



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church**



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Mary's Church of England (Foundation) Primary School

High Style
Great Dunmow
Essex
CM6 1EB

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex

Date of inspection: 10th December 2014

Date of last inspection: 1st December 2009

School's unique reference number: 115299

Headteacher: Clare Griffiths

Inspector's name and number: Pamela Draycott 161

School context

Dunmow St Mary's is a large Church of England foundation primary school. The majority of pupils are White British. A small number come from families who worship in Church regularly. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or for whom the school receives pupil premium funding due to social disadvantage is below the national average. The school follows the 'Values for Life' programme which underpins its work as a Christian foundation school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Dunmow, St Mary's as a Church of England school are good.

- The importance given to the school's Christian foundation by all school leaders which acts as a driving force for school development
- A worship programme which is good and which effectively supports the school's Christian ethos
- Pupils' understanding of principal Christian festivals which is effectively supported through worship opportunities and well linked to the creative curriculum and to religious education (RE)

Areas to improve

- Update and refine the school's vision statement and Christian values so that they are linked explicitly to Biblical teaching and reflect current practice
- Extend opportunities for pupils to be involved in the planning and leading of worship
- Improve the interactive use of the prayer and reflection area in each classroom

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

Dunmow St Mary's motto is 'Enjoy and Achieve' reflecting the school's positive, purposeful and happy atmosphere which is clearly based on its Christian foundation. There is a 'family feel' which encourages mutual support with, for example, older pupils volunteering to help younger children at playtime. This is seen as a reflection of the school's Christian ethos. As one child said, 'It's important to put our values into practice so that we live good lives'. The 'Values for Life' programme is a cornerstone of the school's development of its Christian values. Whilst pupils know these values well, they are not consistently able to make explicit links with Christian belief and teaching. The school's vision statement was devised two years ago and does not fully reflect current practice and priorities. There are wide-ranging opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to take place. The creative curriculum, enrichment through music and sport and religious education (RE) and the worship programme support this well. Pupils' response to these opportunities is good. Pupils are well known and cared for by staff. This supports them appropriately in their academic and personal development. Accordingly, they are helped to achieve at least in line with their capabilities. Alongside this, a good pastoral support system means that pupils of all abilities make good progress as befits the school's Christian service to its pupils. Attainment is around the national average in most areas but is higher for the most able. Spelling, punctuation and grammar skills were lower than the national average. However, the school has taken appropriate measures to address this in line with its Christian principles. This means that they are now in line with expectations. Behaviour, which is based on respect and self-discipline, is excellent. Pupils are polite and act in caring ways which reflects its Christian values well. Opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to take place are good and pupils respond well to these. There is a 'prayer tree' outside the school's main office which has been used by some pupils for prayers or for concerns. However, pupils' use of the reflection areas in classrooms is not well developed.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

A daily worship opportunity linked to the Christian year and to 'Values for Life' takes place. Worship is appropriately extended by going to church to celebrate major Christian festivals. Strong links with the Christian element of the RE curriculum enhances pupils' experience of worship. As one pupil said, 'Sometimes we worship and then we do it in RE or we do some RE work and then think about it again in worship'. The quality of worship in school and at specific festival times in the parish church has a positive impact on pupils' understanding of school values and of Biblical stories. Worship is well planned by the worship co-ordinator, who is also a governor, and by the RE co-ordinator who is a senior leader. This indicates the importance placed on it as a vital element of the school's Christian ethos. Worship is explicitly Christian but is sensitive and inclusive of those of other faiths or of none. Pupils see the importance of worship as a time to learn about God and Jesus and to reflect on values such as peace and respect. Some parents say that their children are asking interesting but difficult questions because of what they have experienced in worship. This is seen by them as a positive aspect of their child's development being supported by the school. There is a strong musical tradition which is used very well to enhance worship. A teacher has set an opening Christian greeting, the Lord's Prayer and the Grace to music. These Anglican elements of worship are responded to very positively by pupils. Although some volunteer to read prayers during worship, overall pupils are not effectively involved in planning or in leading worship. Pupils understand that saying prayers is an element of worship and they know that there are different types of prayer.

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

The headteacher provides decisive leadership of this church school. She has a clear vision for its development. During her relatively short time as headteacher, she has made a considerable impact on renewing and refreshing the school's Christian ethos. In this, she is well supported by her senior leadership team, other staff and governors. There is accurate and helpful evaluation of the school as a church school in place. This includes clear 'next steps' as part of the school development plan. There is a good tracking system which supports senior leaders and class teachers in knowing the progress of individuals and of groups of children. This is linked to care for and support of all pupils as part of its

Christian foundation. Senior leaders, including governors, monitor attainment and progress well. The headteacher is strongly committed to supporting colleagues in considering development of their careers within the church school sector where appropriate. The school has benefited from the support of its diocesan school's link adviser and has used diocesan training courses to support teachers. There are positive and mutually beneficial links with St Mary's parish church. The vicar, who is new to the parish, is already well known in school and has an active interest in the well-being of the school community. She prays regularly for the school during morning prayer for example. The church hosts a Year 3 project during the Autumn term which helps to strengthen links and deepen pupils' understanding. Parents really value the school as a caring and Christian community. They recognise and appreciate its Christian foundation in providing a support for learning and for the personal and religious development of their children. Arrangements for worship meet statutory requirements as do those for RE. This reflects the importance placed on these areas in supporting the school's Christian foundation.

SIAMS report December 2014. St Mary's Church of England Foundation Primary School, High Style, Great Dunmow, Essex, CM6 1EB