

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Marylebone Church of England School

64 Marylebone High Street London W1U 5BA

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	London
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Westminster
Date/s of inspection	9-10 April 2018
Date of last inspection	1-2 April 2014
Type of school and unique reference number	137353 Academy
Headteacher	Kathryn Pugh
Inspector's name and number	Elaine Skinner 914

School context

St Marylebone is a large secondary inner-city girls' school with a mixed sixth form. 20% of 346 sixth formers are boys. The school serves a community of significant social deprivation. Most pupils start school with above average levels of attainment. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities, and those for whom the school receives additional funding, is above the national average. Pupils come from a very wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. 43% do not have English as their first language. 43% are of White British heritage. Exceptionally close links exist with the adjacent church. The headteacher is the executive head of a successful affiliated special free school first established in 2013.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Marylebone as a Church of England school are outstanding

- St Marylebone is a vibrant warm-hearted community which lives out its Christian vision and has a profound effect and positive impact on all aspects of students' development.
- There is a palpable sense of St Marylebone as an exceptionally harmonious and inclusive school. Their experience of the school's ethos unifies a diverse community.
- Exemplary pastoral care based on Christian values, with highly effective systems for tracking and supporting students' progress, enable learning and achievement to flourish.
- The chaplain plays a key role in developing and expressing the school's Christian character.
- Outstanding Christian leadership by the headteacher, very ably supported by a talented and dedicated staff team, creates a very powerful culture in which individuals are nurtured and learning is central.
- Committed governors maintain a high profile in school and promote and support its work as a Church school with vigour.
- Students are empowered by high quality experiences and positive relationships within this inspirational Christian environment.
- Outstanding worship ensures the spiritual development of pupils of all backgrounds and strongly contributes to community cohesion.
- Very strong partnerships with the church and other schools locally and nationally are mutually beneficial.

Areas to improve

- Use the rolling programme of policy review to ensure that key policies consistently, and fully, reflect the outstanding nature of this school as a Church of England school.

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

The transformational impact of St Marylebone school is best understood through personal experience. Its Christian character is implemented exceptionally consistently. Consequently, students effectively begin a relationship with a single person when they join the school. A person who holds them with infinite care whilst encouraging them to grow in kindness and love for themselves and others. As a result, progress, attainment and attendance are well above those seen nationally. Several interlinked factors account for this. Exemplary pastoral care ensures that no student slips through the net. A passion for learning infuses a relevant and stimulating curriculum that students readily engage with. Parents describe 'a golden thread' of values that runs through the school and feel confident that staff know their children as individuals. For their part, students attribute the enthusiasm and care shown by staff to the schools underlying Christian values. St Marylebone is widely recognised as a school where everyone is welcome. A powerful sense of belonging characterises the whole school community. A student summarised it thus, 'within the same uniform each student's identity is celebrated in our school of diversity.' The harmony that seems so natural on entering the school is genuine and carefully cultivated. Community cohesion is thoughtfully planned to involve students and parents in a spirit of collaboration and celebration. Student interpreters help support language development, for example, and different cultures are celebrated and acknowledged in various ways from cake sales to carnivals. Strenuous efforts are made to support anyone struggling to attend. No student has been permanently excluded. A tremendous range of high quality extra-curricular activity is a hallmark of the school's holistic approach. These include such opportunities as participating in the Edinburgh Festival or speaking at a United Nations schools conference in New York. The maturity displayed and developed by these experiences is nurtured in students from the beginning. Talented, dedicated staff work hard to ensure that school is a place where students feel safe enough to be brave. Thus, students are supported to work from within, to beyond, their former comfort zones. Lessons seen during the inspection demonstrated that collaborative working is very well established. Pupils confidently exchange and refine their ideas through working with their peers. They are proud to belong to a school that has a 'Mental Health' and a 'Pride' society. They see that the school is truly there for everyone. The absence of any 'taboo' subjects encourages them to feel that there is nothing that cannot be talked about in their own lives. Religious Studies (RS) supports this by enabling students to critically explore and debate the big human questions about life and the world around them. Students have a good understanding of a range of faiths and cultures, demonstrating respect and interest, particularly through RS curriculum and in their life together. Links are made between RS and other subjects which further enhance students' rounded understanding of the world. Without doubt the school is very effective in helping students develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship reflects and shapes the common identity of this diverse community. Students and staff, of all faiths, and none, place it at the heart of their life together in school. Once a week worship, known as assembly, takes place in the parish church which is almost on site. On such occasions music, dance and drama are frequently used. A wide range of staff and student lead worship that is relevant and engaging. Above all students and staff value this shared experience of invitational inclusive worship for the inspiration and sense of togetherness they take from it. Throughout the rest of the week a tannoy system is used in the lower school and the sixth form site so that students in all years share a common opportunity to reflect and pray. A weekly value based theme is presented by a different member of staff from a different perspective each day. The deeply reverential silence observed during the inspection indicates the importance that everyone attaches to this thought for the day. As one student said, 'a sentence can change your whole day'. For many, stepping back at the start of another busy day lends a calm sense of purpose to what lies ahead. This style of worship means that students have daily opportunities for spiritual growth. In other church services throughout the year including regular eucharists, Anglican liturgy and traditions are made accessible by the chaplain. Students say that worship helps them to understand difficult concepts such as the understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Moreover, they say it 'builds a safe space within all of us from which to love thy neighbour'. Consequently, the impact of worship is seen across the school. It informs the way relationships are conducted and inspires students to take responsible social action against injustice. Underpinning all of this is the extremely successful way in which the chaplain, and others, have developed student leadership and engagement in worship. Typically, this has grown in response to feedback regularly and frequently initiated by the chaplain. As a result, students significantly influence, plan and lead worship. They do so in a variety of active roles either on the worship committee, as a member of the chapel team or as one of the small band of student sacristans. Talented singers and music scholars add power and beauty to church worship. The thriving chapel choir has sung in Westminster Cathedral and is eagerly looking forward to a New York tour. Away from these communal experiences other provision is made for students of all faiths to have a space for prayer or contemplation. This includes dedicated spaces in the lower school, and the sixth form building, but also Tranquil Tuesdays in the library and the Faithful Friday prayer and discussion group.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RS at St Marylebone is a lively, stimulating experience. Teachers make the curriculum relevant. Topics are frequently explored in contexts which enable students to gain new perspectives on life and faith. For example, from the story of Abraham they are led on to consider the holocaust and anti-Semitism. Similarly, the sixth form conference entitled 'Is religion dangerous to society?' enabled them to hear from a speaker with personal experience of the Palestinian Arab Israeli conflict. First-hand experience of different faith traditions is supported by visits to other places of worship such as a Hindu temple for example. From the outset students are taught to critically evaluate, explore and apply what they learn. The foundations of Christianity and other world faiths are effectively laid in Years 7 and 8. Students readily engage with stimulating opportunities to explore and apply Christian beliefs and traditions in the context of modern society. Their skills are developed by a focus on philosophical thinking as they move through the school. All students sit the exam at GCSE in Year 10. Skilful teaching during examination courses prepares students well. The exams themselves are kept in perspective and students approach them calmly. Results are consistently excellent at GCSE and A level. Teaching seen during the inspection was impressive. Assessment is ongoing during lessons and regular tests punctuate units of work. Students are taught how to effectively self and peer assess their work. As a result, they acquire a good level of understanding about how they can and do, improve. Evaluations of students' needs and progress are used to inform teaching and additional support as required. This happens on an individual basis but also through collaborative planning such as that undertaken with the special educational needs and disabilities team. RS lessons develop skills which transfer into other areas of life and study. These include study skills but also the ability to debate, agree and disagree respectfully. The RS curriculum is designed to develop high level thinking skills and a good understanding of multi-cultural Britain. Leadership of a very well qualified team is highly effective in promoting students' progress and respect for diversity and difference.

