

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mark's Church of England VA Primary School	
Address	Queen's Road, Farnborough, Hampshire, GU14 6DU
School vision	
<p>'Living and learning together'</p> <p>St. Mark's CE Primary School is a welcoming community where children develop a lifelong love of learning and sense of belonging within a nurturing and inclusive Christian environment. All children have the opportunity to become free thinking, responsible citizens, whilst understanding and appreciating the wonder of our world. They leave St Mark's with the confidence to live fulfilling lives and respond with flexibility to an ever-changing world.</p>	
School strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's vision and values are deeply embedded. A shared language of equity significantly deepens understanding of identity and difference. • Collective worship is valued as a time for the school and community to come together for reflection and celebration. Prayer is woven into the fabric of the school day. • Leaders have implemented a well-balanced, engaging religious education (RE) curriculum. As a result, pupils confidently demonstrate understanding of worldviews and a range of religions, including Christianity. • Partnerships with the church and diocese are strong. Through this, opportunities for reflection, gathering, and learning are enriched. • Strong teaching and learning in RE enables pupils to deeply consider the world around them. This is exemplified in positive relationships and individualised support for pupils. As a result, pupils make good progress overall. 	
Areas for development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the planning of opportunities for spiritual reflection through the curriculum. This is so that pupils can develop personal insights into their own spiritual growth over time. • Enable pupils to gain a deeper understanding of the biblical inspiration for, and application of, the circle values. This is so that they can further grow in their understanding of how Christianity and faith can enthuse their life and learning. 	

Inspection findings

St Mark's School have developed a highly inclusive and aspirational Christian vision and associated values that have community at their heart. Leaders and governors have recently revised and enhanced the school's vision of 'living and learning together.' Staff recognise the vision as a fresh expression of a longstanding culture of care. Through this process, partnerships with the church and diocese have been productive and are a clear strength. In living out the vision, the well-established circle values run through St Mark's 'like a stick of rock.' They are lived out with integrity and are having a meaningful impact on the behaviour and aspirations of pupils. However, pupils do not consistently recognise the Christian inspiration for these values.

Staff know the individual needs of the pupils well. This enables them to offer a curriculum that meets the demands of this increasingly diverse community. By changing one of the circle values from equality to equity, the school is developing a language to understand and articulate inclusion. A thorough and ongoing review of the curriculum has helped ensure that learning is accessible to all. Inspired by the vision, pupils with additional needs are sensitively nurtured. Ambitious enquiry-based projects in RE stimulate pupils across the full range of abilities to love learning and succeed. Pupils are inspired by human achievement and the wonders of the natural world. However, the way these encounters extend pupils' spiritual development are less evident and planned opportunities for reflecting on spiritual growth are not established.

Collective worship binds the school together in a time that is valued by all. Pupils and adults benefit from the varied pattern of worship throughout each week. For example, the craft activity on peace enabled the youngest children to think of times of stillness and wonder. Their responses included 'listening to the sea' and 'looking at nature.' Worship supports deep and sincere reflection and helps to guide actions, enabling pupils and adults to spiritually flourish. Staff value worship for introducing a 'dimension of thinking about something 'other'.' The pupils' spirituality team are appointed annually. Along with key adults they reflect on the quality of worship and have a positive impact on shaping this important part of the school day. Structured events such as the recent 'pause day' are valued as a time for spiritual reflection. One pupil said that 'sometimes in life you need to pause, to calm down, to stop and think about what really matters.' Prayer areas throughout the school are well used. Another pupil described prayer as 'a time to put down a heavy bag that you've been carrying on your own and share it with God.' Worship is enriched by a very strong relationship with clergy from the local church. Times of reflection, celebration, and worship in the local church building are carefully planned and valued by adults and pupils. Considerable investment from leaders and foundation governors has ensured that this relationship is highly valued and productive.

A warm culture of mutual support and appreciation of difference is evident in the relationships within St Mark's. This is illustrated in the celebration events and displays. Pupils behave very well and show respect for others. They listen carefully to one another and when disagreeing, they disagree well. Families value being a part of this nurturing community. One parent said that St Mark's has enabled their child to 'think carefully about who they are and what they stand for.' Staff work closely as a collaborative and cohesive team. They support each other professionally and personally, impacting positively on their mental health and sense of wellbeing. The school's keen sense of care and community is exemplified in events such as carols around the campfire. Carefully planned provision, including homework clubs, are well attended and rightly seen as important to the role of nurturing pupils whilst supporting families to flourish.

Inspired by their vision, pupils understand the importance of justice both in their school and locality. Pupils talk of the importance of their local and global environment. This is illustrated by the school council's advocacy for water bottles to replace disposable cups. One pupil spoke of the importance of changing their remembrance poppies from plastic to paper 'because making good choices for the

environment matters to us at St Mark's.' Pupils are socially aware and attuned to the impact of their giving, both locally and globally. For example, pupils' learning about war and injustice in countries around the world has inspired prayer for oppressed groups. This is effectively displayed on the world prayer wall in the school library. In addition, the ongoing relationship with the St George's Foundation helps pupils to reflect on their own material and spiritual needs. Pupils develop as confident and responsible citizens and are actively engaged in becoming positive agents for change.

The RE curriculum is a significant strength of the school. Adept and sensitive subject leadership has resulted in a carefully crafted and sequential curriculum that embeds a love of learning. Thoughtful planning has shaped the structure to cater for mixed-year teaching, which has added to, and enriched, diocesan-based materials. Staff speak enthusiastically about the new developments. The curriculum supports an understanding of diversity across world religions and worldviews. This includes appreciating differences within religious traditions. This is illustrated through Christianity that is taught and understood as a living and global faith. This was explored further during Advent with the inclusion of Christian artwork from around the world. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject by governors and leaders is effective and ensures an aspirational plan for continued development. This includes embedding the language of the 'golden threads' to enhance ways of learning in the curriculum. Staff regularly access professional learning through valued relationship with the diocesan education team.

The school has skilfully supported the staff team to enrich their teaching and understanding of RE. As a result, pupils learn well and regard the subject highly. Assessment in RE is carefully planned to enable all to demonstrate progress. Pupils expect to grapple with big questions in lessons and they enjoy doing so. During the inspection, pupils were stimulated to consider what it means to live a good life. In their reflection, pupils demonstrated a secure understanding of the differences between Humanist and Christian beliefs concerning an after-life. Highly effective teaching ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and they make good progress overall.

The inspection findings indicate that St Mark's Church of England Primary School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
School	St Mark's Church of England Primary School	Inspection date	10 th June 2024
URN	116389	VC/VA/Academy	VA
Diocese/District	Guildford	Pupils on roll	107
MAT/Federation			
Headteacher	Victoria Ellis		
Chair of Governors/ Trust Board	Michael Hartley		
Inspector	Mary Sweeney	No.	C.23/24