

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary Abbots CE Primary School

2 Kensington Church Court, Kensington, London W8 4SP

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	London
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Date of inspection	31 January 2018
Date of last inspection	15 January 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	100497
Headteacher	Nicola Doyle
Inspector's name and number	John Logan 892

School context

St Mary Abbots is a one form entry Voluntary Aided Primary School in the Parish of St Mary Abbots in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The school currently has 209 children on role. The established headteacher is supported by a fairly new senior leadership team. The school has relatively low numbers of children eligible for pupil premium (9%). Children come from diverse ethnic groupings with 38% with English as an additional language (EAL). The school has relatively low numbers of children on a special educational needs (SEN) support plan or an education and healthcare plan (EHCP).

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary Abbots as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school's distinctively Christian culture is fully embedded into every area of its life. This is further reinforced by the strong Christian values which are shared throughout the school community.
- There are many high-quality opportunities for children and families to engage in activities that help their own spiritual development and this has a significant impact on the lives of children and their parents.
- The range of opportunities to engage in Collective worship provides a richness to children's experience. As a result, children find worship inspiring and engaging.
- There are high levels of enthusiasm and engagement in religious education (RE). Lessons are dynamic and exciting using a wide range of resources to enrich learning.
- Children have a strong knowledge of key facts in RE and they are confident at articulating their knowledge and understanding of topics covered to a high level.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and through careful questioning they help children to learn about religious practices and to reflect on meaning in their own lives.
- Leaders in the school consistently and confidently articulate and model a vision rooted in the distinctively Christian belief of the importance of each individual as being loved and cherished.

Areas to improve

- Consider ways to encapsulate and articulate the vision and values of the school in policies and other published documents.
- Broaden opportunities for children to develop higher order learning skills through their RE learning.

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

The school's distinctively Christian culture is fully embedded into every area of its life. Parents speak of the strong sense of community feeling with a strong attachment to the church. This is further illustrated by the way the school responded to the nearby Grenfell Tower fire and the high level of support given to the families affected by this tragedy. Strong Christian values are shared throughout the school community and during their time at the school children learn to apply a wide range of Christian values. Children are able to talk effectively about the school's values and biblical teaching. The Christian values exhibited, articulated and taught in the school are much wider than the published values of peace, forgiveness and hope.

Distinctive Christian values have a significant impact on the achievement of children. Thorough and careful monitoring of each child, groups of children and the school as a whole helps to ensure that all children make good progress. Achievement is high and outcomes tend to be well above national expectations. The school benefits greatly from members of the church who come and read regularly with the children. The school ethos and values impact on attendance levels which are high and exclusion which is very rare.

There are a wide range of opportunities for pupils to engage in activities which make a difference to the lives of others, such as the Sentebale charity, a project chosen by the children themselves. Their understanding of the needs of the local community is further developed through their support of a local homelessness project. There are many high-quality opportunities for children and families to engage in activities that help develop their own spiritual development and this has a significant impact on the lives of children and their parents. The link with St Mary Abbots Church is particularly strong and as one parent described it, the 'seamless link between school and church'.

This is a school where relationships are strong, where staff know the children very well and strive tirelessly to ensure that they provide the best opportunity for children to flourish. Children, parents, staff and governors speak about how these values are grounded in the school's Christian vision. Parents talk of the approachability of the school and how they feel confident in approaching staff with any problems. One parent spoke of how the school 'works hard to incorporate real life into school life'.

Through their links with St Mary Abbots church children develop a good understanding of the role of the anglican church and through various projects, such as the Sentebale charity and the diocesan lent appeal children learn about the church in a global context. In RE children learn effectively about people of faiths other than Christianity and have a strong understanding and respect for the diversity of differing beliefs.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship (CW) has a key place in the life of the school. The range of opportunities to engage in CW provides a richness to children's experience. As a result, children find worship inspiring and engaging. The Thursday school Eucharist at the church is particularly valued by parents, governors, staff and children alike. Children enjoy the opportunities presented to participate in the service the input from others, especially the vicar and the other clergy.

Acts of worship are systematically planned, drawing on biblical stories, key festivals and events in the church year. It enables children to reflect on key questions in life and to apply this to their everyday lives. This can often lead to engagement in social action, for example food bank collections, post Grenfell fire response and charity support. Through collective worship children develop a good understanding of the life of Jesus as one child reflecting on the story of the Lost Son said, 'Jesus will always forgive and we should forgive, even if we don't want to.' They have also developed a good understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One child reflecting on this said 'All united you have a perfect sense of life, peace and serenity.'