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

Leaders are united in their commitment to enabling students and staff to excel. They turn their Christian vision into practice with intelligent sensitivity in this very diverse community. This means they secure students' academic success and nurture in them a respect for spiritual, social and moral values. Openness, humility and a deep love of learning characterise the headteacher's leadership. A culture of team work, high expectations and mutual support are evident across the school. An exceptionally able and dedicated staff team join her in relentlessly focusing on achieving the best for everyone in the community. A striking feature of the school is its integrity. The values of compassion, kindness and humility, to name but a few, are evident throughout the school. People of all faiths, or none, see Christianity as the driving force behind life at St. Marylebone. The school's Christian vision is evident in practice but not consistently referenced in policy documents. It is summarised most clearly in the worship policy with reference to Colossians 3:12-17. Leaders use this passage as a touchstone for decisions and strategic planning. Spirituality is thoughtfully and innovatively woven into lessons. Students are delighted and surprised by links made between dance steps and brushstrokes in art for example. Topics such as 'Botany: The Science of Beauty' also show that spiritual perspectives are embedded in the curriculum. Students respect and care for each other well. The school scaffolds this through systems of peer support. However, students' positive relationships take on a life of their own beyond this. Parents attribute the confidence and kindness their children develop to the school's influence. Student leadership is an essential component of school life. Many take on significant responsibilities. They are particularly proud of the role they play in developing worship. Governors have a very high level of expertise and know the school intimately. Consequently, scrutiny, challenge and support are all equally robust. Statutory requirements are met. Development points from the previous inspection have also been met. The ongoing support for the development of the St Marylebone CE Bridge special school powerfully illustrates governors' commitment to achieving the best for all students. Recently the school achieved World Class status. Leaders are proud but not complacent. Rigorous self-evaluation, informed by a love of learning, improves students' lives across the school. For example, the recently revised behaviour policy has resulted in even better behaviour for learning. Leaders relate to staff in the way they expect staff to work with students. As a result, staff are very positive about the personal support, professional development and team work available to them. The school prepares and promotes staff as very effective church school leaders. St. Marylebone is a leading partner in numerous local and national partnerships. This involves very significant, mutually beneficial, outreach work with other schools. Its role as a Teaching School is a clear example of this. The school and the parish are intertwined and the chaplain has a role in both. His kindness, constant availability and effective support are very highly valued. They reflect the spirit of the school. A school in which, as one student put it, 'You don't have to be a Christian to feel the love of God'.

SIAMS report May 2018 St Marylebone Church of England School WIU 5BA