



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Station Road,
Hinckley,
Leicestershire
LE10 1AW

Diocese: Leicester

Local authority: Leicestershire

Dates of inspection: 5th November 2014

Date of last inspection: 3rd & 4th December 2009

School's unique reference number: 120134

Headteacher: Mrs Nicola Harwood

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Sheila Grice (No.165)

School context

St Mary's is a large primary school, in the centre of Hinckley, next to the parish church. It is a popular school, with 30% of pupils coming from outside the parish. The Victorian building has been extended, and the school leases part of a building opposite from the borough council. Playground space is limited, and the school uses a nearby park, leisure centre and playing fields for sporting activities. The proportion of children receiving free school meals is 21.6%. There are 15% on the SEN register and 17.5% of pupils have EAL (English as an additional language). The newly appointed headteacher has been in post since Easter.

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

- Excellent relationships between pupils and staff provide a safe and nurturing environment.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are a strength of the school, leading to confident, articulate learners.
- The strong leadership provided by the headteacher and the support received from the vicar and governing body is a strength of the school.
- Christian values are now embedded, resulting in learners having a good understanding of how these values impact on their own achievement and behaviour.

Areas to improve

- Establish a rigorous system of self-evaluation, involving children, staff & governors, in order to secure future improvement.
- Increase opportunities for learners to plan and lead worship in order to further enhance the quality of worship
- Develop links with other faith communities and cultures in order to deepen children's cultural understanding.

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

St Mary's is a warm, welcoming school where pupils and adults feel valued and cared for within an atmosphere of Christian love and understanding. Standards at the end of KS2 have dipped in the last two years but the school has a detailed RAP (raising attainment plan) in place to secure rapid improvement. The introduction to the 'Secrets of Success' has developed greater independence and more effective learners who are really trying hard to achieve well. Six Christian values, including thankfulness and compassion, are clearly expressed by all members of the school community. By continually relating the values back to Jesus, adults reinforce the Christian distinctiveness of these values. As one parent observed, 'The children are taught about Christian love, which is linked to Jesus who always showed acts of kindness'. The introduction of certificates, given to children who display tangible examples of the values in practice, further deepens children's understanding of how the values make a difference in their lives. The wealth of high quality displays in classes and around school affirm that this is a church school. Each class has an area for reflection and even very young children interact with this area, using glass pebbles to help them pray or think about things. There are very close links with the local parish church which continue to deepen and flourish with many children regarding St Mary's as 'their church'. Links with a school in France help the older children to deepen their understanding of other communities and customs. The New Year cake of epiphany from France was particularly well received by the children in years 5/6. The Christian values of compassion and courage can be seen in action through the fundraising events organised by staff and children. At harvest time the children collected for Hinckley Foodbank, which is supported by St Mary's church, so encouraging them to show their care for others.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Good quality collective worship is clearly at the heart of this school community, permeating all aspects of school life. It is seen by the school as the 'building block' for each day. Diocesan themes, with a strong focus on Jesus and his teaching, are used to plan worship and full account is taken of the Christian calendar. St Mary's parish church is used to celebrate special assemblies at key points in the school year. The children particularly enjoy assemblies led by the vicar, 'Who makes us laugh' and Mr Scrappy, 'Who uses Bible stories to teach us how to live our lives as Christians and make our own choices'. The attitude of children towards collective worship is very positive because they are engaged in worship and it supports their spiritual development. Prayer is an integral part of worship and prayers written by the children for a new school prayer book show that children are confident to pray and talk to God. As one child commented, 'We pray so that He can help us and guide us in everything we do'. The altar table provides a focus for spiritual thought and helps identify the hall as a sacred space for this special time. There are some opportunities for children to plan and lead worship, through regular class assemblies, and they are starting to take a more active part in selecting songs and reading their prayers. Older children are now preparing power points as a focus for the awe and wonder in nature or linked to the time of year and these develop and foster moments of individual spirituality. The introduction of 'worship boxes' in each class supports children in developing their understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The crosses made by a child's grandfather are valued by children and staff and help provide a focus for worship in the classrooms. The impact of worship reaches beyond school with parents saying, in response to survey questions, 'The kids help the parents to be Christian thinking'. Another parent observed that since their very young child started school he now asks to pray at night before he goes to bed. A senior leader took on the role of Collective Worship Coordinator in September 2012 and has made an excellent start in monitoring the effectiveness of collective worship. She was instrumental in securing the introduction of the six key Christian values last year.

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

Leaders at all levels promote and acknowledge the Christian values and place them at the centre of school life. The leadership of the new headteacher is revitalising the Christian character of the school. Her wise and timely decisions, made jointly with governors, are rooted in distinctly Christian values. One parent commented that since the appointment of the new head St Mary's is now, 'More openly a Christian school'. Parent views about the Christian character of the school are beginning to be sought through questionnaires and informal contact and the majority support and understand the religious character of the school. Parents particularly value the fact that that staff are approachable and support their children, always welcoming them with a smile and 'Going above and beyond' to care for their children. Although some evaluation has taken place recently regarding the Christian character of the school and collective worship, staff and governors have yet to fully embed the self- evaluation of this as a church school in order to secure tangible improvements. Governors have been instrumental in ensuring the voice of St Mary's is heard within the local authority, following a recent consultation over the future of primary education in Hinckley. The two newly appointed Foundation Governors are attending training organised by the diocese in effective self-evaluation and this is having clear benefits for the school. The vicar is fully involved in many aspects of school life and he has built very effective relationships with members of the school community, offering spiritual guidance and support to the headteacher and chair of governors. Good partnerships exist between the school and other local Christian churches in Hinckley, however links with other faith communities and the worldwide church are underdeveloped.

.