

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### St. Mark's Church of England Primary School

<b>Address</b>	Danebury Road, Hatch Warren, Basingstoke, RG22 4US		
<b>Date of inspection</b>	04 July 2019	<b>Status of school</b>	VA primary
<b>Diocese</b>	Winchester	<b>URN</b>	131450

<b>Overall Judgement</b>	<b>How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Additional Judgements</b>	<b>The impact of collective worship</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
	<b>The effectiveness of religious education (RE)</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

#### School context

St. Mark's is a Church of England voluntary aided primary school with 632 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is in line with the national average. The number of pupils with special educational needs who also have educational healthcare plans is above the national average. The school's 'Bridge Resource' provides specialist provision for pupils with complex educational needs. The headteacher was appointed in September 2017. The school site is shared with the parish church.

#### The school's Christian vision

We are ambitious for all our pupils to **achieve well** and believe that in order to realise this we must put **character before qualification**. We do this through being **rooted in our distinctively Christian values** of love, forgiveness, hope and faith. We want our children to **positively impact our world**. How do we do all of this? We grow and learn together, **'In God's love.'**

Our Christian Values, Learning Behaviours and HeartSmart High Fives work together to develop the heart and mind of each child and adult in our school.

#### Key findings

- St. Mark's Christian vision, strongly underpinned by the values, is fundamental to everyday life and the future direction of the school's work. The vision shapes this exceptionally caring and compassionate school community.
- High quality learning experiences within an innovative curriculum are instrumental in developing pupils' excellent personal and spiritual development.
- Religious education (RE) and collective worship significantly support the school's vision and pupils can confidently discuss how their themes influence daily life.
- The strong and mutually beneficial partnership between the school and parish church contributes to the school's distinctive Christian character.

#### Areas for development

- Establish a positive working relationship with the newly appointed vicar so the church and school partnership is strengthened even further.
- Seek additional opportunities to support other Church schools with their Christian development so St. Mark's excellent practice can be shared and teachers' leadership skills beyond the school are developed.
- Extend the responsibilities for pupils who lead collective worship by giving them an even greater role in worship organisation, delivery and monitoring.

## **How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?**

### **Inspection findings**

St. Mark's Christian vision is deeply influenced by teachings within the Bible and it is well understood by its community. This vision perfectly describes life within St. Mark's primary school where everybody matters! The vision is underpinned by Christian values of 'Faith, Forgiveness, Hope and Love' that work in conjunction with the HeartSmart programme's 'High Fives' values. These values all work together, positively supporting the emotional, social and academic development of each individual pupil. The vision is also at the heart of key decision-making, supporting leaders when difficult choices have to be made.

The headteacher, in partnership with his leadership team, has a deep commitment to the school's Christian ethos and this significantly influences his leadership style and ambitious approach to Church school development. An extremely caring and nurturing school environment has been created where all members can flourish. The school has welcomed into its community a number of pupils with significantly complex needs. Their emotional and academic needs require high levels of support that the school provides, despite the challenges faced regarding their resourcing. A number of pupils have been identified as Young Carers. These pupils are supported with their own exclusive programme of activities, including dedicated special lunches that are particularly enjoyed. Parents and carers are extremely appreciative of the substantial time given by the school to support their children. Professionals from outside agencies who work with the school praise the extremely high levels of support given to vulnerable children, stating that the school goes 'above and beyond' in meeting their needs.

Leadership monitoring increases the effectiveness of the school's journey as a distinctively Christian school. Governors have a significant presence, supporting many school activities, including worship. This regular participation gives governors numerous opportunities to see the impact of the school's provision on pupil behaviour and learning. They work closely with the headteacher and leadership team, and are comfortable in asking challenging questions. A close partnership with the diocese allows the school to regularly access high quality professional development and advice. The school is now in a position to extend its support to other Church schools with their Christian development so St. Mark's excellent practice can be shared.

