

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St. Mark's Church of England Junior School

Somerset Road, Salisbury, SP1 3BL	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	1 January 2015
Name of multi-academy trust	Somerset Road Education Trust
Date of inspection	5 April 2017
Date of last inspection	20 January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy converter Junior 141645
Headteacher	Gareth Flemington
Inspector's name and number	Lesley Turville 732

School context

St Mark's is a larger than average urban junior school with 359 children on roll. The school converted to an academy in January 2015 when it formed a Multi-Academy Trust with Wyndham Park Infants and Exeter House Special school. They share one campus site. It is also part of a six-school consortium offering school direct teacher training. The school serves a community of owner occupied houses with some social housing. Social deprivation is measured as low. Currently there are significantly more boys than girls. Ethnic minority groups are broadly in line with national averages. Inward mobility is well below national. Children with identified special needs requiring support are below national. There are strong links with the local churches of St Mark's and St Francis.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Marks C.E. Junior School as a Church of England school are good

- Strong leadership from the longstanding headteacher and governors ensure that the Christian ethos of the school is accurately evaluated, protected and developed when making strategic decisions.
- The newly appointed religious education (RE) and spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) coordinator ensures that these subjects impact strongly on pupils becoming articulate, reflective learners.
- The very close and mutually supportive links with local churches shape the way pupils and parents see the school as a church school.
- Innovative ways of reaching out to parents, notably the creation of 'The Street', reflect the school's commitment to reach out to the wider community.

Areas to improve

- Embed the recent emphasis on spiritual reflection (window, mirror and door) and find ways to link this to the school motto so that all stakeholders understand link between reflective learning, the Christian character of the school and pupil achievement and wellbeing.
- Enable pupils to plan and lead worship so that they grow in their understanding of Anglican traditions and practices and are better able to evaluate effectively when asked to do so.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to meet and talk with people of differing faith traditions to further enhance children's understanding of how faith impacts on daily life.

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

St Mark's strong Christian ethos expressed as 'Reaching in, Reaching up and Reaching out' nurtures everyone as an individual. This is achieved through its commitment to discovering talents and inner strength, fostering wonder and enquiry about the world and God and showing compassion and respect for all. Underpinning this is a focus on Christian values with love, honesty, respect and trust being the core group. Children know the motto and explain how it impacts on their daily lives. They feel valued and are confident to express their thoughts and beliefs knowing that they will be respected. They explain how their growth mindset teaching helps them to meet challenges and turn negatives into positives. This means that academic standards meet national expectations by the time children leave with reading being well above the national. The school has recently defined what it means by spiritual development and introduced reflection techniques based on the window, (looking onto the world), mirror (reflecting on yourself) and door (applying what you have learnt). These approaches are producing highly reflective learners who are well prepared to meet the challenges of secondary school life and beyond. The school has identified the need to embed these changes and revisit its vision to find a way to more clearly link the schools ethos to its pedagogy.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is important to the school and planned opportunities for the development of these are woven into the exciting curriculum and extra-curricular activities. A key strength is the specialised provision for music, sport, art and computing. This also allows staff to meet as year group teams to plan and monitor provision and standards. As a result children are highly motivated and attendance is good. Behaviour is good but when children need time out they are encouraged to reflect on what they have done and are invited to atone by writing a letter of apology. In this way a spirit of repentance and forgiveness is fostered.

Children are articulate and thoughtful in discussions. This is further evidenced in the good RE provision that has a considerable impact on the development of the Christian character of the school. It is seen as a core subject by school leaders. The school uses 'The Discovery' scheme to ensure it covers the locally agreed syllabus and children value the chance to discuss big issues such as 'what is good about Good Friday?' All children agree that it is important to learn about other faiths and to show respect for the beliefs of others. Children enjoy the more relaxed nature of RE and the chance to use drama and debate. They talk with knowledge about a range of world faiths and recognise that Christianity has a variety of beliefs within it. However children would like to have the opportunity to meet with and discuss belief with people of faith. As one child explained, 'we get to learn about faith in general terms but it would be lovely to talk about specifics'. This would also help to deepen their understanding of Christian as a world faith.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship and the strong relationships with the local churches of St Mark's and St Francis are key contributors that ensure that all in the school understand and live out its Christian foundation. Worship illustrates the school motto and a range of Christian values by linking them to biblical teaching and stories from the Bible. Children say they enjoy worship, especially the singing and excitedly mention hymns that are favourites to them. These are carefully chosen to link to those sung in church. They further explain that 'God has given us all free will' but that worship can make them 'aspire to live a good life'. This is illustrated by the many charities supported by the school and the respect shown to each other. Children also say that it brings 'them closer to God every day'.

