

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Martin's Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School

Ashley Road, Epsom, KT18 7AD

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Guildford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Surrey
Date of inspection	15 June 2018
Date of last inspection	23 May 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 125142
Executive headteacher	Anthony Marsh
Inspector's name and number	Dr Trevor Walker (NSIN 908)

School context

St Martin's Junior forms part of a federation consisting of the St Martin's Junior and Infant schools. The schools federated in September 2016, coinciding with the appointment of the current executive headteacher. The Junior School is three-form entry and larger than the average sized primary-phased school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, and therefore pupil premium funding, is below the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average, although the proportion of English as an additional language (EAL) is above. The proportion of pupils with special education needs (SEN) is slightly below average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Martin's Junior as a Church of England school are outstanding

- St Martin's is a welcoming and inclusive church school where pupils and adults can flourish.
- Drawing on the school's values, relationships are strong and supportive.
- Collective worship is central to the life of school and seen as important in contributing to, and supporting, Christian distinctiveness.
- Pupils' attitudes to religious education (RE) are positive and achievements are high.
- There is a breadth to the leadership that encompasses the shared strengths and abilities of the executive headteacher and the senior leaders.
- The partnership with the local church is productive and strong.

Areas to improve

- Improve the planning of spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development so that pupils have an enriched experience of each element and therefore make the strongest possible progress.
- Develop the use of prayer spaces throughout the school so that pupils have increased opportunities for personal and private prayer and reflection.
- Continue to develop assessment in RE so that it better informs future teaching and learning.
- Increase pupils' understanding of the worldwide, multi-cultural church.

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

St Martin's is a welcoming and inclusive school. The vision: 'strive + aspire + succeed' is based on encouraging the best from every child. This is underpinned by a series of 'every child' vision statements, the first concerning provision for spiritual growth. Six distinctively Christian values are clearly expressed and strongly promoted throughout the school. The school's website presents the values through a 'jigsaw' motif that includes Biblical references for each one; these are prominently displayed around the school. Pupils have a good understanding of the school's Christian values and their Biblical underpinning. They are not always so secure when it comes to explaining how they are linked to their choices and personal challenges. Classrooms are vibrant places that encourage thoughtful and imaginative learning. Pupils show positive attitudes to their work, and their behaviour is of an overall high standard. The school deals with any misbehaviour effectively and in line with the Christian values. Relationships are positive and the pupils are polite to adults and supportive of one another. There is an appropriate and strong focus on well-being, nurturing and pastoral care. Pupils enjoy coming to school and through range of supportive strategies their attendance is good and exclusion rarely used. The last set of reported national outcomes (2017) showed that pupils' progress in each of the core subjects of reading, writing and mathematics, was in line with national averages. The progress made by disadvantaged pupils, when compared with similar pupils in other schools nationally, was also average. The attainment of pupils, in the core subjects combined, was higher than the national average. In the case of the more able pupils, this was much higher. While the strongest subjects were mathematics and writing, robust action has been taken to improve reading and the school predicts that outcomes of the latest tests will demonstrate that improvement. The school's Christian character effectively supports and enriches pupils' SMSC development as well as the subject of RE. The evident richness of the school's curriculum could, nevertheless, be further enhanced by more systematic planning of SMSC to ensure that there is secure progression in each of the four elements. Pupils are beginning to understand their place in a beautiful yet challenging world through the curriculum and by actively supporting their chosen charities. They care about a range of social issues, such as sustainable development and the impact of pollution upon God's creation. Their appreciation and understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith, as practised around the world, is not so well developed.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is central to the life of school and seen as important in contributing to, and supporting, Christian distinctiveness. Pupils say how much they value that special time of each day; a time that successfully contributes to the collective and personal spirituality of both children and adults. As an example, one teaching assistant said that although she was not a particularly religious person, the school's worship led her to question and think. Acts of worship are carefully planned for the term ahead by the spiritual team (known as the every child spiritual team), working in conjunction with local church leaders. The planning indicates that the pattern of worship, including class worship, is distinctively Christian, captures the school's values and draws on the Bible and the Christian story. Pupils lead prayers and there is an invitation for others to join in. Singing is given a high priority and the pupils clearly enjoy this aspect of the worship. On the day of the inspection, the act of worship was a weekly celebration involving the whole school community. The pupils demonstrated their desire to encourage one another and there was a heartfelt appreciation of each person's contribution, across a range of abilities and differences. Pupils have a generally good knowledge of Christian festivals and seasons and learn about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A Holy Communion service has been held in school presided over by the local incumbent and attended by pupils and staff. During the service, the incumbent was able to explain the significance of each part of the liturgy and the pupils participated by baking the communion bread and by posing their questions through explanatory preparation. Pupils attend church for the major festivals and host the contribution of visiting voluntary groups, such as Spinnaker. The group is very popular with the children and provides them with opportunities to learn about the Christian faith.

