

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

### St Mark's Church of England Primary School

<b>Address</b>	Southport Road, Scarisbrick, Ormskirk L40 9RE		
<b>Date of inspection</b>	21 March 2019	<b>Status of school</b>	Voluntary controlled primary
<b>Diocese</b>	Liverpool	<b>URN</b>	119410

<b>Overall Judgement</b>	<b>Grade</b>
How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Additional Judgement</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>The impact of collective worship</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

#### School context

St Mark's is a primary school with 62 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 below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national averages. In September 2015 the school lowered the admission age to three years thus enabling nursery provision to be established. There are 2 children on the nursery roll at present.

#### The school's Christian vision

'St Mark's School believes that everyone is uniquely created by God. We provide opportunities to recognise our gifts that He has freely given to us. Our caring, nurturing community fosters the growth of Christian values through following Jesus' Golden Rule. **'So in everything, do to others as you would have them do to you'** (Matthew 7:12) Building on this firm foundation allows us to flourish, support one another in reaching our individual potential and encourages us as life-long learners.'

#### Key findings

- The pupils are vibrant and exceptional exemplars of the school's vision, showing love and respect to each other, to every member of the school family and to visitors.
- The vision is promoted and constantly in mind, with all members of staff following the leadership team's example. This leads to the outstanding spiritual and social maturity demonstrated by pupils.
- The security and loving encouragement that has been developed and maintained in school results in outstanding academic achievement. This is amplified by an adventurous and innovative curriculum, vigorously championed by governors.
- Worship and religious education (RE) are at the heart of school life, brimming with reverence and excitement and stimulating exceptional spiritual development for adults and pupils. The vicar plays a crucial and invaluable role in both areas and gives excellent pastoral support for staff, pupils and carers.
- Mental and spiritual wellbeing is seen as crucial in allowing all members of the school family to live well together and enabling all to flourish.

#### Areas for development

- Extend and embed the contacts with different faith groups to deepen the pupils' understanding of diverse religious beliefs and their impact on people's lives.
- Make full use of the planned 'Lighthouse' annexe in church to showcase the school's Christian witness and so build even stronger links with the whole community.

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

This small school succeeds dramatically in demonstrating throughout its vibrant daily life the power and impact of a clear Christian vision. This is because the leadership team, including the foundation governors, carefully, yet with great determination ensure that this vision is indeed lived, not just taught and discussed. The pupils are exceptionally loving and respectful to each other and to all with whom they come into contact. They demonstrate to an excellent degree the effectiveness of Jesus' teaching on which the vision is firmly based. A pupils' council member said 'Love brings us together'. The extremely close and strong church/school links are welcomed. One parent said 'We're all part of one community'.

Leaders are diligent in basing all planning and evaluation of the curriculum on the vision. Innovative and hugely varied approaches are carefully planned. They are also intuitively utilised so as to maximise the achievements of every pupil, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). National data indicates that progress is good to outstanding for all. This approach also leads to exceptional care for adults and pupils alike, with acceptance, love and forgiveness prominent amongst the Christian values that guide such work. The vulnerable and/or those in crisis are supported and guided supremely well. A parent commented on her child's experience on joining the school after a difficult time, saying, 'It's been wonderful. They've made us so welcome.'

The sensitivity and love extended to all ensures that the mental health and well-being of adults and pupils alike is a key priority. The vicar's pastoral role is extremely valuable and this is warmly acknowledged by all. Her dedication is exemplary and inspiring. Her involvement in the leading of worship and in RE teaching is significant, and the spiritual development of all pupils is impressive. A Year 6 pupil, relatively new to the school, said 'I've learnt to have confidence in God.' Indeed, the well above average mobility of pupils is, although potentially disruptive, taken on board with Christian grace and determination to give every pupil the best possible education. All staff are aware that engagement with the 'big questions' takes pupils deeper and brings spiritual and moral issues into every area of learning, giving real depth to the curriculum and pupils' understanding. The recently introduced 'Heartsmart' personal social and health education programme adds further depth, and also has excellent links with Biblical principles.

Pupils' skills and understanding are further enhanced by excellent and very well attended after school clubs. An outstanding example is the work led by the chair of governors with pupils in the 'Code Club', who are in contact with the National Space Agency. They have links with schools worldwide in sharing access to their photos of Earth from space. The pupils in the after school club run by the vicar and church members take their spiritual development further in relaxed and 'fun' ways. They take their faith seriously, sharing insights such as 'we are representing Jesus'. They are living out the Christian values of generosity and kindness by raising funds for a sponsored child in Brazil. The pupils' awareness of the needs of others is keen and impressive. Their choices of charities to support are well informed and thoughtful. For example, the latest annual 'enterprise week' included fundraising for a diabetes charity because one pupil in the school has the condition. They also resent any injustice and promote equality. One said they follow Jesus' example, saying 'He treated all his disciples equally, even Judas!'

The pupils' loving and open attitudes reflect a deeply embedded culture in the school that embraces difference. They are also fully aware that we all make mistakes, but that 'God can make you always truthful...and give you a fresh start', as one pupil put it. There is certainly an active and deep awareness of the need to 'treat others as you would have them treat you'. Staff, pupils and adults in general do their best to live by this golden rule. One teacher expressed the blessing arising from this by saying, 'we trust each other in here all the time'.

Self-evaluation of the Christian distinctiveness of the school is diligently and regularly undertaken with involvement from all sections of the school family. Governors have dealt meticulously with the area for development from the previous report by ensuring that pupils are fully involved in worship, including planning, leading and evaluation. They also foster excellent in-service training in co-operation with the local network of

small schools and with the diocese. Preparation for future church school leaders is thus thoughtfully undertaken and is supported by outstanding teamwork, delegation and sharing of expertise and new ideas with other practitioners. The headteacher is regularly deployed by the diocese to support new headteachers in other church schools, and is an enthusiastic advocate for sharing innovative and inspirational ideas between schools.

Teaching and learning in RE adds immeasurably to the spiritual and cultural development of the pupils. The agreed syllabus is being supplemented by elements of the diocesan syllabus, fully complying with the RE Statement of Entitlement. Staff exchange expertise with the local small schools and through RE development meetings. Lessons are full of life, variety and celebration, with deep and spiritually demanding discussion, role-play and sensitivity to the abilities and needs of each pupil. Drama makes a significant impact on the pupils' experience and learning by exciting their imaginations. For example a Year 1 role-playing 'Pharisee' involved in dramatising Christ's entry to Jerusalem shouted convincingly and vehemently, 'Kill 'im!' In a discussion about RE a pupil said 'We go deeper in all faiths; it changes how you approach them. We can understand and relate to them and give our personal opinion'. The impact of such discussions on the pupils' spiritual development is highly significant. However, an appropriate level of understanding of world faiths is not found throughout the year groups as yet.

Worship is at the very heart of school life, welcoming and inspiring everyone, regardless of their faith position. The vicar, the local congregation and leaders from school, notably the pupils, work together to create a dramatic tapestry. It is made up of child-friendly liturgy, Bible readings, dramatisations, prayer and lively reverent singing, all facilitated with great sensitivity. The pupils and adults are enthralled and are frequently touched emotionally and spiritually by worship in school and in church. One pupil said when describing prayer, 'God does talk to us from our minds.'

Friday afternoon family services are held in church every month with tea and coffee. They involve the whole school, most of the parents/carers and many members of the congregation, and contribute strongly to the building of relationships between the two communities. The soon to be built annexe is aimed at extending this impressive project by providing an open and welcoming Christian centre for the whole of Scarisbrick. This is a school with a Christ-centred mission that is extending God's love far and wide.

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