CHURCH OF ENGLAND
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The Methodist Church

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Higher Trehaverne
Truro TR1 3RJ

Current SIAMS grade: Good
Previous SIAS grade: Good
Diocese: Truro
Local authority: Cornwall
Dates of inspection: 16th June 2015
Date of last inspection: 20th May 2010
School's unique reference number: 9083091
Headteacher: Dianne Jones
Inspector's name and number: Linda Rudge, 791

School context

St Mary's is a smaller than average school with 200 pupils aged 4 to 11 years. It is situated in a central residential district of the city. The majority of pupils are identified as white British with a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. The number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above national average, and the number of children in receipt of pupil premium funding is below the national average.

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

- The school's Christian character has a direct and positive impact on pupils' overall progress especially through high standards of achievement and inclusivity
- Worship continues to be a central part of school life, enhanced by new prayer spaces, and it is highly valued across the community
- The school's leaders and managers have sustained mutually beneficial relationships with the local church and with the wider community

Areas to improve

- Develop a clear shared definition of spirituality that is embedded across all subject areas to promote pupils' spiritual development and deeper thinking about 'big questions'
- Shared and planned opportunities for a review of the school's values and worship to involve all parts of the school community, especially pupils
- Links between distinctiveness and school improvement strategies to help everyone understand the central role of the Christian foundation in school achievements

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

The school's community has much to celebrate and to be proud of; it is an inclusive and purposeful place to live and learn. Parents speak highly of St Mary's, and the majority actively support the Christian foundation and ethos, many attending school worship events at the local church. Pupils from all backgrounds, of all faiths and worldviews, feel welcomed and supported in their personal and academic development. All pupils make rapid progress over time, and this includes those with special educational needs. The school makes good use of additional resources to support these pupils, and decisions about inclusion are based firmly on the Christian ethos. Pupils love their school and its inspirational environment, and they enjoy learning. The school provides access to a broad curriculum and extra-curricular activities such as Breakfast club, sports and creative arts groups, and the 'JAFFA' group in which a Christian youth leader helps pupils to explore faith in more depth. The school's values are drawn from pupil versions of the 'Ten Commandments' and these are published on the website and around the school. As yet, these values are not explained securely by all pupils, teachers and parents, Detailed links between them and Jesus's teaching have to be embedded in terms of some pupils' understanding of their impact. However, pupils' personal attributes, their positive behaviour and the excellent relationships around the school clearly demonstrate the Christian values of Forgiveness and Love. The school actively supports local and global charities and has supportive sponsorship links with a child in Africa. Pupils of all ages enjoy religious education (RE) and talk about how it helps them to learn about themselves and about other people, including those of other faiths. The 'Where in the World' unit drawn from the Barnabas scheme is particularly effective in terms of promoting pupils' respect for diversity in world faiths. RE makes positive contributions to the school's character through its curriculum and, for example, through active and appropriate links with the local church, and through affective enquiry based visits to the cathedral. Some of the older pupils' written work in RE shows a high degree of reflectivity and spiritual awareness, and a good understanding of the Christian way of life, but this is still an area for development in Key Stage 1. Similarly, the school is still at an early stage of developing ways of promoting spiritual development through deep thinking across the curriculum, for example in Science.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship continues to be highly valued across the school community. Worship is inclusive, attended by all, and it is engaging and inspirational. Daily organised worship takes place in large groups or in class settings where the symbol of the cross provides a focus, and where candles are lit to show that a special time is being provided for reflection, and for encounter with God. Quiet and colourful prayer spaces around the school, trialled and reviewed since the last inspection are used by pupils for personal reflection and as somewhere to go for inspiration and support. The school's emphasis on the value of worship is seen through careful planning discussed with church representatives. Whole school worship is inspirational in its skilled leadership and in the impact on pupils' personal behaviour, respect for others, and a willingness to take social or charitable action in response to the themes. Many pupils, some very young, and some members of staff are happy to speak openly about how prayer can help them to deal with challenges in life, and also to celebrate happy events and achievements. The whole school worship observed during the inspection visit showed pupils of all ages demonstrating an active interest in the theme of Forgiveness, and a sound knowledge of prayer. Pupils of all backgrounds and ages often take lead roles in worship, and they enjoy reading prayers they have written. A prayer net at the front of the school assembly hall is a popular place where pupils leave their prayers to be read out, or just to be seen by others. Pupils of all ages can explain their understanding of Christian concepts, and some Anglican practices, that they learn about in both RE and worship. Pupils are not yet involved closely in reviewing and planning worship on a regular basis, although they do provide feedback on worship.

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

Teachers, school leaders and governors of St Mary's show how the school is a reflective Christian foundation through their actions and their planning. They are able to talk with some confidence about the relationship between the school's Church foundation and its specific positive interpretation in this local community where families who attend church regularly are in a minority. Staff members, governors and parents know the impact of Christian values and ways of living on the developing attitudes, achievement and self-worth of the pupils. The 'green for growth' marking policy has helped to raise standards in all areas of teaching and learning, and has promoted effectively the concept of respect. The 'Beautiful World' awards also promote self-esteem and confidence, as well as securing pupils' understanding of the story of the Good Samaritan at a level appropriate to their ages. Some older pupils are beginning to show their deeper understanding of Biblical teachings in their RE work, and in their peer leadership. Arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements, and a revised curriculum for RE is providing more time for the continuous and progressive study of Christianity. The school participates in professional development through the Diocese and the local authority and it is also contributing to the future leadership of church schools through its work on prayer spaces. The links with the local parish church and with Baptist and Methodist communities are mutually beneficial and lead to exciting school worship, local visits and festivals. RE is given a good level of support and resources, but this provision needs to be secured through shared professional development for all teachers. This is a good church school led by highly committed and successful senior staff and governors who are supportive of the school's Christian character.

SIAMS report St Mary's Truro VC Primary School TR1 3RJ