



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 Controlled Primary School

Oakfield Road  
Bridgwater  
Somerset TA6 7LX

**Previous SIAS grade: Good**

**Current SIAMS grade: Good**

**Diocese: Bath & Wells**

Local authority: Somerset

Dates of inspection: 15 July 2015

Date of last inspection: 19 July 2010

School's unique reference number: 123784

Headteacher: Mary-Jane Collington

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

#### School context

St Mary's is larger than average size primary school with 376 children in roll. The majority of children are of white British heritage. The school serves a wide community with a range of socio economic backgrounds. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly in line with national average. The numbers who are entitled to support from the pupil premium is lower than average. Attendance is above national average. Children enter the school with their development broadly in line with national expectations. Since the previous inspection there have been new extensions to the school building and the number of children entering the school is rising.

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

- Christian values are embedded in the life of the school and make a difference to children's personal development.
- Relationships throughout the school community are based on kindness and compassion and this contributes to the creation of a positive learning environment.
- School leaders and managers are strongly committed to the continual development of the school as a church school.

#### Areas to improve

- Involve the whole school community in reviewing the Christian vision and aims so that they more effectively reflect the school's current understanding of what it means to be a church school.
- Develop a shared understanding of spirituality so that high quality opportunities can be identified across the whole curriculum that deepens children's spiritual awareness.
- Develop the role of the recently formed ethos committee to effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of Christian distinctiveness on the lives of children.

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

Christian values are an important part of the life of the school and recognised by children and adults to be a central expression of what helps make them distinctively Christian. Children learn about explicit Christian values through the collective worship programme and these are then explored in the classroom and linked to the curriculum where appropriate. Children have a good understanding of values such as hope, compassion and friendship and are able to connect these to their everyday lives both in school and beyond. The school's badge reflects the Christian ethos of the school and how it is underpinned by a sense of togetherness under God's care. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection in developing its understanding of what it means to be a church school. The current aims and vision no longer fully reflect this understanding, particularly with regard to the links between aims, values and spiritual development which together contribute to the development of the whole child. Children have a very good understanding that Bible stories help them understand how values can help them to be better young people and form the basis for developing relationships with others. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. The quality of care shown by children to each other, regardless of age, is one of the outstanding qualities of the school. The school is developing its understanding of spirituality and how to ensure that times for quality reflection are an integral aspect of teaching and learning. Children respond positively to their learning and are eager to share their thoughts and ideas. Religious education (RE) lessons provide good opportunities for children to explore matters of faith and belief that contribute to their understanding of different religions and cultures, as well as developing an appreciation of them. At its best, teaching in RE challenges children through questions that encourage them to explore concepts in depth. The use of such questions across all curriculum areas has yet to be fully explored. Children at St Mary's enjoy their education and are encouraged by adults in school to grow in their learning of what it means to be fully human.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Collective worship has improved since the previous inspection with the rejuvenation of themes delivered through a two year programme that places greater emphasis on values linked to explicit Bible stories that now have more relevance to the lives of children. Weekly themes link Christian teaching to other aspects of the children's learning such as RE and social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL). These links provide good opportunities for children to explore how Bible teaching can help them in their everyday life. Children feel strongly that acts of worship are an important part of being a church school because they are 'times to come together to talk to God' and 'learn about Jesus'. Children have a mature appreciation of prayer and how it can be used to bring comfort to those in need. They have a strong conviction that God values every person and listens to them regardless of whether they have a faith or not. There are very good opportunities for children to pray and reflect outside of acts of worship. Reflection areas in every classroom include prayers that children have written themselves and opportunities to explore their thoughts about values. Children say that these areas are important because they give them a place to 'think of things other than to do with school'. There are effective opportunities in worship for children to consider the meaning of the Trinity. They know that it is 'God in three parts' as Father, Son and Spirit. Children talk confidently about their interpretation of what this means to them and are comfortable to admit that they get 'confused about it at times'. Evaluation of collective worship is well-established and involves adults and children. Children have good opportunities to participate in worship and are involved in some of its planning and leading. The celebration of major Christian festivals at the church is an important part of the life of the school for children and parents. Easter and Christmas services are part of the fabric of the school and help to mark the year. The annual leavers' service at the church is a wonderful time for the school community to come together to witness the Christian ethos in action. Children in Year 6 show a marked degree of care for their buddies from Reception as they share their thoughts before the whole community. It is an inspirational moment in the life of the school which reflects the school's success in developing children who are growing and learning.

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

The headteacher has ensured that the school has continued to make progress as a church school and has moved forward since the previous inspection. She has a clear grasp of the purpose of being a church school and that its aims have meaning to all members of the school community. The headteacher, together with other school leaders and managers, have accurately identified that the time is right to review these aims so that they more closely reflect the current understanding of what it means to be a church school. The headteacher is committed to this continual development and is fully supported by her staff and the governing body. The chair of governors and foundation governors share the headteacher's enthusiasm to further develop the Christian ethos. Self-evaluation is accurate and supported by strong evidence. Leaders and managers have a very clear grasp of how to continue to improve and possess a good capacity to move forward. The leadership has recently identified the need to establish an ethos committee with responsibility to monitor and evaluate the impact of the Christian ethos. The establishment of this committee is a reflection of the commitment towards the church foundation. The role of the ethos committee is still at an early stage. Parents feel strongly that the school is an inclusive community that promotes a distinctive Christian ethos but does it in such a way that everyone feels ownership of it regardless of their background. Religious education has a high profile within the school and makes a valuable contribution to the children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development. The RE subject leaders has a good understanding of the subject and what needs to be done to improve it further. Links with the parish church are a vital part of the life of the school. Children regard the church as 'theirs' and the vicar as part of the school. The vicar has recently been appointed but is already a part of the school community and the school is excited about the many ways that they can build closer relationships. There is a strong commitment between school and church to continue to work and grow together to serve the needs of the children. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report July 2015 St Mary's CE VC Primary School Bridgwater TA6 7LX