



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

St Mary's Road, Swanley, BR8 7BU

**Previous SIAS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: Rochester**

Local authority: Kent

Dates of inspection: 6 February 2015

Date of last inspection: 26 November 2009

School's unique reference number: 118754

Headteacher: Amanda McGarrigle

Inspector's name and number: Steven Gallears (NS 802)

#### School context

St Mary's is a one form entry school with a maintained nursery funded by the local authority. The Swanley community, and particularly the St Mary's ward, faces many challenges. It is situated in an area of high socio-economic deprivation. 24% of pupils are on the special needs register or the vulnerable children list. The school is working towards being a 'Centre of Excellence' with Kent County Council for its work with its local community. Approximately 5% of families attend the local parish church regularly. The incumbent joined the parish in November 2014 and has been working with the school since January 2015.

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

- This is a warm and friendly place where God's presence is made known and felt. This school plays a pivotal role in the local community and supports all pupils, irrespective of starting point or background.
- Celebration of the pupils' God-given talents is at the heart of all that the school does.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are welcoming and courteous and respectful of each other.
- Involvement and engagement in collective worship is good. Pupils are keen to contribute and recognise the significance of this time to connect with God.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop a set of explicit Christian values which the pupils can see will support them in their learning and in their wider lives.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to plan and to formally evaluate collective worship.
- Increase the amount of written work in Religious Education (RE) books to reflect the good practice in classrooms and give pupils opportunities to formally assess their work.

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

The mission statement clearly states the intentions of this school as a Christian community. The belief that all those walking through the door are children of God and that it is the school's duty to care for them is resulting in improving attainment and progress. The school does not, however, explicitly focus on a specific set of Christian values. Behaviour is good. Pupils are polite, courteous and welcoming. They are proud of their school. However, some pupils find it difficult to link this good behaviour with the school's Christian ethos. In many areas of school life, pupils have opportunities to develop their spirituality. They are encouraged to work together and to understand how their actions affect other people. They are challenged to explore and to develop their own beliefs. The school is at the heart of the community and has a mission to serve all stakeholders. The headteacher and her team go the extra mile for all children. The pupils feel safe and they enjoy coming to school. Their achievements and God-given talents are recognised and celebrated. The school, following the Gospel messages of compassion, forgiveness and reconciliation works with all in the community, constantly striving to improve relationships, especially with hard to reach families. The school celebrates diversity and effectively challenges misconceptions. Pupils are clear that a Christian establishment is based on respect and tolerance of all and this is clearly communicated to parents. RE is seen by staff and by pupils as an important part of school life. Pupils are given opportunities, both within the RE curriculum and more widely, to learn about and celebrate major Christian events and festivals. Giving of time, money and gift is an important part of school life. In their RE lessons, pupils think about the local and worldwide community. The introduction of prayer themes each term has supported this.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Pupils' behaviour and engagement during collective worship are good. They are eager to participate and to enjoy this time. Many people help and support the delivery of collective worship including pupils who are involved in the music. There are few formal opportunities for children to plan or to evaluate the effectiveness of collective worship. Collective worship is distinctively Anglican in structure. Pupils are welcomed and all can recite the school prayer. It is very clear that this structure is familiar to pupils and that this is embedded in practice. Messages from collective worship are clearly delivered and are linked to the children's lives. Some find it difficult to articulate these messages, meaning that they may not have the desired impact. However, broader messages are clearly having an implicit impact; for example, the messages of respect, kindness and striving to be the best they can are clearly understood. Prayer spaces in each classroom are well used by pupils. Pupils say they enjoy the space and time to pray and know that this is an important part of their school life. They say that prayer boxes in each classroom help them to "speak to God" in either a private or public way. Many want their prayers read. The new incumbent, who has good considerable experience of working with schools, is developing fresh relationships with all members of the school community.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

Pupils make steady progress over time in RE and their attainment is in line with national expectations. In 2014, some pupils' attainment was above national expectations in RE. The co-ordinator for RE has planned an effective curriculum and has led the subject well. The subject co-ordinator has a good understanding of attainment and progress. Pupils do not, however, have opportunities to reflect upon their levels of progress and attainment. Therefore, pupils have a limited understanding of their level of attainment in RE. There is some evidence of quality learning about and learning from religion in pupils' exercise books. Marking helps pupils to understand what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. However, the amount of work in pupils' books does not reflect the good practice that is taking place. This, in turn, makes it difficult to evidence the 'deeper thinking' and understanding of religions which is needed to access higher levels of attainment. Planning is good in RE with clear direction given and resources allocated to each year group. There is a balanced curriculum giving pupils ample

opportunities to develop their understanding of Christianity and of other world faiths. Pupils take pride in their work indicating that this subject is taken seriously and is an important part of school life. They enjoy their RE lessons as they give them opportunities to offer their opinions and also to share in the experiences of others. Displays in classrooms are used to highlight current learning in RE. Pupils display good levels of religious literacy. This is developed at a very early stage in their school life and is reinforced throughout the curriculum. This is helped by the good subject knowledge of the teachers delivering the RE curriculum. Pupils like to question their own and others' beliefs and they are keen to explore their own faith and sense of belonging.

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

The headteacher is fully aware of where the school is as a Church school and what it needs to do to improve. She knows her school well and is working with outside agencies to improve attainment. There is sound self-assessment of the school as a Christian community. The headteacher is passionate about her role and mission at the school. She has a clear understanding of what it means to be a leader of a Church school. This is lived out in daily practice and is mirrored by her colleagues. The school has links with other local schools and regularly participates at the 'unity service'. The school has close links with its parish church. The parish priest regularly visits the school and the school uses the local church. There are also good links with other Christian denominations and local community groups. The school has taken advantage of some training events organised by the Diocese. Parents are supportive of the school. They feel that their children are safe and that the school has effective and robust procedures in place for keeping their children safe. They state that communication from and with the school is excellent. RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. All areas for development from the previous SIAS inspection have been addressed. Governors know the school well and they have a clear understanding of what needs to improve. They have yet to develop formal monitoring of RE but they have a clear grasp of the school as a Church school. They provide rigorous challenge to the headteacher, based on the school's Christian distinctiveness.

SIAMS report February 2015 St Mary's CE Primary School, Swanley BR8 7BU