Children and parents of all faiths and none feel valued which was illustrated on the day of inspection by the Easter service held in the packed local church where everyone joyfully came together to worship. Children shared an inspirational service combining song, drama, music, art, poetry and prayer to explain how the Easter Story of Salvation fits into God's big plan. This illustrates the way worship themes seep out and impact the whole curriculum. The depth of learning for year 5 children was seen in the way they explained their art work and in the thought provoking prayers and poems reflecting on the Crucifixion. Similar events, led by different year groups, mark other major festivals. Weekly clergy led worship in school adds to this and ensures that pupils understand the pattern of the church year and a range of styles and approaches. In addition a weekly lunch time club run by the church youth worker is well attended and provides an opportunity for pupils to explore biblical teachings in a more personal way.

Pupils identify that they would like to be more involved in school worship and would value the chance to plan as well as lead on a more regular basis. Leaders recognise that this would also improve the quality of their understanding and evaluation of worship which is currently limited. Acts of worship include symbols and artefacts such as a candle and cross. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of these symbolism citing the lit candle as representing 'Jesus the light of the world' and the cross as a symbol of forgiveness. The older children talk knowingly about The Trinity and the symbolism of the bread and wine used in communion as they have learnt about these in RE lessons. Whilst staff attend worship, they do not lead on a regular basis. New 'Roots and Fruits' material

has been bought to help them grow in this area. In worship, children are invited to pray and reflect on how they can take lessons learnt out into the school day. Prayers are also said at lunch time using ones written by children in lesson time. However new spiritual areas in each class are inconsistent in the opportunities they provide for interaction and personal prayer.

Governors regularly attend worship to monitor provision and children's engagement. They also regularly talk with them about worship. In this way they accurately evaluate worship which leads to action planning for improvement and ensures that it meets statutory requirements.

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

St. Mark's C.E. Junior school has maintained and developed its longstanding Christian vision through a period of change as it joined with two local non-church schools to become a multi-academy trust. Directors and governors are vigilant in ensuring that each school maintains its own unique character whilst working together for the good of each other. They ensure that policies for collective worship, RE and subjects such as 'sex and relationships education' are written by the schools themselves to reflect their individual needs. This sympathetic leadership has ensured close mutually beneficial working relationships. This is illustrated by all schools accessing Local Authority and Diocese training opportunities. The school is also a member of a local consortium of six schools which further enables shared expertise and training opportunities.

Since the last inspection school leaders have introduced school governor days. These mean that relationships in the school are more open and governors can challenge from a position of knowledge. In addition, good use is made of pupil voice and parent questionnaires. As a result, school self-evaluation is accurate and the School Development Plan and Christian ethos action plan reflect accurately where the school needs to improve performance. Areas for development from the previous inspection have been mostly met with plans in place to meet the one area still to be addressed. New work on spirituality means that the school now has another layer of reflective principles, illustrated by the symbols of a window, mirror and door which shape work in the classroom. Governors recognise and have planned for a revisiting of their vision and values and try to draw these new elements and the school values together under their motto of 'Reaching in, Reaching up, Reaching out'.

Staff are encouraged to learn and grow with individual expertise acknowledged and used across the school for specialist teaching allowing year groups to meet together to plan. Senior leaders are empowered and the deputy headteacher has recently left to take up leadership of her own school. The new RE and SMSC coordinator is attending and providing relevant training so that all staff feel more confident and knowledgeable about new schemes of work and initiatives. She has started 'book looks' and lesson observations and is keen to ensure that assessment shows that standards in RE match those in other core subjects.

Relationships across the school and community are excellent. The school ethos of reaching out is seen in the unique development of 'The Street'. This is an area between infant and junior school where parents congregate daily. To serve their needs the school has set up a cafe with undercover seating and a packed lunch depot. Parents now meet over a coffee, buy their child's lunch and meet school staff in an informal way.

The longstanding and mutually beneficial links with local churches shape the way the school is perceived as a church school in the community. Parents value these links and say their children are being nurtured and are very happy and that the school models Christian values. They appreciate the personal care they receive from staff of both the church and school in difficult times. A group meet regularly to pray for the school illustrating the close links between all in this community. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report April 2017 St. Mark's CE Junior School Somerset Road, Salisbury, SPI 3BL