

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School

Rowington Close, Paddington, London, W2 5TF

| | |
|--|------------------------|
| Current SIAMS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Diocese | London |
| Previous SIAS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Local authority | Westminster |
| Date/s of inspection | 14 March 2018 |
| Date of last inspection | February 2013 |
| Type of school and unique reference number | Voluntary Aided 101135 |
| Headteacher | Tonnie Read |
| Inspector's name and number | John Viner NS144 |

School context

St Mary Magdalene is a smaller than average, currently undersubscribed, primary school with a nursery, located on Paddington's Warwick Estate and serving the parish of the adjacent church of St Mary Magdalene. Its 207 pupils reflect the rich diversity of the area, with a much higher than average proportion who speak English as an additional language. A higher than average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and a much higher than average proportion attract additional funding to counter disadvantage. A handful of pupils attend a church. Ofsted recently judged the school to be good.

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

- The headteacher and key staff live out a determined Christian vision for the school that is raising standards and improving attendance.
- The Christian values on which the school is founded define its mission and are evident in all aspects of its work.
- Collective worship is at the heart of school life. It is inclusive and affirms all who attend, regardless of their personal faith or belief.
- Pupils enjoy Religious education (RE), make good progress and achieve good standards.
- The partnership with the parish church is intertwined with the work of the school so that, together, they are a beacon of faith and hope to the community they serve.

Areas to improve

- Clarify those underlying values that are distinctly Christian so that they are not muddled with those that are simply human values.
- Ensure that RE is taught consistently well by:
 - setting out written work in a way that demonstrates continuity, development and quality.
 - ensuring that lessons are pitched at a level commensurate with pupils' intellectual development and spiritual awareness.
 - using marking and feedback to deepen and extend pupils' thinking.

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

Distinctly Christian values are at the heart of the school, define its purpose and are evident in all aspects of its work. However, because the school also strongly promotes human rights, these underlying Christian values are not always as clear as they could be. The school's motto, 'Believe, Achieve and Succeed Together' does not make this clear and it is sometimes hard to separate Christian values from those that are simply human values. Nevertheless, leaders, clergy and the majority of pupils can explain that it is in response to its Christian character that human rights and the pursuit of excellence matter. Some excellent work has been done in setting rights against promises that are rooted in Christian values so that pupils understand that belief must lead to action. The values upon which the school is founded inspire the outstanding and truly caring relationships between and among adults and learners. Their parents say that their children acquire positive values for life. Pupils agree, saying that they learn the importance of love, truth, justice and humanity and that this helps them to become good people. They say that adults live out these values too and, if they misbehave, they always get a fresh start.

Because pupils know that they are safe, valued and special, they become confident and self-assured. They behave impeccably, work hard, make excellent progress and achieve high standards often from low starting points. As a result, standards are rising and attendance is improving. The strong focus on pupils' welfare and development means that they acquire positive attitudes to each other and to adults, and enjoy the many opportunities to celebrate and learn from their diversity. This excellent promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is inseparable from its promotion of Christian values and human rights. As a result, pupils develop finely-tuned and positive attitudes to community and a real, shared sense of spirituality that enables them to use the language of faith and belief with growing confidence and maturity. Pupils are excited by RE and recognise that it is an element of the school's Christian distinctiveness. They understand that Christianity is a world faith in the context of a multicultural world in which faith and belief are important.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship, which the school calls assembly, is a key aspect of each day and all pupils recognise its importance in the life of the school. They engage with worship enthusiastically, participate keenly and enjoy the many opportunities that enable them to play a particular role. Worship is inclusive and all who attend - both pupils and adults - regardless of faith or belief, say they are affirmed and strengthened by it. Worship is distinctly Christian, biblical, rooted in the person of Jesus and the Christian belief that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, pupils of other faiths say that it also makes them feel good about their own religion and one added, 'it helps me to put my faith in God'.

Worship is carefully planned by the RE leader and incumbent, around a series of themes drawn from the values which the school promotes, the church's year and other key events. A range of leaders, including staff, the incumbent and the local Baptist minister ensure that worship is always varied and interesting. At the time of the inspection the church building was unavailable but, when worship takes place there or is led by the incumbent in school, pupils have an excellent experience of Anglican tradition and practice. This is further enhanced by the regular Key Stage 2 class Masses, at which those pupils who are communicant members of their churches, can share Holy Communion. Pupils enjoy this variety. Older pupils say how much they have always enjoyed assembly and all agree that they love the different varieties of prayer. They value the way that worship is used to reinforce both the school's Christian values and the human rights which the school promotes. Parents, regardless of faith or belief, value those opportunities they have to attend worship in the school or, for major Christian festivals, in church. Although very few parents of other faiths withdraw their children from church worship, none are withdrawn from worship that takes place in school.

