

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Felsham Road

Putney

London

SW15 1BA

Diocese: Southwark

School's Unique reference number: 101046

Date of inspection: 21 November 2012

Date of last inspection: July 2007

Headteacher: Cheryl Payne

Inspector's name with National Society inspector's number : Barbara Chevis

Quality assurance: Lyn Field 151

School context

St Mary's CE Primary School is a very popular one form entry school in Putney with 250 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are white British and a high percentage attend the local church. The headteacher has been in post since September, having been promoted from the post of deputy headteacher in the school. Both deputy headteachers are new to their posts, having also been promoted internally.

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

St Mary's provides pupils with a nurturing, caring environment. As one parent said, 'This school gives more than an academic education'. All stakeholders speak very highly of the school and its commitment to including everyone. The new headteacher has brought a renewed emphasis to the school's Christian character. Christian values are implicit in all school life and show clearly through the respect and sensitivity with which pupils relate to each other.

Established strengths

- The caring and supportive approach of the school which fosters learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- The high value that is given to opportunities for quiet reflection, prayer and spiritual development both in lessons and in collective worship
- The engagement of all pupils in collective worship, through active participation and good listening
- Good teaching which engages pupils, ensuring that achievement in religious education is high

Focus for development

- To improve strategic planning as a church school for senior staff and governors by implementing a rigorous system of self evaluation that involves all stakeholders
- To strengthen the use of assessment in religious education (RE) to inform planning and support individual pupil progress

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

There are good relationships between all members of the school community and parents speak very positively about the very distinctive caring and nurturing ethos of the school. Pupils report that 'teachers are kind and look after us'. Pupils feel valued and, in turn, value each other. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils show sensitivity towards the needs and thoughts of others, especially those of different ethnicities and religions. This sensitivity is particularly seen in their positive attitude to prayer. Pupils' spiritual development is strengthened through time for reflection in RE lessons and collective worship. Pupils are aware of the importance of helping those less fortunate than themselves, both in this country and abroad. They enjoy choosing a charity for their class to support each year and take responsibility for raising money for their charity, showing

their developing moral, social and cultural awareness. Christian values are evident in the way pupils relate to each other. Their behaviour is good. They work co-operatively and are polite to each other and to adults. Whilst pastoral care, behaviour and attitudes to others reflect Christian values, many stakeholders find it difficult to explain a distinctively Christian understanding of the school's core values. Christian values are talked about implicitly by staff and governors, for example, within work undertaken around anti-bullying and when reviewing the admissions policy. However, these references are not explicit enough to support pupils' understanding. The headteacher is aware of this and has already initiated projects to develop the school environment. These include the strategic placing of canvases illustrating verses from the Bible around the school. Pupils also make good use of the Bible carving trail, where pupils identify Bible stories which have been carved on blocks of wood. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy talking about the significance of these artefacts and displays which enrich their understanding of Christianity and their spiritual development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

There is a tangible sense of community during collective worship when the whole school comes together, including all staff. Pupils are actively engaged in collective worship through the reading and writing of prayers. They are confident to share personal experiences with the whole school, and these issues are dealt with sensitively by the headteacher. Children listen with great attentiveness and enjoy participating in singing, which is of a high standard. They are able to discuss the significance of the 'Angel' tree which currently forms a central focus during worship. They say they enjoy this part of the day and talk about collective worship with enthusiasm, showing its influence on their thinking and behaviour. Pupils have a good awareness of the church year and Anglican traditions and practices, which are celebrated both within the school and at the local church. The service of Eucharist is held twice a term at the school and a cabinet containing artefacts used during the service is on display in the hall. Pupils are able to talk about these items with confidence and knowledge. A number of parents attend the Eucharist service with many more attending the sharing assemblies. Pupils and other members of staff are encouraged to lead collective worship through Key Stage assemblies and class assemblies and the local vicar visits regularly. The headteacher has taken over the role of the lead for collective worship this term and is aware of the need to involve more stakeholders in the planning and delivery of this area. Parents have recently been asked to complete a questionnaire about collective worship, which was compiled by the RE leader. There is a special interest governor for collective worship but full use is not made of this role to regularly and systematically evaluate the planning, delivery and impact of collective worship.

Religious Education is good

Pupils enjoy RE, and appreciate the variety of approaches and tasks that they are asked to complete in lessons and for homework. They particularly like the times for reflection and state that 'a candle is sometimes lit to make us feel we are a group. Lessons are calm.' They relate their learning to their own experiences and this supports their growing moral and spiritual awareness. Pupils are proud of their work and their books and portfolios in RE evidence a high standard of attainment in line with that of English and mathematics. A strength of the teaching is questioning, which supports pupils to develop their understanding of the Bible, and allows them to develop their own opinions. All teachers are observed teaching RE each year and the quality of teaching is consistently good or better, ensuring pupils make at least good progress. Pupils enjoy learning about different religions and value others' opinions and beliefs, leading to good community cohesion. The school has been supported by the Diocese to develop assessment in RE, an issue for development raised in the last inspection. Good progress has been made and assessments are now undertaken at the end of each unit. However, these assessments are not yet being used consistently to inform future planning and to support individual children whose attainment is not as secure as their fellow pupils. Marking is good, and pupils are given the opportunity to respond to teachers' comments although this is usually through reflection rather than in writing. Monitoring of books is undertaken annually and feedback is given to staff verbally. The focus on verbal feedback over the past year has meant that there is no record for senior staff and governors to use in setting priorities and measuring improvement over time.

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

The new headteacher and two new deputy headteachers are supported by the RE leader in their desire to lead St Mary's further forward as a church school. They have a clear understanding of the needs of the school. The RE leader has good links with the Diocese, and attends RE conferences to ensure she is up to date with developments and to increase her own personal knowledge. She is

given opportunities to share her learning with staff in the school to support good teaching and learning. Strong links have been made with the church to support pupils' learning and understanding of Christian practices. Governors are very knowledgeable about the overall progress of the school and support the partnership with the church through their own membership. However, systems used to hold the school to account as a church school by governors are generally informal and anecdotal, and there is little written evidence of such challenge. Effective systems for gathering feedback from a range of stakeholders, and for evaluating the work of the school as a church school in order to inform strategic planning are not in place. The headteacher already has made a start to ensure a wide range of stakeholders are involved in the writing and reviewing of a number of policies and strategic documents on a regular basis. She is committed to the school as a church school, and developing the Christian character of the school to ensure it is more explicit. The headteacher has the support of her staff. She, together with her supportive deputy headteachers, has good capacity to move the school forward as a Christian school. The impact of her work in her short time as headteacher is very evident.

November 2012 SIAS report, St Mary's CE Primary School, Putney, London SW15 1BA