THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND EDUCATION OFFICE

The Methodist Church

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy				
Address	Wintringham Road, St Neots, Cambridgeshire, PE19 1NX			
Date of inspection	25 November 2019	Status of school	Academy inspected as voluntary aided Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust	
Diocese	Ely		URN	142034

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

School context

St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy is a primary school with 126 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Many pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is above national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages. The school is part of the diocesan multi-academy trust, which it joined in September 2015. There are currently a number of vacancies on the local governing body.

The school's Christian vision

'Learning, Achieving, Growing in God's Love'

Our school community is centred on the love of God, through his Son, Jesus Christ, and strengthened by the Holy Spirit. We will be generous and visible people of Jesus Christ, reaching out in love to all, bringing hope, aspiration, and life in all its fullness to our children.

Key findings

- Leaders have been unswerving in their commitment that all in the school community experience life in all its fullness. Rigorous self-evaluation and monitoring have led to a community of embrace, centred on the love of God, which is transformational for pupils, staff and the wider community in this exemplary church school. The inspirational chair of governors has been pivotal in the school's journey to excellent.
- The school has proactively formed an impressive range of partnerships which have led to a tangible sense of hope and aspiration. Pupils passionately use these partnerships in order to be 'generous and visible' to others through a range of social action projects.
- A recent focus on spirituality has led to a shared understanding of staff and pupils. As a result, provision for spiritual development has improved through worship and curricular opportunities.
- Collective worship has a profound impact upon members of the school community. Pupils, staff and wider stakeholders speak unequivocally about how it inspires them to 'reach out in love' both in and out of school.
- Well-planned religious education (RE) has led to creative opportunities for pupils to explore their own and others' worldviews critically and openly.

Areas for development

- To expand the school's influence as a beacon of church school education in order to share excellent practice with schools in the locality.
- To further grow opportunities for spiritual development so that the spiritual needs of all are met.
- To forge partnerships with national networks to enrich future school provision.

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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

The established vision, centred on the love between the persons of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, infuses all aspects of school life. Staff speak movingly about how, 'Relationships are at the heart of everything.' The embrace of the school community, in which each member is treated with dignity and personally known, has led to a culture which has proved transformative in raising aspirations. A recent home-learning project resulted in creative celebrations of this culture. Displayed in the school reception, they proudly demonstrate the value parents and children give to the school vision and its impact on their lives.

The headteacher and senior leaders have transformed the school since their appointment. Rigorous monitoring with governors has enabled the school to be generous and visible to the community they serve. The family and nurture worker embodies this outreach of love, providing key and timely support. This treasured support has enabled pupils to access the curriculum and fulfil aspirations. Coordinated support between staff and specialist partnerships ensure that all pupils flourish through tailored provision in which their needs are personally known. The journey of school improvement has been exceptionally driven and monitored by the chair of governors, who has been uncompromising in her pursuit that all experience life in its fullness.

Leaders empower staff to be the best they can be which, in turn, helps pupils realise their aspirations. They relish learning and participating in school life. The rich curriculum challenges them and includes an impressive list of extra activities so behaviour and attendance have significantly improved. Pupils, including vulnerable groups, do well because their progress is closely tracked. A well-represented Christian distinctiveness monitoring group including parents, school leaders, governors and clergy has enabled sustained improvement, supporting the school during a period of governor vacancy. This group has been observed by leaders from local church schools, leading to the sharing of excellent practice. Such a role has the potential to benefit all partners but is currently underused.

A deep sense of koinonia (fellowship) suffuses life at St Mary's. Pupils value opportunities to support one another, including roles as peer mediators and reading buddies. The school supports the mental health of staff and pupils through personalised arrangements and an open-door policy. *Valuing all God's Children* and Stonewall training has informed the work of the academy in ensuring all members of the school community are cherished. New staff swiftly understand their role as vision-informed through excellent induction. The well-established partnership with the parish church has led to a strong link with a school community in Kigali, Rwanda. Pupils have exchanged letters about worship in each school and a Kigali choir recently visited St Mary's. This has enhanced pupils' understanding of global Christianity.

Staff and pupils have a shared understanding of spirituality. As a result, pupils have regular opportunities to reflect and think deeply. Pupils value the spiritual areas in each classroom as a place to pray and contemplate. Not all pupils see these areas as accessible outside of class worship or golden time, and limited opportunities for prayer and reflection exist outdoors. Staff increasingly see opportunities for spiritual development across a range of subjects. Big questions such as 'What kind of world did Jesus want?' allow pupils to consider whether others are flourishing in the modern world. Pupils regularly think about issues of inequality and injustice in lessons. They explain how learning about current affairs is important 'so we know how we can help'. One pupil commented how a Britain's Got Hope project allowed him to see how 'we could hope in different ways'. Care for the natural world through a recent recycling drive was recognised in the school's 'Global Neighbours' accreditation.

The school values have a profound impact across pupils and staff. Pupils are moved by a deep sense of compassion to be generous and visible to those in and out of school. As one pupil stated, 'We reach out in love to everyone in the world.' Courageous advocacy has become a natural part of school life. This includes tackling homelessness, donating school-made blankets to Kigali and food bank contributions. Pupils have written to a range of businesses, challenging them to introduce more eco-friendly practices. Parents spoke of how this visible reaching out in love inspired them to give generously in their own professional lives.

Collective worship is a joyous expression of the school vision. Pupils and staff explain the importance of this shared time together in thinking about God, themselves and others. Invitational and inclusive worship at the

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beginning of each day leads to 'an oasis of calm'. The strong partnership with the parish church and local Christian groups means that pupils benefit from an impressive range of worship styles and leaders. Pupils enjoy the range of worship opportunities as a whole school and in classes. Staff have been able to share strong practice in class-based worship, leading to a range of reflection opportunities for pupils.

Worship Acolytes take an active role within collective worship. The group enthusiastically plan and lead worship, viewing their role as an opportunity to allow others to grow spiritually. Their work with acolytes from another school allows them to think about improvements to worship in both schools. The Worship Acolytes regularly start worship in which a bible, cross and candle are used to remind the community about the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Worship is well-planned and allows pupils to become knowledgeable about Anglican worship practices, including the Eucharist. Pupils increasingly recognise that prayer can be spontaneous as well as planned, leading to a deeper appreciation of different spiritualities.

RE is exceptionally led by a committed subject leader. Pupils build on their understanding of Christianity as a diverse global faith because of a carefully planned curriculum. This reflects the *Church of England Statement of Entitlement*. Pupil understanding has been enhanced by visits to a range of different Christian churches in the local area, such as the United Reformed Church. Staff training has allowed teachers to have a strong grasp of enquiry approaches to learning across a range of religions and worldviews. As a result, pupils have rich opportunities to engage with religious texts critically and reflectively, understanding that people interpret texts differently. For instance, Year 5 and 6 pupils recently thought about different genres in the Genesis creation story, reflecting on their own worldview in the process. A previous development point for RE has been met, as opportunities for pupils to explore their own beliefs now punctuate RE provision. All pupils flourish in RE due to high levels of challenge and personalised support.

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The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

RE teaching and learning are of a high standard. Many pupils meet, and often exceed, the age-related expectations of the syllabus. Robust monitoring and evaluation have led to a plethora of creative and innovative approaches. These are well-matched to support learning about religion and worldviews. Assessment is timely and meaningful, enabling all pupils, including the vulnerable, to make strong progress.

Headteacher	Ben Hodson
Inspector's name and number	Ryan Parker
Quality assurance	Lyn Field 151

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