CW programme expects pupils to consider and respond to the theme of the session with opportunity for question and answer. Bible stories are acted out using role play, and songs are sung enthusiastically, chosen to reflect the church year. In consequence, the pupils participate and reflect seriously. Pupils express a wish to be even more involved in the planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of CW (a focus from the last inspection.) They declare, 'We pray!' The school utilises the Christian liturgical calendar, which develops pupils' understanding of key Christian festivals and days such as Christmas, Easter, Harvest and Christingle. This is enhanced by visits to St Mary's Church for festivals where pupils lead worship. These occasions are well received by parents and have a positive impact upon them. The involvement of the clergy and wider Christian ministry team in CW further develops pupil's understanding of the Anglican tradition and the seasons of the church year. Members of all faiths and none are included in CW. They feel valued and respected, a child from another faith commenting, 'You do not have to agree.' Parents from other cultures and faiths often visit the school and speak about their background and beliefs. This has resulted in prayer being accepted as an activity for all, especially through the creative medium of prayer art. CW is clearly linked to the school's core Christian values. This can be seen in the way the pupils have developed a greater understanding and ownership of CW as part of the distinctive Christian ethos of the school. In addition, parents comment favourably on the 'inherent tolerance' of the school. CW reinforces and expands the pupils' understanding of Christianity as a global faith. For example, the pupils often write to and receive letters from Stanley, a child in Haiti, who is supported by the school. The prayer trees, prayer box in the hall and classroom reflective areas are clear, engaging and well used. This has developed and embedded a sense of personal spirituality in the pupils. The consequence is that the pupils are keen to participate in CW, especially with extempore prayer. Here, the pupils' prayers often display a maturity of understanding about the Christian faith, 'Not just a list of thank-yous.' Symbols, such as a single ribbon with three separate coloured strands are effectively used when discussing God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The pupils thus confidently articulate an age appropriate understanding of the Christian recognition of God as three in one, the Trinity. CW is effectively monitored and evaluated by the school's senior leadership team, assisted by foundation governors and parish clergy. Foundation governors observe and participate in CW at least twice a month. The result is that the pupils see governors attending CW, know who they are and understand that worship is important to all.

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

Leadership and management is outstanding because the inspirational leadership of the head teacher motivates all key stakeholders to give of their best. Senior leaders, governors, parents and pupils thus strive and succeed in delivering high quality learning opportunity for all. The distinctive Christian ethos of the school and its values underpins the life of the community and ensures that the well-being of the children is maintained at a high level. This can be seen in the way the rapidly rising self-esteem in pupils of all ability levels helps them to make remarkable academic and social progress. A committed, hard-working and effective full governing body has successfully led the school through a time of rapid numerical expansion and building development. The fruit of their effort can be seen in the magnificent new wing of four classrooms and the high-quality refurbishment of the old site. Parent and pupil surveys show how this determination provide a larger school deeply committed to its Christian foundational ethos has resulted in soaring staff and pupil morale. This is underpinned by a similar renewed commitment to improving standards of learning and personal achievement. Foundation governors have recently conducted surveys on pupil responses to CW which is fed back to the full governing body. Regular governor visits ensure that RE is under constant scrutiny. A full review of RE policy is undertaken every three years. All new staff are offered training in RE, monitored by the subject leader. Training has been provided for all staff and governors on using the national SIAMS grade descriptors as a self-evaluation tool (a focus from the last inspection.) As a result, the distinctive Christian values of the school are firmly embedded in both CW and RE and teaching and learning. In preparation for future leadership in church and community schools a robust programme of training is in in place for all staff. For example, every teacher goes on a professional development course and subject leader role course each term. Within the informal federation of local schools there is mutual sharing of training and ideas, with a rota of visits to observe best practice. St Mary's is seen as a leading practitioner of this inter-school staff training approach and receives many visitors. A warm collaboration with the parish church and other local churches has reinforced the partnership of school and church, with a consequent rise in attendance at family services. A parent commented that, 'It could not be stronger. Church members are familiar faces to children, school families are familiar faces within church.' In following the Buckinghamshire Agreed Syllabus (2016) the school meets statutory requirements in RE. It exceeds them through the subject's integration of the school's core values with the creative curriculum.

SIAMS report October 2017 St Mary Haddenham HPI7 8AF