The development, understanding and desire for the practice of personal prayer has been enhanced through the appointment of pupil prayer leaders, one being appointed from each class for the duration of one term. These young leaders are given opportunities to lead worship, undertaking specially chosen and shared activities, such as a visit to Wintershall to witness the performance of the Biblical drama. Through effective self-evaluation, the school has ensured that disadvantaged pupils have a lot of opportunities to take on this leadership role. Classrooms have a focal point for RE and reflection. Other focal points include reflective mirrors in the corridors, annotated by inspirational quotations and Biblical references, and a prayer tree in the entrance to the school. However, the use of resourced prayer spaces where pupils can spend time in private prayer and reflection have not been provided, and this is something that the pupils say they would value.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Pupils' attitudes to RE are positive. The school follows the Guildford Diocesan Guidelines for RE and the subject is regarded as a core subject within the school. The curriculum balance for teaching Christianity and other principal world faiths is appropriate. Good practice is in evidence where, for example, pupils who celebrate Ramadan have an opportunity to share this experience with their class peers. All pupils have RE books that are designed to encourage a more creative approach and enthusiasm for the subject. Pupils' learning and outcomes demonstrate the use of drama, role-play, music and art. Books are impressive, not least for the way in which they demonstrate the pupils' independence and imagination in the presentation. The standards of achievement in RE are high and compare well with the best outcomes in other areas of the curriculum. This includes the achievements of the disadvantaged pupils. Learning outcomes are reported to governors, alongside other core subjects. Teaching is at least good and sometimes better. Teachers use effective questioning that demonstrates good subject knowledge. In one Year 5 lesson, for example, pupils were studying a unit of work that focused on Christian baptism. The teacher was able to follow through their answers and pursue a greater depth of understanding. Appropriate arrangements for assessment have been developed, based on age-related expectations, and pupils' progress is being regularly monitored and evaluated. Pupils receive good feedback through teachers' marking that is focused on the specific academic content of the subject. Some showed thoughtful sensitivity in addressing pupils' emotional as well as their academic needs. Where marking has required the pupils' response, they have responded appropriately. The school, nevertheless, recognises that better use could be made of assessment for informing the next steps in teaching and learning. The RE curriculum includes visitors, visits and special focus days and these have been extensively evidenced in photographic records. Destinations include the Woking Mosque as well as places of Christian worship, including the parish church. Pupils enjoy these visits that provide them with valuable learning experiences that enrich their understanding. The spiritual team are responsible for leading the subject across the federated schools. They carry out regular monitoring and evaluation, including moderations of books.

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

The school's Christian foundation permeates and strengthens the life of the school. There is a breadth to the leadership encompassing the shared strengths and abilities of the executive headteacher and the senior leaders. Leaders have created an inclusive and caring school that, though a culture of ambition, continues to strive for improvement. The school's vision statement is rooted in the school's Christian values, creating and supporting a learning environment where pupils and adults can flourish. Although more could be done to ensure that the vision is more theologically grounded, the every child vision statement, and the Christian values, gives a clear priority to the importance of spiritual development and growth within the school community. One member of staff encapsulated this approach in describing the values as a 'prism' through which the school operates. The school's spiritual team are responsible for leading collective worship and RE across the federated schools. The team consists of three teachers who considerably strengthen the effectiveness and impact of the subject as well as the middle management of the school. Soon after federation, and working with the school's new leadership, their evaluations concluded that RE was not being given a sufficient priority. Through decisive actions they have now successfully raised the status and standards of the subject to its current standing in the school. This includes: ensuring that all class teachers teach the subject to their class; seeking to improve teachers' subject knowledge; and, that all pupils have books and a record of RE of which they can be proud.

Governors and leaders have a good understanding of the strengths of the school, as well as the areas for development. Governors are supportive of the school and have become more actively involved in monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness as a church school, although more could be done in systematically measuring the impact of the vision and values. Evaluation is strongest where it involves the whole school team working in conjunction with the governing body. The current school development plan does not encompass the development of the elements and areas of Christian distinctiveness and doing so would further improve planning. The partnership with the local church is productive and strong. The incumbent makes a significant contribution to the religious life of the school, for example through governance, pastoral support and in leading acts of worship. The church has appointed a children and families worker who has subsequently become an additional member of the spiritual team. She has made an important contribution to evaluating provision across the main issues that have an impact on Christian distinctiveness, as well as strengthening links with governance. The school has a productive relationship with Guildford Diocese and the members of the spiritual team attend regular diocesan updates that are subsequently shared with members of staff. Partnership with local schools has been forged, not least in the joint moderation of pupils' work. Parents are strongly supportive of the school. They commented on the dedication of the executive headteacher to the care and aspirations of the pupils and the whole school community, and this was verified by this inspection. They appreciated the partnerships that they had with the school, for example through the personalised homework diaries. The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship and RE.