



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Mark's CE Primary School

Sussex Way
Tollington Park
London N19 4JF

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: London

Local authority: Islington

Date of inspection: 3 February 2015

Date of last inspection: January 2010

School's unique reference number: 100444

Executive Head Teacher: Calvin Henry

Head of School: Martha Braithwaite

Inspector's name and number: Gladys Vendy 299

School context

St Mark's is a small oversubscribed one form entry school. It is situated in an area of social deprivation in the parish of St Mark's, Tollington Park. An above average number of pupils speak English as an additional language, have special educational needs or disabilities or are eligible for the pupil premium. Over 77% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest being of Black Caribbean heritage. A number of children attend St Mark's church on a Sunday. The Ofsted inspection in May 2013 judged the school to be requiring improvement.

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

- The Christian ethos of the school is promoted through the Christian vision which is firmly underpinned by Christian values that are understood and articulated by all groups of the school community
- The senior leadership team supported and challenged by the strategic direction of the governors has changed the culture of the school and strengthened the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of the pupils
- The focus on prayer which is fundamental to the Christian character of the school contributes effectively to the spiritual development of the children

Areas to improve

- Give more detail in the planning of collective worship so that there is better support for those who lead worship and a stronger focus on Biblical teaching
- Ensure that planning for religious education (RE) is around the two attainment targets of learning about and learning from RE so that lessons are more balanced
- Address inconsistencies in the marking of RE across all year groups so that pupils are

clear about how to make progress

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

The entrance area to the school sings out its Christian vision in diverse high quality displays which contributes to the Christian ethos of the school. Children and adults talk confidently about how explicit Christian values firmly underpin this vision and support their daily lives. 'When I was upset I thought about the Christian value of hope and it helped me' said one pupil. The values of service and endurance are paramount and are threaded through daily routines. The provision of a free breakfast club for some of the school's more vulnerable children and the support of a home/school worker have resulted in improvement in attendance and punctuality. Many children start school without nursery experience and their skills are well below the expected levels. Restructuring of the teaching team has focussed on quality provision for each child. Bespoke intervention strategies are used when necessary and as a result the gap between all groups of learners has narrowed. Standards of achievement have improved in the last three years so that by the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' attainment is in line with the national average. A fully integrated creative curriculum gives all children the opportunity to achieve. Extra-curricular activities include a well-attended Christian club, run by the church team, where children can explore the Christian faith. This strengthens pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Members of the support staff are actively engaged in play at lunchtimes and as a result behaviour in the playground has dramatically improved and children are happy. Respect and compassion are features of the excellent relationships between adults and children so that children feel safe and secure. 'We let everyone in and make them feel comfortable because we are all part of God's family' remarked one pupil. The quality of religious education, which children enjoy, contributes to the Christian character of the school. It also enables children to understand the importance of Christianity as a multicultural world faith. British values are effectively promoted and also encourage children to show respect to everyone in the school community. Pupil voice is strong and listened to. Children nominate and vote to give to charities of their choice. The school is working with the church to develop links with a school in India.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is central to the life of the school and a parent commented that 'this is a faith based school' showing the impact it has beyond the immediate school community. One aspect of the school vision is 'my faith' and children say that they try to live this out through their lives in prayer and by caring for each other. Worship is planned half termly around the church calendar year and Christian values. As it is led by different people each day, more detail such as the inclusion of Biblical references and stories would offer better support. The main Christian festivals are celebrated and worship takes place in church so that children are developing an understanding of Anglican practice and traditions. Children can articulate that the daily gathering together is a special time for them and describe God as 'awesome'. Here, they express their developing spirituality through enthusiastic singing of action worship songs. This contrasts strongly with their total stillness during times of reflection. Children readily express the difference prayer makes to their own and other's lives. As well as creating class prayer books for their reflection areas one class had made a book of Advent prayers which demonstrates their growing understanding of the church calendar year. Children know Anglican call and responses and the Lord's Prayer. They speak confidently of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Evaluation of worship by children, teachers and governors has led to children taking a more interactive part in worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Data confirmed that assessment and tracking procedures which was an area for focus in the last denominational inspection has been fully addressed and is firmly embedded. The introduction of success criteria into planning has ensured that adaptations can be made so that children's progress can be assessed during a theme. As a result standards have risen so that attainment is now in line with national expectations. A more creative scheme of work has also enabled some children to achieve better than in less practical subjects. Each class maintains a very good portfolio of children's work which, as well as recording creative work, is used as a benchmarking tool. RE is led by a member of the senior leadership team which gives it a high status in the curriculum. 80% of the RE scheme of work is based on Christianity. Children showed a good knowledge of the Bible and were able to give examples of stories which illustrate the school's Christian values. Areas for the development of social, moral, spiritual and cultural development have been identified in both RE and collective worship. The subject is well resourced. Children are excited at the opportunities to explore artefacts which also enrich their experience and knowledge about other faiths, as do regular visits to other faiths places of worship. Work in RE makes good links with other subjects especially history and science which helps pupils value its importance. Children show very good learning behaviour, work co-operatively and are familiar with religious vocabulary. If lessons were specifically planned around learning about and learning from religion they would be better balanced so that children could further develop their skills of analysis and enquiry. Monitoring is regularly undertaken with the RE link governor and outcomes feed into a strong RE action plan. However there is sometimes a lack of consistency in the quality of marking in RE books which would point the way forward for children to make more rapid progress.

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

Concerned at the quality of education the school was offering its children the governors approached the diocese for advice. As a result the school developed a partnership with another church school from which it has reaped rich rewards. This has meant a rapid all round improvement in teaching and learning. The senior leadership team led by the experienced executive head teacher has successfully embraced the support and relentless challenge of the governors who hold them to account. The culture of the school has changed through an open door policy in which all are welcomed and valued. The issue about developing self-evaluation practices from the previous inspection has led to the formation of a strategic steering group. This dedicates three meetings a year to evaluating the school's vision and how it is lived out. This reviewed and shared vision provides a platform through which everyone's views are heard and from which decisions are made. This ensures that the school community stays tuned to the Christian values through action in service. The biggest change has been the development of a children, families and community committee which meets the needs of the vulnerable. It also monitors the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through collective worship, RE and behaviour. Governors now work alongside parents at open evenings and as a result communication between them has improved. For example parents' needs are responded to through the provision of regular workshops. The child protection procedures have been summarised to one page so that parents can fully understand the school's child protection policy. The school and church mutually support each other to the benefit of the community they serve. Partnership between the two schools extends beyond the senior leadership. It gives opportunities to the whole community including the children to share professional development, worship and social activities. The school enjoys excellent support from the diocese. Leadership skills are developed at all levels by using diocesan training courses. The school has travelled a long way in a relatively short time and is now well prepared for the next stage of its journey.