

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mark's Church of England Primary School	
Talbot Village Bournemouth Dorset BH10 4JA	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	1 December 2015
Name of multi-academy trust	Bournemouth Septenary Trust
Date of inspection	22 March 2018
Date of last inspection	12 February 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 142445
Headteacher	Caroline Burn
Inspector's name and number	Marcia Headon 761

School context

St Mark's Church of England Primary School is a larger-than-average and oversubscribed primary school. There are 417 pupils on roll aged 4-11. Pupils come from a mixed range of social and economic backgrounds, but the majority live within the Parish of St Mark's and are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is well below the national average, as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A smaller-than-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. In 2015 the school converted to an academy as one of the seven schools in the Bournemouth Septenary Trust.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mark's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school has a very effective partnership with the local church which it uses extensively to enrich its distinctive Christian ethos.
- The extensive nurturing given to pupils and the support they receive from all staff, ensures that the well-being of pupils is of the highest priority.
- The vision of the school, with its emphasis upon values, shapes the personal and spiritual development of pupils.

Areas to improve

- Develop formal systems for school leaders and pupils to evaluate the impact of collective worship in order to develop their spirituality even further.
- Refine and extend the formative feedback system currently used in religious education (RE) to ensure it captures the skills of analysis, enquiry and reflection as well as knowledge and to enable pupils to make even greater gains in learning.
- Ensure that the school develops a system for external moderation of standards and progress in RE so that the accuracy of judgements is benchmarked against other schools.

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

Christian values are central to all aspects of school life and are well known by pupils, staff and parents. It is a highly caring Christian community. The biblical origins of the values are widely displayed around the school through posters prepared by the pupils. The importance of the values is evident in the colourful and meaningful art work which they have produced. Pupils of all ages can explain how the values impact on their thinking. When they find a piece of work difficult they know to keep on persevering as Jesus did. They relate the value of creativity to God's creation of the world and the wonderful things within it. Wisdom, or thinking, as it is called in the school, is seen as vital before taking any action. The value of service or care is very evident throughout the school. Staff see it as their duty to ensure pupils are well supported in their learning. Achievement in Early Years and in the phonics test at the end of Year 1 was strong in 2017 and this continues across the rest of key stage 1. Pupils make good progress at key stage 2 and those who need extra support are given help through a raft of strategies. Nurture is a particularly strong feature for any child who finds difficulty, whether it be in learning or because of emotional or physical need. Teachers and teaching assistants frequently make reference to the values in their lessons and hence reinforce their importance. Relationships throughout the school are strong, supportive and caring. Older pupils help younger ones and the friendship bench, with its biblical quotation from John 15 about helping a friend, is very well used. Behaviour across the school is very good, with pupils holding doors open, greeting visitors, and showing consideration and respect. The school is highly inclusive, and attendance is high. There is a well-defined and understood definition of spiritual development across the staff. They use opportunities as they arise to develop spirituality. Pupils of all ages are developing the ability to think for themselves and experience 'wow' moments such as the opening of the leaves of trees in the field or snow falling quietly. However, work on mapping planned opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum is in its infancy. Pupils show an understanding of the need for tolerance towards those of other faiths. This is fostered through teaching in RE and visits to places of worship from other faiths, such as the Islamic centre or the synagogue. Pupils have a good knowledge of Christianity as a worldwide faith and talk with confidence of how Palm Sunday is remembered in different parts of the world. The school's values and position as a Rights Respecting school encourage pupils' sense of responsibility towards others. They have raised significant sums of money for the local hospice and other charities. The produce from harvest is always donated to the local food bank and pupils speak with conviction of the need to help those less fortunate than themselves.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is valued by members of the school community, who see it as a time to think and to talk to God. It is planned by the headteacher, who uses the opportunity to reinforce the values of the school in a Christian context. The values associated with the school's vision are the themes for one year and the values of the school are the focus in a second year. These are sometimes linked to world events or to topics which the school wishes to emphasise. Recently, pupils have been considering poverty in lessons and the theme of worship on the day of the inspection was the scarcity of water and its wonder as one of God's creations. A good ambience is created for whole-school collective worship with the altar as a focal point and the lighting of candles. Pupils act respectfully, listen attentively to a Bible reading and sing with great enthusiasm. Time is allowed for reflection. Pupils enjoy whole school worship. Class worship, which is held weekly, is more intimate and allows pupils to plan and lead. In class worship pupils are currently studying 'Lent books', which they enjoy and which reinforces their real understanding of the significance of Easter. They all appreciate the worship in the church at major festivals such as remembrance, Christmas and Easter which is led by different Year groups. Many parents come and one wrote saying that as a military person he considered the service to be among the best he had ever attended, as pupils showed real understanding and emotion for the significance of the occasion. The vicar leads worship in school at least three times per term, as do other staff or members from the church. Simple responses and Christian greetings are used but the pupils have limited experience of other forms of Anglican traditions. Pupils show a good awareness of the concept of the Holy Spirit because the Trinity is referred to regularly as part of collective worship and has been the subject of teaching in a number of acts of worship. One of these was vividly remembered as fidget spinners were used to help the explanation. There is a whole-school commitment to prayer. This is seen in worship, in the prayer wall and prayer box and in the way in which pupils speak about talking to God in prayer. The staff have a Eucharist at the beginning of each year, led by the Vicar which is well attended. Pupils are encouraged to think about the meaning and purpose of prayer to Christians and display a good understanding of what prayer means to a Christian. There are excellent opportunities for spiritual reflection by all in the very peaceful and well-tended spiritual garden, which is treated with respect by pupils. However, there is very limited evidence of formal monitoring and evaluation of collective worship. Governors attend worship regularly and make their comments informally, but pupils are not routinely involved in any form of evaluation which leads to developments in worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards in religious education are good by the end of both key stages and similar to those in other core subjects. Pupils make at least good progress from their starting points. Pupils show a wide knowledge of Bible stories and recall events from the Old Testament as well as those in the life of Jesus. The recent introduction of Understanding Christianity, alongside the more established Discovery scheme has significantly enhanced pupils' knowledge of Christian concepts. Teaching is good and at times outstanding. Pupils are given a variety of activities to complete and they particularly enjoy the drama and art in their lessons. Support for less-able learners is good and work is well matched to their ability. Religious education is taught as a discrete lesson and the work in pupils' books shows that there is an emphasis upon developing knowledge and on the skills of enquiry and analysis and interpretation. The vicar recently visited to enable older pupils to question him on how science and creation could be complementary. The pupils gained considerably from this session and it deepened their thinking. Visits to the local church form part of RE lessons and younger pupils enjoy being able to ask questions about the worship practices and the vestments used. The presentation of pupils' work is generally good. For the older years, the school has recently introduced a new form of feedback which identifies more accurately where skills need to be developed. Islam, Hinduism and Judaism are studied, but currently there is not enough in-depth comparison made with Christianity, which hinders pupils from making any connections or identifying differences between religious faiths. Religious education is well led. The coordinator is enthusiastic and has planned the work appropriately. She is an RE specialist and has good subject knowledge. She and another teacher cover much of the teaching of RE in the lower years. She monitors the work in RE books. She has led a number of sessions of professional development for the staff on the teaching of the subject. She regularly observes RE teaching, as do the senior team. Assessment in RE is developing well and there is careful tracking of pupils' progress. The work has been internally moderated. However, there has been no external moderation to enable the coordinator to check standards against other schools.

