



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

Chanters Road
Bideford
EX39 2QN

Current SIAMS grade: Good

Previous SIAS grade: Good

Diocese: Exeter

Local authority: Devon

Dates of inspection: 28th April 2015

Date of last inspection: 1st December 2009

School's unique reference number: 113385

Headteacher: Adrian Scarrett

Inspector's name and number: Linda Rudge, 791

School context

St Mary's is a larger than average school with 402 pupils aged 4 to 11 years. It is situated in a residential district of this coastal town. Pupil premium funding is lower than average. The majority of pupils are identified as white British, with a small number of pupils of other backgrounds. The school has successfully addressed most of the areas for improvement in the last Church school inspection.

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

- Christian values have a direct and positive impact on pupils' overall progress.
- Worship is a central part of school life and its agreed values have a direct and positive impact on behaviour and relationships.
- Parents report a high level of satisfaction with the school's leadership and see the school as a living witness to the Christian foundation and to its chosen values.

Areas to improve

- Opportunities across the curriculum to promote spiritual development and deep thinking
- Shared and planned opportunities for self-evaluation of the school's ethos and worship to involve all parts of the school community especially pupils.
- The representation of the Church through the re-appointment of trained foundation governors in order to sustain improvement.

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

The school's community spirit is based on reflective action and high aspirations. All pupils feel welcomed and supported in their personal and academic development. This is reflected in rising attendance rates and a stable school population. Pupils love their school and they enjoy learning. The school's membership of the Atlantic Coast Co-operative Trust (ACCT) provides access to a broad curriculum and extra-curricular activities. These help pupils to feel involved in the wider community. There has been sustained progress in pupil attainment for most groups in the last six months. Pupils who have identified special educational needs achieve well. This progress is attributed by pupils and parents to the school's Christian ethos, its agreed values, effective pastoral care, and the use of specially trained staff who offer counselling and social support. The Christian roots of the five agreed values, chosen by pupils with staff guidance, are explored effectively through Bible stories in RE and worship and through engaging displays around the school. Direct teaching about the Christian concept of 'Forgiveness', for example, has helped to improve pupils' relationships and with improvements in behaviour for effective learning. 'Saying sorry' cards help pupils to show their feelings to each other if words are difficult to find. Parents and church representatives report that the values-led teaching has also had impact on pupil relationships at home and in the wider community. The school actively supports local and global charities and has creative and supportive links with schools in Uganda and India. Pupils can talk about these schools with enthusiasm and a good knowledge of other ways of life. There are some opportunities planned in teaching across subjects to promote deeper thinking and spiritual development. This is at an early stage of development but is already leading to pupil enquiries based on 'big questions' about life. Pupils of all ages talk about how religious education (RE) helps them to learn about themselves and about other people including those of other faiths. Displays of RE work enhance the school's distinctive environment, and promote pupils' respect for diversity in other world faiths. However, pupils have only a basic understanding of Christianity as a diverse multicultural world-faith and this limits their spiritual and cultural development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is inclusive and it takes place in large groups or in class settings where quiet areas are used by pupils for personal reflection. The school's emphasis on the value of worship is seen through careful planning shared with the local incumbent, and skilled leadership in assemblies and class worship. Some pupils and staff speak openly about how prayer can help them to deal with challenges in life, and to celebrate happy events. The whole school worship observed during the inspection visit showed pupils of all ages demonstrating sound knowledge of songs and responses, and a great enthusiasm for the daily event. Pupils often take lead roles in worship and they enjoy reading prayers they have written in class. Pupils talked during the day about the school's recent initiatives to move worship to the end of the day as a positive opportunity to 'round the day off' and to 'go home thinking about our prayers'. Pupils of all ages can explain their understanding of Christian concepts they learn about in both RE and worship. The regular presence of the parish incumbent as a worship leader enables continuity, progression and outstanding impact on the pupils' learning about the Church's year. The current range of Christian leaders in worship limits pupils' social and cultural development as they do not regularly encounter other churches in Bideford. The school sees worship as a central part of school improvement strategies, especially in its links to behaviour, positive relationships and achievement. This has led directly to the sustained quality of worship at the school during a difficult period of change and uncertainty. However, too few acts of worship promote the pupils' understanding of key elements of Anglican tradition and practice. Pupils are not currently involved closely in reviewing and planning worship on a regular basis.

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

Leaders and governors of St Mary's know their school, its teachers, its pupils, and their families, very well. This means that they are able to talk about the relationship between the school's Church foundation and its interpretation in this local community with conviction and accuracy. Shared leadership amongst staff and governors is clearly embedded in Christian values and in a set of aims that appeal to all. These aims are illustrated in the Bridge logo of the 'BASE' aims of the school (Belong, Achieve, be Safe and Enjoy) which makes reference to the Church of England foundation and implicitly to the supportive and positive nature of the school. Staff members, governors and parents know the impact of values such as friendship and trust on the attitudes, achievement and self-worth of the pupils. They also show pupils how these can be interpreted in a Christian way through Biblical texts and pupils are able to show their understanding of these teachings accurately and with enthusiasm. The staff and governors have a good understanding of the school's performance and distinctiveness as a Church foundation, and they know that there are areas to develop, for example through the re-appointment of foundation governors and through the wider involvement of parents and pupils in self-evaluation. Arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. The allocation of funds for dedicated staff with pastoral roles including bereavement support, have enhanced the Christian ethos and daily life in the school. Pupils feel safe, valued and cared for in all areas of their development. The school participates in professional development through the Diocese and this is gradually contributing to the future leadership of church schools. RE is given a good level of support and resources, but this provision needs to be embedded in professional development for all teachers. The distinctiveness of the school as a community church school also has mutually beneficial links through its immediate school partners in the ACCT. Teachers and pupils are also benefitting from these arrangements and they all express a sense of worth and uphold an ethos in which they can develop as members of the community. This is a good church school led by highly committed senior staff and governors.

SIAMS report St Mary's Bideford VC Primary School EX39 2QN