

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's and St John's School

Sunningfields Road, Hendon, London, NW4 4QR

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese

London

Previous SIAS inspection grade (primary only)

Outstanding

Local Authority

Barnet

Dates of inspection

31st January and 1st February 2017

Date of last inspection

November 2011

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Aided - 103119

Principal

Matthew Glenn

Inspector's name and number

Pamela Draycott (161)

School context

The school is developing as an all-through school for pupils from Nursery to Post 16. It has expanded significantly since the previous denominational inspection when it was a primary school. The secondary phase is currently teaching pupils up until Year 9. The school community is religiously, culturally and socially diverse. Just under half the pupils identify as coming from Christian backgrounds. The percentage of pupils for whom extra funding is received due to social disadvantage and those who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's and St John's School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Effective leadership promotes an expressly Christian and inclusive ethos which drives its developments as a church school, appropriately influencing the day to day actions of those who work and learn here.
- The worship programme draws specifically on Christian beliefs and has a very positive impact on the strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils across the school, irrespective of their faith or non-faith background.
- Partnership with the church and the positive involvement of clergy make a significant contribution to the school's distinctive Christian character.
- Religious Education (RE) has a high profile and strong subject leadership results in high expectations and at least good and often very good progress, particularly in the secondary phase.
- Very good behaviour and respectful relationships are clear expressions of the school's Christian vision for pupils' positive personal and academic development.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that governors plan a programme for systematically monitoring and reviewing the ongoing developments of its distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school.
- Formalise subject leadership for RE at a whole school level in order to provide a clear line of responsibility and accountability for the subject across all phases.

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

The school's Christian and inclusive ethos is a clear driving force during its transition to an institution catering for pupils from Nursery through to Post 16. Its motto, grounded in biblical text, is that with God, 'everything is possible'. This impacts deeply on both pupils and staff, raising aspirations and aptly driving developments within its nurturing and inspiring ethos. Likewise, its values of 'faith, hope and love' are very well embedded in school life. This means that pupils of all ability levels and backgrounds attain well and are cared for as 'unique' with their own gifts and talents. In turn this supports the respectful relationships evident and impacts positively on pupils' very good personal development and wellbeing. As they grow through school the vast majority are maturing as kind, thoughtful and confident individuals. Attendance is above the national average due to pupils being happy in school where, 'we care for each other and respect each other whatever our religion' as a Year 8 pupil said. In keeping with its Christian ethos, behaviour in and around both sites is very good. On those few occasions where attendance or behaviour fall short, the school works closely and effectively with pupils and their parents to help to bring about improvement. In keeping with its Christian concern for the individual there are strong pastoral systems which offer very good personal support. Pupils enter broadly at national expectations and are making at least good, and often very good progress from their various starting points, as they grow throughout the school. SMSC development and the way that pupils respond is very good. Opportunities within the performing arts, through business and enterprise and across the curriculum, including through RE, are well taken to explore a range of issues of religious, spiritual and moral concern. Pupils are very well supported in taking responsibility for themselves and others. They recognise the importance of charitable giving as a 'way of showing faith in God and helping other people' (Year 9 pupil). There is a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities and visits which deepen pupils' outlook and expands their horizons. Worship and RE contribute deeply to the school's Christian ethos and values. RE makes a very strong contribution to helping pupils appreciate diversity and difference of beliefs and practices locally, nationally and globally. This appropriately includes opportunities to address Christianity as a world-wide multi-cultural faith.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The daily worship programme is at the heart of the school's day. Its themes are thoroughly developed to explore the overarching values of faith, hope and love. This means that staff and pupils see its importance and relevance. As one Year 5 pupil explained, '...it is a time when we are together to think and reflect and pray'. A Year 9 pupil recognised the 'quiet space' provided through worship as being 'valuable'. A well-focused policy and high quality planning successfully intertwines biblical teaching with Christian values. Consequently, the programme effectively supports pupils in their understanding of Christian teaching about Jesus and the belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Christian festivals and key events in school life, such as anti-bullying week and Black History month, are appropriately included. Accordingly, worship contributes in an extremely positive way to pupils' strong SMSC development. It deepens understanding of the church's year as they explore the biblical foundation and symbolism of festivals. Whilst being explicitly Christian it is inclusive of the whole school community. Pupils have an age-appropriate and developing understanding of Anglican practices. This includes the lighting of a candle to represent Jesus as, 'God's light to the world', as a Year 3 pupil reflected. Worship is fittingly extended through special services in church and the regular Eucharist service introduced for Middle School pupils (Year 5 upwards). It is also strongly supported through work in RE and in personal health and social education (PHSE). Pupils of all ages are involved, enthusiastic and respectful during worship. They regularly lead worship in school and church. For example, in the middle school pupils willingly lead discussions and reflections based on the focused materials provided for worship during their personal and academic mentoring (PAM) group. Some pupils are part of the worship and citizenship group which meets regularly to discuss worship and how it relates to action through, for example, charitable giving. Pupils' role in planning and evaluating worship, whilst good, is less well developed than their involvement in leading it. Pupils recognise the importance of prayer. They know the Lord's Prayer and its significance for Christians. Year 6 pupils explain prayer as 'speaking with God' and a way of 'reaching out to God'. They recognise that prayer can help at difficult times. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 value prayer spaces in classrooms whilst those in Key Stage 3 recognise the importance of prayer through the prayer tree which some use. However, the school's use of outside spaces to enhance pupils' prayer and reflection opportunities is not

