



## Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Mary's Church of England (VA) Primary School  
Littlegrove, Barnet EN4 8SR



### Diocese of St Albans

LA:	Barnet
SIAS Inspection:	Thursday, 06 May 2010
Previous S48 Inspection:	22 February 2007
URN:	101324
Headteacher:	Mel Adams
SIAS Inspector Name:	Bob Hopcraft
SIAS Inspector No:	484

### School Context

St Mary's is an average sized primary school set in pleasant suburban surroundings in the village of East Barnet. It has a rich social and cultural mix, with pupils coming from a range of diverse ethnic and faith backgrounds. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The school benefits from a bright and supportive learning environment and very good outdoor provision. The local parish church is a relatively short walk away.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's as a Church of England school are outstanding.**

This is because explicit Christian values lie at the heart of the everyday life of all pupils and staff, resulting in a community which is bathed in trust, love and forgiveness. This is reflected in outstanding relationships and pupils' impressive ability to show empathy and understanding far beyond their years. The excellent relationship with local clergy further nourishes and enriches the every day experience of staff, pupils, governors and parents.

### Established strengths

- The outstanding commitment of the headteacher to the promotion of the school's Christian character;
- The outstanding impact that the school's values have on all who work and play at St Mary's;
- The excellent provision for collective worship and religious education (RE), which nourish and support children's developing spirituality;
- The outstanding links with the local churches, clergy and community.

### Focus for development

- Look for further ways in which children can be encouraged to lead worship.

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

This is because pupils, staff, governors and parents are of one mind that the key Christian values promoted by the school play a significant role and have deep meaning in their everyday lives. These values are ever-present throughout the school day, providing a rich environment of love and support. This, in turn, encourages pupils to develop a warm empathy with those around them and in the world beyond, enabling them to lay strong foundations as effective citizens of the future. There is a real and genuine commitment to inclusion, which not only seeks for the best *for* each child, but actively seeks for the best *within* each individual. As a result, all feel cared for and nurtured and there is a very real sense that every child really *does* matter. Pupils are clear that forgiveness is the key value for them, describing it as "*all our values rolled into one*". This deep commitment means that relationships are outstanding at all levels and that when things do go wrong, forgiveness and reconciliation lie at the heart of the solution. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and the high quality learning environment plays a significant role in supporting this. During the inspection many excellent displays were observed which encouraged reflection and thought on a range of spiritual and cultural levels, enabling pupils to develop a good understanding of the culture, heritage and beliefs of a range of faith groups.

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

The outstanding provision for collective worship noted in the previous Section 48 report has continued to be an important part of the school's commitment to ensuring that pupils and staff have the very best experience of this important part of the school day. Well planned and varied acts of worship, including the weekly visit to church, ensure that experiences are well matched to the needs and abilities of all pupils and that they are also meaningful for staff and visiting adults. As a result, all staff and pupils thoroughly enjoy worship and describe it as being a key part of their everyday lives. The views and responses of pupils are collected regularly, providing an ongoing record of the impact and effectiveness of worship. Christian values play a key part in worship and are reinforced through the effective use of song and prayer. During the visit to church on the day of the inspection, pupils demonstrated a genuine reverence and commitment to worship and many opportunities were provided for pupils to participate actively through prayer, readings and questions. While there have been some opportunities for pupils to take a more active lead in worship, for example two pupils who prepared and led an act of worship on the theme of Barak Obama's election, the school has identified this as an area for ongoing development. Significant, but unobtrusive use is made of the liturgy during worship and children are familiar with a range of responses and traditional prayers, enabling them to extend their understanding of Anglican practice. As a result, pupils have an understanding of church festivals and the ebb and flow of the church year that extends far beyond that expected for their age range. The focus on values has enabled the experience of worship to extend beyond the act itself into the school day and the act of leaving the candle burning as pupils leave worship provides a potent symbol of this.

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

Pupils reach standards in RE that are well above those expected. All age groups make very good progress because of the consistently good and sometimes outstanding teaching they receive. High expectations and challenging questioning lie at the heart of this teaching, enabling pupils to reflect effectively on what they are learning and to experience a wide range of exciting and interesting learning situations. A good example of this was seen in a year 3 class, who were challenged to suggest questions to ask of a person who had recently been healed by Jesus, eliciting such responses as *"Why did Jesus choose you to be healed...?"* and *"Do you now believe...?"* Excellent opportunities are identified to enable the reinforcement of literacy skills through RE, enabling children in an outstanding lesson in year 4 to describe Jesus in poetry as *"He who calms the water's emotions"* and *"He who brings man alive, with no pain"*. Effective assessment, however, means that pupils' progress in their religious understanding is not lost sight of, but is complemented by other skills and curriculum areas. As a result of this outstanding provision, pupils develop a mature and well-balanced understanding of Christianity and of other major world faiths. The many opportunities for reflection observed during the inspection supports pupils' spiritual development very effectively, enabling RE to compliment and promote the school's Christian foundation outstandingly well.

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

The headteacher, through her commitment and example, plays an outstanding role in promoting and leading the school's development as a church school. In this, she is ably supported by a committed team of staff, governors, pupils and parents. As a result, the school's Christian values are promoted consistently and reach out into the community beyond its walls. Two examples of this are the school's logo, which seals the commitment to *"...Learning in Faith in Learning..."* and the weekly *"Crocodile of Faith"* as children, staff and parents walk up the hill to church for worship. Both of these provide tangible outward signs of the school's commitment to its Christian foundation. Governors have a particularly strong commitment to this aspect of the school's work and the establishment of a strategy group has enabled them to evaluate the school's development effectively and to take a strategic view of its future development as a church school. The links between the school and the Church remain an outstanding aspect of its work and the partnership with other local denominations since the last inspection has further strengthened this relationship. The very close ties between St Mary's Church and the school were summed up by one member of staff: *"It's not as if they are up there and we are down here: you can't see the join!"* As a result, the school's commitment to its Christian foundation lies at the heart of its commitment to providing the best possible outcomes for every child and adult in its care.