

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Swanage St Mark's Church of England Primary School			
Address	High Street, Swanage, Dorset, BH19 2PH		
Date of inspection	01 March 2019	Status of school	Primary academy inspected as VA. Saturn Education Trust
Diocese / Methodist District	Salisbury	URN	142165

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Excellent
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Excellent

School context

Swanage St Mark's is a primary school with 169 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is above national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages. The school is part of a Multi-Academy Trust, made up of three Church schools and the headteacher of St Mark's is currently interim CEO of the trust.

The school's Christian vision

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life."
John 8:12

In St Mark's, Jesus demonstrates how light leads us to our core values. These values are the vehicles that dispel the darkness.

Our Christian values help us to see God's light and support us with our mission to 'open doors to the journey of life,' a discovery that is full of love, trust, respect and inspiration. We drive learning through discovery and encouraging children to have high aspirations and hope for the light of life to fill them with knowledge and skills to lead fulfilling lives.

Key findings

- The drive of the leadership to place the Christian vision at the heart of the school and draw on this as the impetus for ensuring that all learners flourish is exemplary.
- The impact which the school's work on home liaison and nurture have had on pupils' mental health and well-being are exceptional.
- The depth to which pupils are able to articulate and draw on the school's vision to guide them conveys the central place which the vision has in shaping the life of the school.
- The rigour with which religious education (RE) is led and managed is excellent and leads to outcomes which are of a very high standard in relation to the school's context.
- Collective worship is underpinned by the school's Christian vision and pupils are able to discuss how they draw on it as a source of hope and inspiration.

Areas for development

- To develop and implement a more systematic process for evaluating the impact of the school's vision over time in order to identify further areas for development.
- To refine the shared understanding of spirituality so that progressively deeper opportunities can be planned for the spiritual growth of pupils.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

Leaders have infused the school with an unrelenting determination to fill pupils with the knowledge, skills and hopefulness to enable them to lead fulfilling lives. Leaders have taken advantage of support from the parish and the diocese to extend their understanding of current thinking in Church school education which is evident from the extent to which current agendas are deeply embedded. An extensive plan is in place for the on-going development of the school's Christian distinctiveness, encompassing collective worship and RE. Governors monitor the outcomes of the plan but this monitoring is not yet systematic. Recently appointed staff confirm that their commitment to the school's Christian ethos was established at interview and that they have been provided with professional development to understand their role in promoting the school's vision. This commitment to the development of Christian distinctiveness extends across the multi-academy trust, as exemplified by the recent appointment of a Trust SIAMS Leader. All recommendations from the previous inspection have been addressed.

Teaching is carefully focused on the needs of individuals and, as a result of this, outcomes for learners are on an upward trend. In particular, the provision which the school makes to address the needs of its high proportion of disadvantaged pupils is exceptional. A wide range of provision is in place to ensure that disadvantaged pupils arrive at school punctually and are ready to learn, including a walking bus and breakfast club. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is broadly in line with that of other pupils. The school's Nurture Leader runs a social learning group during four afternoons each week to enable pupils to acquire social skills to be ready to learn. Activities have included gardening, an afternoon with Tim Peake, art therapy, drama therapy and family cookery. Through the targeted work of the Nurture Leader and the Interventions Manager, standards of attainment for vulnerable learners have risen in line with that of other pupils. The school has secured bursaries and grants to widen the scope of its work on emotional well-being, including projects which run during the school holidays. In addition, the school has assisted families through a food bank, which it supports with Swanage Churches Together. The school also runs a 'Uniform Swap Shop' and has provided extensive family support with Swanage Children's centre. All of this work has stemmed directly from the school's vision to 'help us to see God's light'.

The curriculum at the school is highly enriched in order to inspire a love of learning. Through many interesting and engaging topics, exciting enrichment afternoons and the work of the school's own Forest Schools Leader, pupils are encouraged to believe in the school's vision and be guided by it. As a result of this, pupils are increasingly able to overcome challenges and make positive choices and, as a consequence, exclusions are kept to a minimum. There are many examples on displays around the school and in personal reflection books of pupils asking and reflecting on spiritual questions and the school is creating a spiritual garden in its grounds. However, while the school has a spirituality policy, not all members of staff are able to articulate a shared understanding of spiritual development.

Pupils are clear that the school's vision guides them in their personal decisions. One pupil said that, 'Our vision tells us that God doesn't want you to be full of darkness but full of light and that means that you have to help the world to be full of light.' Another pupil commented, 'Because we are a Church school, we respect Jesus' teaching and when you respect Jesus' teaching, you have to respect others.' With the support of the parish priest, the school has undertaken extensive work with pupils on the theological basis of standing up for justice. Pupils articulate this to an impressive degree and have engaged in a very wide variety of activities to challenge injustice and exploitation. These have included beach cleans, recycling projects and involvement with Church Action on Poverty. Parents feel that this aspect of the school's ethos has made a real difference to their children's outlook. They say that children often talk about the vision and challenge their parents to fully adhere to it!

Forgiveness and reconciliation are central to the ethos of the school. In a RE lesson on the Easter story in the Reception class, one child said that, 'When Jesus died on the cross, he took away all of our sins. That's just like in our school - if people get red cards they can always be taken away if they are sorry so that they can start again.' The school has a well-embedded Mental Health and Wellbeing policy and, in addition to very clear systems and strategies for promoting the mental health of pupils, staff report that the school is a place where there is a culture of care and encouragement. Dignity and respect are of paramount importance. The school is an advocate for Stonewall and the celebration of diversity is a completely natural part of life at the school.

Collective worship is a central aspect of school life and contains many aspects through which pupils grow spiritually, including music, story, prayer and reflection. Pupils are able to discuss a wide variety of biblical stories which they have explored in collective worship and explain how these underpin the school values and their decisions in life. The Trinitarian nature of God has been very carefully explored and pupils articulate this well; many classrooms contain high quality displays and artworks illustrating this. The parish priest leads weekly worship and the parish supports worship through Open the Book, which the pupils particularly enjoy. Pupils attend the parish church for worship at key times of the year and are given opportunities to plan and lead worship.

As an expression of the Christian vision, leaders have worked with absolute determination to put a RE curriculum in place which ensures that pupils acquire a thorough understanding of Christianity as a living world faith. Through this curriculum, pupils also develop knowledge and understanding of a range of world faiths and are enabled to draw very thoughtful comparisons between these.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

Examples of excellent RE teaching were observed on the day of the inspection and the work in pupils' books demonstrates that they explore theological concepts in great depth. Rigorous systems of assessment have enabled teachers to ensure that pupils make excellent progress. RE teaching encourages pupils to ask deep questions and bring their personal experience to bear on answering these. Pupils talk animatedly about their own religious and spiritual ideas. Monitoring of standards in RE is excellent and staff develop their own practice through comparing work samples and identifying areas for development. Standards are regularly moderated across the local group of schools, leading to high expectations of pupil outcomes.

Headteacher	Sally Craig
Inspector's name and number	Richard Wharton 835