



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### St Mary and St John CE VA Primary School

Meadow Lane, Oxford OX4 1TJ

**Previous SIAMS grade: Satisfactory**

**Current SIAMS grade: Good**

**Diocese: Oxford**

Local authority: Oxfordshire

Date of inspection: 7 March 2016

Date of last inspection: 10 and 11 January 2011

School's unique reference number: 123213

Headteacher: Liz Burton

Inspector's name and number: Robin Sharples 398

#### School context

St Mary and St John CE Primary school is an urban school with a multi-cultural catchment with 412 children on roll. The school which was on two sites one for Key Stage 1 and one for Key Stage 2 has been on one site since September. Foundation age children are taught at Comper Foundation Stage School. The school has an average number of children with special needs and a lower than average number of children in receipt of free school meals.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary and St John CE Primary school as a Church of England school are good.

- Leaders' vision for a distinctive church school has led to the development of a strong, ethos which ensures that the school's Christian values are integral to the life of the school.
- The Headteacher's strong leadership has created a nurturing environment in which staff model Christian values.
- The school has very good relationships with the local church, exemplified by lively engagement from the clergy, who give a solid basis for the school's distinctive character.

#### Areas to improve

- Use the National Society self-evaluation schedule to create an action plan to sit alongside the school development plan in order to take the school to outstanding.
- Enrich the provision of spiritual (not exclusively religious) experiences through which children develop their own spiritual language and ways of expressing thoughts and feelings.

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

The strong emphasis on the learning needs of the children is set in a firm context of Christian values as defined by the school's mission statement. This ethos leads to consistently good teaching and the good use of assessment information ensuring that all learners make good progress as confirmed by a recent Local Authority assessment. The strong ethos means that parents are confident in the school's ability to deal with any issues which arise, attendance is good and any exclusions are dealt with in a manner which enable the pupils to be welcomed back into the community as early as possible. Because the school's mission statement is upheld by all members of the community teaching is effective, classes are industrious and focussed and children know what they are learning and why they are doing certain activities, whether this is a discussion, artwork or a maths test. The children understand that their school is a special community bound by its Christian values and talk easily about their place in that community. The school council for example identified the importance of their work in improving the school through such things as a drive for tidy cloakrooms alongside engagement with charities. The bringing together of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 on one site has had a very good impact on the community, the children were very enthusiastic about the additional opportunities and responsibilities that this has brought such as the links between older and younger pupils. The children see such things as a valuable part of school, talk fluently about moral and social responsibility and express an appropriate understanding of British Values. However when discussing moral and social aspects of behaviour they do not always see their actions as being drawn from Christian values. Children's choices focussed on consequences rather than being made on the basis of Biblical examples or Christian values. Children have very well-developed, inclusive understanding of cultural diversity, they see the importance of faith in people's lives and discuss this with great respect for the ideas and opinions of others.

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

Worship has a high profile in the life of the school. The community dimension of worship has considerably improved since the last inspection with a very wide range of people attending and an increasing amount of participation and leadership from children. The school has actively sought to enhance these aspects of worship through staff attendance at courses and developing the place of worship within the school. Pupils appreciate the chances to engage and reflect and these opportunities are developing as the worship patterns evolve. Worship includes a range of appropriate elements such as the lighting of a candle, prayer, song and story - the gathering music (Karl Jenkins' *Agnus Dei*) was particularly effective. Children speak of worship enthusiastically as an opportunity to share ideas. The range of elements included enables the children to find their own favourite or engaging parts. This is complemented by the use of the Christian year in planning themes. Children have written prayers of their own and regularly contribute them to worship, they are also seen on the prayer trees in school. Worship also develops children's understanding of Jesus and places the values of the school in a Christian context. Reflective areas and displays in classrooms and general areas of the school increase the impact of this throughout the community. Bible stories are used well and are complemented by material from other faiths as children explore their ideas of faith and values as illustrated in a recent hall display. The local incumbent plays a very significant role encouraging and challenging the community to develop their understanding of the school's Christian values. The pattern of worship across the week includes key stage worship and parents are encouraged to attend. This has been successful and has had a significant impact on the school community; parents also contribute by playing the piano for worship.

**The effectiveness of Religious Education is good**

Religious Education (RE) has a good impact on children, they talk fluently and knowledgeably about their work in RE. Learning has been considerably enhanced by the introduction of the new agreed syllabus and the emphasis on big questions. This has enabled pupils to bring their

own understandings and ideas into their learning. There are some particularly good examples in school such as work on dress and belonging. Effective assessment is being developed alongside the new syllabus and assessment without levels in the rest of the curriculum. Some good RE teaching was seen which engaged children well and was woven into cross-curricular art work. Children discussed RE with enthusiasm and spoke about multi-cultural issues and the importance of such matters as life and death. One thing children mentioned as of overriding significance is that in their discussion 'no-one judges'. The children are encouraged to make their own choices based on sound knowledge of faith and non-faith life-stances. Pupils are thoughtful and reflective but their ability for personal spiritual reflection or experience does not match their awareness of social or moral concerns. Children tended to talk of *facts*, *thinking* and *meaning* (learning about) rather than *experience* *feeling* and *personal response* (learning from). RE is well led, teachers are enthusiastic and it has a strong profile in the curriculum. There is much good work in books and the school is working hard at developing consistency in marking and outcomes for pupils as the new syllabus is embedded.

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

Everyone at St Mary and St John has worked very hard since the last church inspection, very significant progress has been made and the areas for development have been fully addressed. The staff team is strong and well supported by the leadership. Teaching and other members of staff are encouraged to pursue their professional development which has increased the effectiveness of both teaching and administration. Members of staff also comment on the positive team work and mutual support within the school. Governors articulate a coherent vision for the school which has been carefully developed within the expectations of the church Trust Deed to ensure that the school is fully inclusive. Whilst it achieves this, there is some blurring of the distinction between Church and Christian so, for example, when values feature in worship this is sometimes seen as a Church context rather than a reflection of school ethos. This affects some of the children who don't go to church in that the values can be seen as *Church* values and thus have no meaning for them. The mission statement is found in all the schools documentation and is prominent in the website. School self-evaluation is very strong from an 'Ofsted' perspective and the school is to be congratulated in maintaining the excellent standards of recent years, self-evaluation as a church school under the current SIAMS schedule is not as well developed. Worship and RE meet statutory requirements. Parents were at pains to point out that the values of the school, while being drawn out of the Christian foundation of the school are values which are universal in their application. In talking about the distinctive character of the school parents suggested that the school has achieved a good balance of faith and inclusivity but also commented on the great value of keeping '*faith alive for children*', this is regarded as a very valuable element of school.