Leaders have a strong belief that all pupils can achieve success when they learn within a caring environment that encourages excellence as a reachable goal. Special events have allowed pupils to meet inspirational role models who follow a wide range of careers, some being parents of the school's pupils. Pupils understand that aspiration and future career choices are something you have to work for with hard work, ambition and dedication. The innovative and engaging school curriculum, where pupils are supported and challenged, is ensuring they have their best chances for achievement. The school's values provide an understandable framework, supporting positive behaviour both inside and outside of the classrooms. Pupils with specific educational needs receive highly individualised provision, allowing them to experience success. This has led to the school's academic progress being broadly in line with national figures.

Pupils have a growing knowledge and understanding of world religions. They appreciate faith similarities as well as differences and can clearly explain why respect should be shown to all religions. They know that all faiths are very important to believers. RE and collective worship both make regular references to the Christian values of the school, therefore making them relevant at age appropriate levels. Pupils confidently explain how they apply the Christian values to their lives. One pupil explained how the HeartSmart value 'Don't rub it in, rub it out' value helped his friends to forgive him when he was a bit unkind to them.

Pupils are aware that some peoples' lives are not as advantaged as their own and are encouraged to think beyond themselves. With this in mind, the school has led a Changing the World initiative where pupils within each class decide upon a cause that could impact positively on others. For example, reducing the use of single use plastic and making mini essential items kits for homeless people. St. Mark's and Immanuel Church have a long established partnership with the Raising Hope Foundation that supports orphaned and vulnerable children in a small village in Ghana. School staff and church members have visited the village and its school, ensuring pupils have an understanding of their charity work's impact with regular news. Local causes are also supported such as the Basingstoke Foodbank and the Macmillan cancer charity.

The school building, with its displays of beautiful artwork and other curriculum evidence, provides a very attractive and stimulating learning environment, all due to the pride and care given by the school's staff and pupils. Immanuel church is currently in an interregnum period, however, partnerships with other clergy and church members have ensured that the church's presence within the school has been maintained and developed. For example, a much enjoyed pupil worship takes place in the church each week, planned and delivered by the lay minister. The school's leaders were delighted to be involved in the recruitment day for appointing the new vicar, placing the school at the heart of the process. Candidates were able to appreciate the significant importance of the church and school partnership. The whole school now looks forward to welcoming their new vicar into their Christian community.

Inspired by the school's vision and underpinned by the Christian values, collective worship and RE offer pupils opportunities to further develop their capacity to ask big questions, for example, 'Where was God during the world wars?' Pupils are encouraged to think deeply and widely, guided by teachers' skilled questioning. They are used to situations where there are a range of viewpoints. However, pupils say that all opinions should be respected and having a different opinion to somebody else is fine.

Collective worship is a special time in the school day and Anglican practices make it a distinctively Christian worship experience. Prayer and reflection opportunities are given within worship and throughout the school day. Interactive reflection experiences within the school support this, for example, one pupil stated, 'Writing my name on God's hand and seeing how unique my fingerprint is made me feel really special.' Pupils are able to reflect on Bible stories they have heard and also able to explain the lessons within the stories that can apply to life today. They say they would like more opportunities to plan and deliver worship as they particularly enjoy worships where they participate.

Parents describe the headteacher and all staff as visible and approachable presences within the school. Their nurturing manner and prompt action taken when dealing with concerns is greatly appreciated.



### **The effectiveness of RE is Excellent**

Teaching and learning in RE is excellent. The two subject leaders are supported in their role and this allows them to monitor the quality of RE across the school, offering knowledgeable guidance. Skilled questioning is encouraging pupils to think deeply around the themes and their respectful listening to others allows them to consider aspects they may not have initially considered. Pupils achieve well in the subject and there is a clear link with the school's Christian vision and values. Class RE books are carefully presented and learning statements from the children are captured, giving teachers important information regarding pupils' levels of understanding. Assessment systems are in place, accurately informing future learning needs. Teachers are confident in their delivery of the relatively new Understanding Christianity materials. The RE leader engages with other schools in mutually supportive partnerships which positively impacts on the future development of RE within the school.

Headteacher	Charles Applegate
Inspector's name and number	Lorraine Pugh 819