Pupils benefit from many outstanding opportunities to prepare and lead class acts of worship. This is especially effective when older pupils can deliver these assemblies to younger pupils, developing their own leadership and presentational skills and so growing in confidence. From their earliest years, pupils learn about the nature and purpose of prayer, making use of the many opportunities around the school for personal reflection and prayer. Pupils can write their own prayers for personal use or as part of public worship. Leaders and governors regularly monitor and evaluate collective worship. As part of this, they take note of pupils' views so that all are involved in planned improvement.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards of attainment in RE are at least in line with national expectations and sometimes above. Pupils of all faiths and none make very good progress from the time they join the school. Because the school's Christian character leads to the excellent promotion of spirituality, pupils make good progress, whatever their starting points. By the time they leave the school, pupils have a thorough knowledge of Christianity and the key points of the other faiths they study. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced a new, and more demanding, programme of study which is enriched by visits to a range of places of worship. This engages pupils and interests them and, as a result, they are enthusiastic and say how much they enjoy RE and the opportunities to learn about different religions.

Teaching is generally good and some of it is excellent, so that pupils are highly engaged and remember what they have learnt, especially when they have been actively involved. However, all teaching is not as good as the best and this is confirmed by the variability of work in pupils' books. Sometimes teachers do not always pitch the work at levels that are appropriate to pupils' intellectual or spiritual development. This means that sometimes the concepts and expectations are beyond pupils' comprehension or that those with high levels of spiritual understanding are not always sufficiently challenged. On occasions, teachers talk too long and pupils say that this is frustrating.

Pupils like the way that RE is sometimes linked to other subjects because it helps them to see the wider relevance of faith and belief. However, the cross-curricular organisation of work in books is muddled. Sometimes work is marked as English, not RE and, in some classes, an over-reliance on low-level worksheets limits pupils' responses. Teachers' written feedback does not always challenge pupils' thinking enough and some pupils say that they do not always know how well they are doing. Nevertheless, the school has taken robust steps to develop effective assessment systems since the last inspection, although these are still in the early stages of development.

RE is strongly led by a knowledgeable and committed subject leader who has worked hard to prepare teachers for the greater demands of the new curriculum. As a result, RE has a high profile in the school and is regarded as a core subject. There is an effective system of monitoring teaching and learning. However, the curriculum is new and, although it has been implemented very strongly, monitoring has not yet achieved the higher standards of teaching and learning it demands.

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

The headteacher, key staff and governors share and articulate an ambitious Christian vision for the school as one where faith leads to action. This is raising standards and improving attendance. Together, they have developed a community where rights and responsibilities are seen as an active response to living faith. The commitment of leaders and governors to Christian values has created a school where pupils thrive spiritually, personally and academically. Leaders, clergy and governors share a deep commitment to securing the very best for the wellbeing of pupils and their families, helping them overcome educational, social or economic disadvantage.

There are strong and effective systems for self-evaluation and, as a result, leaders and governors know their school well and can plan for its systematic development. They are, for example addressing the very real problems resulting from the school's current under-subscription, which is a matter that lies outside their control. As a result, they are minimising its impact and developing strategies to reverse the trend. They have ensured that RE and worship meet statutory requirements and are each well led and they have developed a curriculum with the school's Christian distinctiveness at its heart. Through effective self-evaluation, governors are able to hold leaders to account for the school's Christian effectiveness. They recognise the school's potential future leadership needs and understand how to address them.

There are strong and effective partnerships with the parish church and the Baptist church, each being of mutual and substantial benefit and making a significant contribution to school life. The Baptist church and its ministry team provide high quality Christian activities for pupils at key points of the year. The school supports a number of charities and, through its links with the church, has taken forward its ongoing support of the local food bank. Although few attend the church, parents recognise the value of the partnership with the parish and the incumbent plays a key role in the life of the school and is available to support staff or families needing his advice. Together, the church and school are a recognisable Christian presence to the community they serve.