

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy

The Street, Broughton Gifford, Melksham, Wilts, SN12 8PR

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Salisbury</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	1 April 2015
Name of multi-academy trust	Academy Trust of Melksham
Date/s of inspection	22 March 2017
Date of last inspection	28 March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	141928
Headteacher	Pauline Orchard
Inspector's name and number	Richard Wharton (835)

#### School context

St Mary's is a smaller than average primary school set in a rural location. There are 94 pupils currently on roll, organised into four classes. The proportion of children with disabilities or additional educational needs is lower than that seen nationally, as is the number of children from ethnic minority groups or who speak English as an additional language. The headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection and none of the other teachers have been at the school more than two years. The school became an academy two years ago as a founding member of the Academy Trust of Melksham, which contains members of St Mary's church as trustees and board members. Although the Academy Trust of Melksham is a mixed trust of church and community schools, measures have been taken to ensure that the Christian distinctiveness of the church schools is maintained.

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

- All members of the community clearly articulate that the church ethos is the basis on which the success of the school is built.
- Relationships between the school and St Mary's church are highly regarded by all members of the school community and contribute significantly to the school's distinctive character.
- The children are rightly proud of the distinctive character of their school and are able to talk in impressive depth about the way in which it influences their decisions.

#### Areas to improve

- To embed a more systematic process for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the school's distinctive Christian ethos in order to generate further strategies for continued improvement.
- To embed the ongoing work to widen children's understanding of other cultures by providing more opportunities to experience them at first hand.
- To refine the school's core values and shared interpretation of spirituality in order that they provide a clear basis for developing further exemplary practice.

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

The school revisited its vision and values statement in summer 2016 in order to secure collective ownership of the Christian basis of its ethos by the current school community. The 'Vision Tree' image which was produced as a result of this work is clearly in evidence around the building and is being drawn on effectively by all members of the community to underpin their understanding of what it means to be a distinctively Christian school. In discussing the values which lie at the roots of the Vision Tree, children show a good understanding of their Christian basis. One child commented that, 'Those words come from Bible messages; 'courage' doesn't just mean not crying if you hurt yourself, it means the courage to do the right thing.' Children are very clear about the ways in which these values impact on their behaviour and relationships. One child commented that, 'Friendship doesn't just mean playing nicely with your friends, it means helping people to belong instead of judging them.' Another child said that, 'Forgiveness doesn't just mean letting people off because they've said sorry, it means helping them to change so that they can be included.' The impact of these values on behaviour and relationships is further strengthened by the incorporation of a restorative justice approach to conflict resolution. Children clearly have a strong respect for diversity and there is ample evidence within their work of how Religious education (RE) fosters their understanding of a range of faiths. One child commented that, 'Finding out about other religions is important because people in other religions are loved by God and they each have their different path to follow. We try to follow the example of Jesus because he shows us what God is like.' The school is currently exploring a selection of schemes of work for RE, including the Understanding Christianity resource, in order to build on the good understanding of diverse faiths and support for the Christian character of the school which RE teaching currently provides. The school is now beginning to introduce events to enable the children to have more personal experiences of other cultures and widen their horizons. Despite a drop in attainment for the 2016 Year 6 cohort, standards of achievement have been steadily growing over recent years. The headteacher speaks passionately about how excellent relationships and a very positive family environment have led to a focus on inclusion and individual needs, resulting in good progress for vulnerable pupils. Parents speak in glowing terms about the extent to which the Christian character of the school shapes relationships among the whole community and of the highly supportive ethos which this engenders, which underpins children's ability to achieve their best. They say that the Christian ethos of the school is lived out explicitly in its day-to-day life and that children come home and discuss stories of faith that they have talked about and raise further deep questions. Children clearly have a growing sense of personal spirituality and they talk about the telescope image on the Vision Tree as symbolising, 'How you look into the future and try to see things in God's view.' In order to develop exemplary practice, the school now needs to build on this understanding of spirituality further and incorporate opportunities to explore it across the curriculum.

## **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.**

Collective worship is of central importance in the life of the school and plays a key role in enabling children to make connections between Bible stories and the school's values. The worship observed enabled children to make links between the biblical value of 'justice' and the concept of 'restoration' within the children's own experience. The worship effectively demonstrated the children's willingness to engage in thoughtful reflection; they were able to relate the content of the worship to stories and teachings of Jesus that they had explored on previous occasions. The worship was followed by a morning of extended activities led by clergy from St Mary's Church, in which children explored their ideas further. This is a well embedded termly approach, through which the children are clearly able to appreciate the importance and relevance of collective worship. Support for collective worship from St Mary's church is excellent and the 'Open the Book' team leads worship each Monday. The headteacher and clergy plan worship together, which includes providing planning materials for teachers to support class-based worship on Thursdays. Class evidence files contained inspiring images of Godly Play being used within Bumblebees Class. Children also plan and lead acts of worship themselves for particular occasions (e.g. Red Nose Day or Remembrance). Regular visits to the church give children a sense of Anglican traditions and the cycle of the Church's year and aspects of these are also incorporated into the imagery and traditions of whole-school worship. The Christian understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is incorporated into worship through prayers and symbolic colours and children are able to talk about this with understanding. Children have a particularly impressive appreciation of the place of prayer within their school, as exemplified by the excellent prayer display in the hall. Parents also confirmed that children talk about the importance of prayer at home. Children describe how prayers are said at key times throughout the day (e.g. lunchtime and at home time) and that you say prayers at the special prayer station in the library or in the spiritual garden. However, they were also clear that 'you can say prayers anywhere you like', which was confirmed by the example of one of the younger children who had made a cross during a Forest School session and had taken it off to a quiet place to pray. The children were clear that, 'You

can't just try to use God by praying for selfish things to please yourself, you have to try to think about what God would actually want you to pray for.' When asked how we can know what God would want us to pray for, the children related their thoughts back to collective worship, 'Well, for instance, you could think about justice and how God wants to restore the world to how it once was, when there was no hate and everything was peaceful. You could also think about our Christian values and how God might be speaking to you through them.'

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

The headteacher has a strong belief in the importance of the school's Christian ethos, which she articulates with clarity and conviction. She sets the tone for other staff in order to ensure that Christian distinctiveness pervades the school and when appointing new teachers, ensures that they understand that they will be expected to fully uphold this Christian ethos. The governors are equally committed to ensuring that the distinctive Christian character of the school remains paramount. By carefully steering the course of events as the Academy Trust of Melksham was formed, they have been able to ensure that this continues to be the case. Indeed, partnership working with the diocese has increased through the process to convert to an academy and the school is very outward looking and keen to exchange ideas. This was confirmed through discussion with a colleague headteacher from the Academy Trust of Melksham, who described plans to regularly share church school practice as part of the trust's future development. Parents say that the school is always open to their contributions and encourages them to engage in school life. The links with St Mary's church are particularly valued and many shared activities are facilitated throughout the year. The governors have carried out some recent monitoring visits but this is not yet sufficiently systematic to gain a thorough understanding of the school's performance as a church school and identify next steps for improvement. The headteacher has recently taken over the role of RE leader; considers this a core aspect of the school's provision and has incorporated it into the school development plan. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and Worship.

SIAMS report, March 2017, St Mary's Primary Academy, Melksham, SN12 8PR