There are many opportunities for children to engage in prayer and reflection, formally and informally. Class spaces and displays provide opportunities for children to reflect and pray, such as a display with thoughtful comments about forgiveness 'when someone forgives me it makes me happy' and 'forgiveness is when you say sorry and you forget about it'. Individual class prayer cards help to focus prayer and the use of more formal prayers such as the use of the Lord's Prayer and the Grace helps the children to have a greater understanding of the richness of prayer. The summertime holiday crosses activity, where children and parents were asked to bring a cross to school from wherever they visited in the world helped developed children's understanding of the church as a worldwide community. The variety of opportunities to reflect through worship results in thoughtful and responsive children who are developing a strong and mature personal spirituality.

Children especially enjoy opportunities to take part in leading worship. This can be through the lighting of candles as

'lighting the candle is special' as one child put it. They also enjoy singing in the choir at the Eucharist and other opportunities to take part in worship. Good evaluation systems are in place to monitor and evaluate collective worship and feedback from clergy, staff and parents following acts of worship and these are used effectively for future planning.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Standards in RE are generally as high as that of other core subjects, but in many cases exceed them. Lessons have clear success criteria and this enables children to identify clearly what needs to be done to achieve in lessons. Good quality marking enables children to both reflect on their work and to know the next steps they need to take in their learning. As a result children make good progress in RE. There are high levels of enthusiasm and engagement in RE. The school are in the process of gradually introducing the new diocesan RE scheme of work and have a clear plan which ensures that high standards are maintained during the transition.

Lessons are dynamic and exciting using a wide range of resources to enrich learning. Teachers make good use of religious artefacts to stimulate learning. Strong subject knowledge leads to high quality learning experiences for children. Through careful questioning they help children to learn about religious practices and to reflect on meaning in their own lives. An example of this was in a lesson on pilgrimage where children were firstly asked where they would go to on their own personal pilgrimage and what they would take with them. The quality of pupil response is very high with one child explaining the reasoning behind their choice to go to a beach in Italy with 'I would take time to appreciate the sea and views around me'. Others were able to give good reasons why they would leave behind their mobile phones and devices to 'be able to connect with nature'. In a lesson about Muslim prayer children were encouraged to think about key concepts surrounding the design of prayer mats and they were able to use their knowledge of Islam to give good explanations. In a Key Stage 1 lesson about the synagogue, children recapped enthusiastically about a previous visit and demonstrated excellent subject knowledge.

Children have a strong knowledge of key facts in RE and they are confident in articulating their knowledge and understanding of topics covered to a high level. In some cases teaching enables children to develop higher level skills, such as interpretation, evaluation and reflection, but this is not yet consistent across the school. The leadership and management of RE is given a high priority and as a result subject expertise is strong.

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

Leaders in the school consistently and confidently articulate and model a vision rooted in the distinctively Christian belief of the importance of each individual as being loved and cherished. This is driven by the strong Christian vision of the Headteacher, effectively supported by the senior leadership team and governing body. At all levels leaders have a strong view of school performance and what needs to be done to take the school forwards. This is based on thorough and insightful self-evaluation practices and very strong relationships between leaders and the school community as a whole. There are good examples of how pupil voice feeds into this planning through the school council and the recent pupil survey for example. As one member of staff describes it 'every child is special and unique and the school works hard to give them all the best start'. Governors are extremely efficient in fulfilling their role to support and challenge the school. In a recent governor's learning walk they were able to not only observe how the school was running, but were able to offer pertinent questions to the school. As a result they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Arrangements for RE and collective worship effectively meets statutory requirements.

The school engages well with the diocese and makes good use of professional development opportunities, such as middle and senior leadership training. In addition to this they make good use of the in school support offered by the diocese. As a result of this the school is effectively developing leaders for future church schools. To further develop leadership opportunities the school has correctly identified the need to ensure that succession planning is embedded into the culture of the school to ensure that the strong Christian vision is maintained and further developed. The relationship between the school and the local church is strong and exemplary in many ways. They also enjoy sharing in a number of activities with another local parish. As a result of this there are strong and substantial benefits for the church and the school community. The school has good links with a number of different charities and organisations such as the local food bank and homelessness project. These enable the children to develop a good social conscience. Parents and carers enjoy the close family feel, the openness of staff and the many opportunities they provide for parents to get involved in school. Many parents describe the school as a 'family', with one parent saying that 'it's not just the child going to school, it's the whole family!'. This enables children to thrive in a secure and nurturing community.