

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Mary's, Prittlewell, Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School

Boston Avenue,
Southend-on-Sea,
SS2 6JH

Diocese: Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex

Date of inspection: 25th May 2012

Date of last inspection: 8th March 2007

School's unique reference number: 115145

Headteacher: Mrs Frances Neil

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Binnell N665

School context

This is a larger than average primary school with most pupils attending coming from white British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's as a Church of England school is outstanding

St Mary's school lies at the very heart of its community. It has a very strong Christian ethos which permeates all aspects of the school. Collective worship has a centrality to the life of the school. Religious education is recognised as being of key importance. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership ably supported by the highly valued Incumbent and members of the leadership team.

Established strengths

- Christian values strongly underpin all relationships across the school.
- The centrality of collective worship to all aspects of school life.
- The Headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders, the incumbent and governors provides a very strong and effective direction to the church school.

Focus for development

In line with current school plans

- Enhance the monitoring of Religious Education teaching and learning in order to support the consistent delivery of outstanding provision.
- Extend opportunities for pupils to utilise their Parish Church as an educational resource to support their learning in Religious Education.

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

The very strong Christian ethos of St Mary's permeates all aspects of school life. Pupils are secure in the knowledge that their thoughts and beliefs are valued. They value the opportunities that a church school gives them for prayer and reflection, recognising the school as 'happy' and 'jolly'. Pupils show great respect and consideration for each other. This is evidenced through the very strong relationships seen between pupils, between pupils and adults, and between adults. Examples of these include the older pupil who lowered the microphone in an assembly for a smaller child and the 'J Club' bringing together adults and pupils at lunchtime in worship together. Displays throughout the school are outstanding and reflect the Church's year. They help to celebrate pupils' achievements and how the school strives to care for others. The wider school environment fully supports the school's Christian foundation with a very good use made of Christian imagery and symbols. All these aspects together make a major contribution to the spiritual development of all learners.

The impact of collective worship on the school is outstanding

Collective worship has a centrality to school life. Very well planned and resourced acts of worship have a place of major importance and appropriately reflect the school's Christian foundation. There is a cycle of assembly themes which is firmly established. Over the course of the week pupils experience a variety of worship, with each assembly having a different focus. Pupils were very positive about worship in school with one pupil commenting on how 'joyful' he felt in all school assemblies. The collective worship leader has an exceptionally good overview of coverage of school worship over time, seeks the views of staff and pupils and liaises effectively with the Incumbent to ensure pupils access worship aligned to aspects of the Anglican tradition. Leaders of worship are enthusiastic and encourage very good levels of pupil participation. This was demonstrated in an outstanding act of worship in school that was led by the Incumbent on the theme of 'Peter's preaching persuades 3000.' A wide range of pupils had an active role in the worship; some acted out the bible reading, others led the prayers, another group played music alongside the pianist, with others and taking on key monitorial duties such as working the visualiser. There was a clear message at the end of the assembly which touched all present and left them with something to think about. It is evident that learners are familiar with Anglican tradition, with a good range of suitable liturgical responses built into the assemblies. Pupils visit their Parish Church regularly to access planned worship and they talked enthusiastically about these services held on a regular basis.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious education (RE) is recognised as being of key importance at St Mary's. The RE subject leader took up post in September 2011 and has given renewed impetus to the role and subject. Pupils' attitudes are very positive and the quality of teaching and learning observed in the three key stages of the school is judged overall to be good with the progress of pupils across the school in RE is also judged by the school and the inspector to be good. There is a well-written policy in place and a new school curriculum has been developed with RE having a central place within it. The school has responded well to the three areas for development identified at the 2007 inspection which all related to the provision of RE at the school. Assessment approaches are now securely embedded in RE and information is now used to improve attainment. Better tracking procedures are now evident and the scheme of work for RE has been revised, ensuring learning objectives are appropriate. As the school has identified it now needs to continue to enhance the monitoring of RE teaching and learning more effectively in order to support the consistent delivery of outstanding provision. The school has also identified the need to extend opportunities to utilise their Parish Church more effectively as an education resource, to support pupils' learning in RE, as identified in the school's RE Policy

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

The Headteacher provides outstanding leadership which is recognised by all members of the community. Her vision for the church school is shared very effectively and all leaders and governors are clear of their roles and responsibilities to support its achievement. Pupils commented that 'we wouldn't have a school this special without her'. The head is ably supported by the highly valued Incumbent, senior leaders, the RE and collective worship leaders and governors. They work extremely closely and have successfully enhanced the Christian dimension of the school and strengthened links between the school and church. Governors provide both support and challenge to the leadership of the school as the need arises. They have played an active role in the creation and reviewing of the school development plan and a small group helped to review the Chelmsford diocesan self-evaluation toolkit evidencing their role in effective school self evaluation. The school is in a very good position to evolve further from this very firm foundation and to respond effectively to the two areas for development identified.