



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### St Mary's CE VA Primary Academy

Fuller Street  
Kettering  
NN16 0JH

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Peterborough**

Local authority: N/A

Dates of inspection: 6 July 2016

Date of last inspection: June 2011

School's unique reference number: 122024

Headteacher: Diane Wright

Inspector's name and number: Annette Ray

### School context

The school is an average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils receiving support through pupil premium is above the national average. The school has an above average and growing population of children for whom English is an additional language. In April 2013 the school became an academy as part of the Cross Keys Academy Trust. The trust consists of two other local primary schools. The headteacher and deputy head teacher were both appointed in September 2016.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's CE VA Primary Academy as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school's Christian character has a high profile and shapes the behaviour and relationships for all members of the school community.
- The importance given to the teaching of Jesus Christ creates an ethos of aspiration and self-belief.
- Learners are inspired by religious education (RE) and can give examples of how teaching in RE has impacted on their daily lives.
- The school's Christian vision and ethos informs all aspects of school life resulting in a coherence between policy, practice and how everyone understands the character of the school.

### Areas to improve

- Develop the children's understanding of the elements of worship so they feel more confident in planning and leading worship for both classes and the whole school.
- Build on the current commitment to RE teaching to ensure it responds to the highest level of challenge and ensures all teaching is consistently outstanding.

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

This school is a shining example of Christian love and care. The school's distinctive key values built around the word faith are deeply embedded in all aspects of the school's life. All members of the school community understand this because the head teacher uses a key ring holding a bunch of labelled keys as a visual prompt of how faith holds the keys together. Values of friendship, forgiveness and hope underpin relationships which makes people feel supported and cared for. Children are happy in school and take home a depth of understanding of how people should live through their values. Pupils have confidence in their teachers and trust them saying things like 'they are amazing' and 'they help us so much'. The headteacher's commitment to everything reflecting the example of Jesus is exemplified in the school's approach to attendance and the behaviour policy. This results in the very small number of issues being dealt with in a supportive manner by all of the staff team. Attendance has increased, pupils want to come to the school each and every day. The Christian vision that all are loved by God means that the school works tirelessly to support not only pupils but their families as well. Attainment on entry to the foundation stage is below national average. The school's passionate aspiration for every child as a child of God leads to practice that enables pupils to make at least satisfactory and often more than expected progress. This means that levels of attainment at the end of year 6 are consistently above national averages. Through regular planned and spontaneous opportunities to pray and reflect learners develop spiritually. The school has many spaces that can be used for this such as the values tree which has story sacks hanging in its branches illustrating each of the key values. Learners delight in using these story sacks to retell the linked biblical story using artefacts as well as the story book itself. A recent development is 'the well', another space which children can access for reflection, a calm, quiet space which is valued by the pupils. Although only recently introduced, a child described it as 'the most prayerful place in the school'. Prayers written here are often used in worship. Learners develop an understanding of and respect for difference and diversity through the RE curriculum and themed days. This, together with links with a school in Kenya, also helps them to understand something of how Christianity is lived out in other cultures. This outward looking focus, together with the aspirational care they experience at St Mary's means children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are strengths of the school.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Enormous importance is given to collective worship. Christian teachings particularly about the school's values are richly explored in a variety of engaging and memorable and Bible based ways. Both learners and staff contribute on a regular basis, the atmosphere being one of joyful celebration and a time together to learn about the teaching of Jesus. All staff regularly attend worship and value the time together. This is so central to the philosophy of the school that attendance at an act of worship is included as part of the school's interview process. This helps to select candidates who support the school's deeply embedded Christian vision. A wide range of approaches is used, including drama, pupil responses, singing and quiet contemplation ensuring all are engaged in the worship experience. The thinking of all present is enriched through inspirational themes. These develop high levels of spiritual and moral reflection as well as an active response. Following a worship on the theme of how Jesus would want us to serve others, the children recently tidied up the local park. Prayer and reflection are key elements of worship. Learners make good use of inspirational spaces around the school for reflection and prayer. Learners develop a rich understanding and enjoyment of a range of types of worship through the variety of adults who regularly visit the school to lead worship. The head teacher's commitment to modelling high quality worship has meant that the opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship independently have been limited. Pupils' understanding of the liturgical year and of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is impressive for their age. Monitoring of collective worship is deeply embedded, having a clear purpose, and actively involving governors and a parents' committee. The impact of pupil monitoring has led to developments including the increase of time for calm and stillness for reflection.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

Learners are inspired by RE and learn well. There is a careful balance between learning about religion and reflecting on what their learning means to them. Through a strong focus on Christianity pupils reflect on how they might apply the teachings and example of Jesus to their own lives. In addition their understanding of religion and the world is broadened through learning about religions other than Christianity. A highly developed system of assessment, as in other subjects built around the word faith, ensures that learners make good progress from their starting points. Standards of attainment in RE are at least in line with the expectations of the Northamptonshire Agreed Syllabus. Children are very proud of their work and are able to give examples of how marking helps them to improve. Through using a variety of effective strategies such as challenging questions and stimulating tasks that promote learning, teaching is always good and often outstanding. Recent high quality training on developing higher level skills has enhanced the provision for both teaching about Christianity and other faiths. This is not yet fully embedded in all teaching. Learners apply their knowledge and skills through curriculum enrichment faith days. One recent such day developed the children's understanding of the impact of religion on believers. This gave rise to the inspiring faith tree in the entrance which records what faith means to people from differing religious traditions.

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

There is passionate leadership from the headteacher who promotes a vision deeply rooted in Christian values. She strongly believes that as Christ loved the church so we should love the children. This passion for improving the life chances of each and every child involves everyone and motivates a successful, relentless attention to understanding and supporting academic and wellbeing needs. This commitment continues even after the pupils have moved to other schools. The staff and governors totally support her in this, 'All here are seen as part of the school family'. The headteacher is correct in her assertion that 'we live and breathe the values in everything we do'. The staff support her in this, one staff member commenting, 'It is so lovely to work somewhere where you totally live out your Christian values every day.' The governing body supports the headteacher in her leadership of both collective worship and RE which has resulted in significant improvements in both areas. This commitment ensures that statutory requirements for both RE and collective worship are fully met. Accessing appropriate training has developed the governing body's skills in monitoring the Christian distinctiveness of the school and developing its senior leaders. They visit the school regularly and their monitoring results in both support and challenge in the school's work. The school has fully addressed all development points from the last inspection. The relationships with the parish are much stronger than at the time of the previous inspection, valued by all and mutually beneficial. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is expertly woven into the whole curriculum. There is a total commitment to meeting the needs of all with a holistic approach involving professional, academic and spiritual development.

SIAMS report July 2016 St Mary's CE VA Primary Academy Kettering NN16 0JH