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

The headteacher has a very strong vision for the school which is rooted in her personal faith in the Christian message. It is shared widely with staff, governors and parents and is translated into action in the school. The leadership and management embody all that the school strives for as a caring Christian community. The vision is very clear in the posters, pictures, symbols and artefacts which decorate the school. The school self-evaluation of its church school distinctiveness is detailed, and the school development plan is accurately directed towards ensuring this is enhanced. Careful evaluation and rapid action is taken to rectify any concerns. The governors are enthusiastic, fully committed to the school and wish to preserve and enhance its Christian ethos. They have increased the level of their monitoring, their visits to lessons, their attendance at collective worship and discussions with pupils to find out their opinions. Through their newly established ethos committee the governing body is about to undertake a review of the values of the school. It implemented the recommendations of the previous inspection fully. It acted quickly and decisively upon the advice given by the diocesan adviser last year. As a result, it knows the school well and holds it to account. It has taken its training needs very seriously and recent professional development from the diocese means governors are having a significant impact on the school's work. The partnership with the local church is exceptionally strong. The work of the vicar and children's minister makes a huge contribution to the Christian character of the school. Both are well respected by pupils who speak with enormous enthusiasm of the 'Tribe' and 'Connect' clubs run by the children's minister and of the way she makes them fun. They have a significant impact on pupils' personal wellbeing and spiritual development. Church members have provided Christmas and Easter experiences for the school and these are highly appreciated by the pupils as well as developing their understanding of key events in the life of the church. The school develops its staff as leaders of church schools well. One deputy has obtained a headship in a church school and the coordinator for RE has attended training on Understanding Christianity alongside other courses. The headteacher is a member of the Bournemouth Church School Heads Association. Parents are very supportive of the school, praising the care it takes of their children and the way it respects and develops pupils' individuality. One said, 'values are at the heart of this school'. The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship and RE.

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