

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Saint Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Silkham Road,
Oxted,
Surrey
RH8 0NP

Diocese: Southwark

Local authority: Surrey

Dates of inspection: 20th/21st September 2006

Date of last inspection: 26 January 2001

School's unique reference number: 125194

Headteacher: Mr. Alan Norgrove

Inspector's name and number: Mr. Arthur Williams 279

School context

St Mary's is a Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School in Oxted, Surrey, for learners aged 7 to 11 years. There are 361 learners on roll. The school population is very stable with only a few learners leaving or joining outside the normal admission time. The learners are predominantly white, although there is an increase in the number of learners from ethnic minority groups. There are 37 learners on The Special Needs register and 5 learners with statements. St. Mary's is the only Junior School for North Oxted and admits learners from a wide area.

A growing number of learners are admitted to St. Mary's whose parents affirm their Christian allegiance. Parents and learners have a wide church membership. Some attend the local Anglican Churches while others represent other Christian denominations.

The school has benefited recently from the removal of temporary mobile classrooms and their replacement with a permanent building containing six classrooms. The building was opened in 2005 by the Bishop of Croydon. Substantial refurbishment of the main school has also taken place, resulting in a new general office, staff room, music room and library.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Saint Mary's as a Church of England school are good

Saint Mary's is a good church school where Christian values are at the heart of its daily life and drive its aspirations.

Established strengths

- The outstanding Christian ethos of a happy and caring school where learners have high standards of spiritual and moral development.
- An outward looking school where learners are aware of the wider world and its needs.
- A strong and living partnership between the school and its foundation church.
- The support for the teaching of Religious Education(R.E.) by comprehensive, clear and practical documentation.
- Strong co-operative leadership that works hard to promote the outstanding Christian ethos.

Focus for development

- To ensure the new collective worship structures benefit all learners.
- To ensure that the assessment of R.E. is consistent with other curriculum assessment procedures.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, meets the needs of all learners outstandingly.

The Christian character of the school is strong and permeates every aspect of school life. Learners are taught in an atmosphere that recognises the importance of care, respect and individual worth. The standards of the learners' spiritual, social moral and cultural

development are high. The behaviour of learners in the classroom and around the school is excellent. Learners respect each other and are proud of their school. An outstanding strength is the way learners extend the care for each other to the wider world. During the week of the inspection orphaned children from a school in Uganda, came and shared a school day and gave an evening concert for the school community. This link has been in place for many years and has given learners a very strong insight into the needs of children who have been orphaned through Aids or war. This dramatic link is deepened by sustained inter-school friendships and effective displays. Other ways of extending the awareness of learners include fund raising for charities, and through curriculum planning, an example being the way that year 6 learners debate the fair sharing of the world's resources. The school's inclusive approach results in excellent support for learners with special needs and children of other faiths feeling valued and secure. Learners are encouraged to contribute to the life of the school. There is a strong pro-active School Council who have lobbied successfully for change, an example of this being the up-grading of the toilets. Learners are confident to place their prayer requests in a prayer box. Staff model strong positive patterns of behaviour and the Christian values of the school are appreciated and supported by parents and carers.

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

Collective worship has many established strengths and has recently been made more intimate and reflective through class acts of worship as a result of recent reorganisation. The observed whole school assembly was good. It had all the benefits of a large act of corporate worship. It had a strong feeling of community, the learners sang a hymn with enthusiasm and enjoyment, a sense of worship was created by the lighting of a candle and a spoken welcome to worship. Good use was made of ICT, appropriate questioning and answers, and there were opportunities for private and corporate prayer.

An observation of a class assembly showed the teacher exploiting the intimate nature of having her class. The learners were able to reflect on the story of a family getting up in the morning and the behaviour of individual members. Nearly all the children made vocal contributions and this promoted individual reflections and prayers on selfish and caring behaviour. Thoughtful questioning by the teacher, such as, what behaviour would you want to change, created an outstanding act of worship. Since class worship is a new initiative a coherent monitoring system is not yet in place to ensure consistent quality.

Collective worship is supported by good documentation, effective resourcing and a range of leaders taking whole school collective worship. Whole school worship is enhanced by the learners having regular services at St. Mary's Church. These are used to mark the main events of the life of the church and school, such as Easter, Christmas and Harvest. The learners take a strong lead in the service. The opportunities to visit the church are appreciated by learners and their parents and carers and the wider congregation of St. Mary's who actively recognise the importance of the school in the life of the parish.

The religious education is good.

Standards in R. E. are good with some outstanding features. Learners across the classes have good Bible knowledge and understand the structure of the Bible. They have a good understanding of the life of Jesus and can recall stories from the Old Testament. In the best lessons learners are able to relate their R.E. knowledge to their own lives. In one class, learners were able to consider who they could care for after studying the story of The Good Samaritan, in another learners could name the gifts of the Spirit and explain how self-control and patience could apply to themselves. In its own evaluation the school has placed Assessment as a focus for development. This is an appropriate judgement. The school has many learners with high potential R. E. ability, and they are not always sufficiently challenged, particularly with independent research. All learners benefit from planned opportunities for reflection but learners need more guidance in how to deepen this skill. The school deploys the teachers of R.E. effectively. All those teaching R.E. are good teachers with a feel for the subject. They skilfully use a range of techniques; story telling, drama, word games, and ICT to enhance a teaching point. For example a teacher enhanced the parable of the sower by recording a DVD of a local farmer explaining the properties of seeds. This immediately engaged the learners and promoted their understanding.

An outstanding feature of the R.E. provision is the very comprehensive and practical documentation that supports the subject. This enables continuity of good practice especially when new staff join the school or when class teachers move to a different age range. The R. E. co-ordinator plays a key role in promoting the subject and staff approach her for advice and support. She monitors lessons and has devised a structure where learners assess their own work, giving valuable insight into what they like about the subject, for example learners particularly enjoy the role of drama in re-telling Bible stories. Learners enjoy the subject and they appreciate the fact that they are taught about other world faiths. As one child remarked. "If you understand what some-one else believes you can respect them." The importance of R. E. is reflected around the school in a number of attractive displays.

The leadership and management of the school, as a church school, are good

The headteacher has a clear Christian vision for the school. He challenges the school community to live this out on a daily basis by the example he sets in his relationships with learners and staff and the decisions he has to make. In this he is clearly respected by staff, governors, learners and parents and carers. He is ably supported in this vision by the deputy headteacher, staff, and governors. The corporate leadership of the school is a strong feature. An outstanding feature is the way the various leaders complement each other and respect each others skills. Leaders are allowed to develop their own skills within a shared vision. These include, the pastoral care of the deputy head, the subject leadership of the R.E. co-ordinator, the regular presence in the school of a number of governors, including the chair, working with groups of learners and the taking of assemblies by the priest of St. Mary's, chair and vice chair. They all promote the Christian vision of the school. Governors have an excellent knowledge of the school and seek to extend this by developing their critical friendship role in R.E. through classroom visits and using this information to support staff and learners.

Due to the co-operate nature of the leadership team the Christian vision of the school is secure.

SIAS report September 2006 Saint Mary's Church of England (Aided) Junior School.
Silkham Road, Oxted, Surrey RH8 0NP