well developed. The monitoring and evaluation of worship by senior leaders and by the worship co-ordinators is regular and purposeful and leads to continued improvement. Governors take their oversight role seriously but there is no overall plan for them to regularly monitor and evaluate this aspect of the school's Christian distinctiveness. Pupils, parents and staff rightly appreciate that worship gives pupils a sense of belonging and impacts positively on their personal development, helping them to 'reflect on their beliefs and the school values'.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE has a very high profile and its positive impact on the school's Christian ethos and values is clearly recognised by staff and pupils. Standards are at least in line with, and often above, national expectations, especially in Key Stage 3 where the school has begun to teach GCSE in Year 9. The work produced by pupils as they embark on their examination course is detailed and impressive. This is because they engage thoroughly with their learning and respond extremely positively to the high quality of teaching they receive. The RE curriculum from Reception through to Year 8 has an appropriate balance of content focusing on Christianity and other world faiths, ethical issues and school values. Pupils are enthusiastic about RE. This is because they enjoy the very good range of creative approaches to learning planned for them. For example, drama and role play enable pupils to express feelings relating to biblical stories whilst a range of written tasks provide them with opportunities to demonstrate their learning. Pupils of all abilities talk about being challenged to think deeply, reflect and explore key ideas about religion and belief in the world today. Pupils in all year groups share ideas openly and honestly within a supportive learning environment. This contributes effectively to pupils' learning. Responsibility for the leadership of RE is shared between two staff members – one who focuses on Reception to Year 6 and the other who oversees Years 7 upwards. Whilst the subject leaders work co-operatively it is not clear which member of staff has overarching responsibility for the subject across the age-ranges. Currently the subject leaders are working together to develop the curriculum in the light of changes to the new diocesan syllabus. Effective and consistent feedback, based on the school's secondary phase approach and GCSE criteria is in place for Years 7 and above. It is effectively supporting pupils' progress against challenging targets. The system for assessment of RE is less robust across the primary phase. Monitoring and evaluation are firmly embedded through staff line management systems.

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

The principal, ably supported by the vice principal and other senior leaders, has a collaborative leadership style which both supports and holds colleagues to account appropriately. He has firmly established the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school during this period of change and growth. Leaders, including governors, have a clear and shared understanding of school priorities based on its ethos of service to its community. This is rooted in the school's distinctively Christian values and articulated consistently well by leadership. As a result there is a palpable shared commitment to the school's future development as a church school. Staff at all levels are very well supported for working within its church school context. This means that the school is committed to the professional development and wellbeing of staff. Governors are proud of their school as it evolves and work supportively in sharing its Christian ethos and values. However, their role in monitoring and evaluating the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school, whilst good, is not clearly or regularly planned into its cycle of visits. Governors ensure that statutory requirements for worship and RE are met. Leaders of these two central areas of school life are well supported which contributes to ensuring that high standards of attainment and progress are built into an effective action plan for each area. Relationships with parents are good. The majority are very supportive of the school's Christian foundation and rightly recognise its impact on their children's behaviour and attitudes. Links with local churches, particularly through the clergy at St Mary's, are exemplary. Clergy offer support through governance, planning and delivering aspects of the worship programme and pastoral support. Many pupils attend a special midweek service called 'kids cafe' and some attend the Sunday services regularly with their family. Diocesan support is well drawn upon through, for example, attendance at courses and advisory support. Issues identified in the previous denominational inspection have been well addressed.

SIAMS report (January-February 2017) St Mary's and St John's School, Hendon, London, NW4 4QR