



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 Academy

Cundy Street

Sheffield

S6 2WJ

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Local Authority: Not applicable

Diocese: Sheffield

Date of inspection: 20 March 2015

Date of last inspection: January 2010

School's unique reference number: 107109

Headteacher: Lynn Thorne

Inspector's name and number: C A Roberts 469

School context

St Mary's is a smaller than average-sized primary Academy with 174 pupils on roll. It converted to an Academy in September 2014 sponsored by the local diocese. Over half of pupils are from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. Around one in five children speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium is higher than in most schools. Likewise the proportion of pupils on the special needs register. The new headteacher has been in post since Spring 2013. Many new staff have been appointed since the headteacher came into post. The school came out of special measures in June 2014.

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

- A clear Christian vision based on Christian values which is promoted by all leaders, staff and governors and is supporting rapid, positive development of the Academy.
- The love and care shown to all pupils by staff and leaders as a result of the Christian character of the Academy.
- Inspirational worship which is uplifting and has a good impact on relationships and the daily lives of everyone in the Academy community.
- Good quality religious education (RE), led by a highly talented leader, who is very well supported by leaders and governors.

Areas to improve

- Develop a consistent approach to target setting in RE so that children understand what they must do to improve.
- Develop a link with a country abroad and further links with the local community to

enhance learning and understanding.

- Gather views of parents formally, particular on worship, to aid development.

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

The vision, reviewed by all stakeholders, is clear and strong, based on Christian values such as love and respect. These key values support staff who nurture and care for the children, encouraging high levels of self-esteem. The headteacher and staff are excellent role models in living out the Christian vision and children have a good understanding of the impact of faith on their lives. Children can relate Bible stories to the Academy's Christian values. For example one child cited the Good Samaritan as encouraging pupils to love everyone. Christian values also have a good impact on children's personal development and relationships. The Academy is inclusive of those with faith or none and promotes many opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through service to others, Godly Play, Philosophy for Children and reflection corners. Children want to come to school because they feel valued, loved and a part of the Academy. Innovative strategies, undertaken in the spirit of nurturing and care, are in place to tackle issues over attendance. Consequently attendance is improving. The strong Christian character ensures there is a robust and positive approach to academic progress. Rigorous tracking and focus learning groups are helping to close the gap between disadvantaged and other groups of children. Children have great respect for faith and the beliefs of others; they are not afraid to talk about their beliefs or about God. They are also starting to understand Christianity as a multi – cultural world faith through the strong RE curriculum.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship at St Mary's is well planned by leaders and the vicar. Themes are based on the Christian calendar as well as Christian values. Bible accounts and those from all faiths are used to illustrate the themes and values. The impact of these ensures there is continuity of learning about key aspects of worship and also spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Worship is inclusive, so all children and adults can respond in their own way. A variety of staff and visitors lead worship which ensures it has variety and engages the school community. Children sing animatedly, with passion. They enjoy the drama and opportunity to give their reflections and prayers spontaneously. Consequently they find worship relevant, uplifting and joyful. Children understand the value of worship in people's lives and say 'It makes you feel closer to God' and 'It helps you reflect'. Themes ensure that concepts such as The Trinity are appropriately developed over time ensuring children understand why it is important to believers. They can also relate Bible and other stories of faith to their own lives. For example one child mentioned the meaning of the account of the Rich Man stating, 'This helped me to know that God could change me and make me share'. The focus on silence, reflection and prayer in worship, coupled with the use of prayer stations in every classroom ensures children have many opportunities for spiritual development. They really value these experiences and say 'You feel there is always someone to talk to when you pray or reflect'. Experiences of Godly Play and services in church (which are well attended by parents) further enhance the impact of worship on the whole school community. Worship is regularly monitored and evaluated by leaders, governors, and children to ensure continued development. After many acts of worship immediate feedback about what element children enjoy most is sought through marbles in a pot. Leaders now plan to develop 'pupil voice' for worship to explore the impact in more detail.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious education is led by a highly talented and effective leader, who is well supported by governors and leaders. There is a clear action plan for RE and a dedicated governor for RE monitors this. There is a well-planned and interesting scheme of work based on learning about and learning from religion. The leader for RE is a key member of SACRE and the working party

devising new units of work for schools based on the new Sheffield agreed syllabus. Teaching and learning in RE is monitored regularly through lesson observations, learning walks and book scrutiny as well as regular 'pupil voice' sessions. These show that lessons are at least good, with some outstanding. Consequently children achieve in line with expectations of the syllabus and sometimes higher. RE develops children's understanding of Christianity as a world-wide faith as well as other faiths. Children enjoy RE and can state why it is important in their lives, 'It helps you understand other people's beliefs' and 'It might help if you are religious to learn about it more'. Philosophy for Children, Godly Play and visits to the local church greatly enhance learning in RE. Leaders have identified the need to develop a series of visits to places of worship for all faiths in future. Assessment in RE is on-going and teachers regularly standardise work to ensure consistency across school. Although some children have a good understanding of what they need to do in order to improve their learning in RE, this is underdeveloped across school. Children would benefit from a consistent approach to target setting in RE.

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

Since the new headteacher has been in post there has been a strong increase in the promotion of the Academy as a distinctive Christian school where every child is loved and valued. Through rigorous and dedicated strategies with the full support of governors and staff the Christian character of the Academy is explicit not only in displays, but in communications to parents and the daily interactions with the school community. The Christian character directly impacts on standards of achievement which are rising due to many focussed learning activities and support given to all groups of children. Children feel valued and nurtured. They state 'Teachers respect you as an individual' and 'They help you when you need it or are sad'. Governors visit the Academy regularly not only to monitor and evaluate the Christian character but to support staff and children. They have a good understanding of church school distinctiveness and the impact the vision has on the lives of the children and their families. Issues from the previous inspection have been tackled effectively. Governors and leaders regularly listen to pupils' opinions about the Academy as a church school. This has brought about change and now needs to be extended to gain feedback from parents particularly on worship. Governors ensure that RE and worship fulfil statutory obligations. Staff and governors have had many discussions about church school aspects during the conversion from primary school to Academy. This has strengthened understanding of future development needs. Leaders nurture all staff to ensure they attend relevant external professional development as well as in-house, to aid future leadership across church schools. The Academy benefits from strong partnerships with the church and community, for example through Harvest and Remembrance celebrations. However, they recognise this as an area for development especially making links with global communities. Parents are rightly proud of their school and say 'It's like a family, each child is really cared for, not just academically but spiritually. They really know my children'.

SIAMS report March 2015 St Mary's CE Academy, Walkley, Sheffield S6 2WJ