

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Mellor St Mary's Church of England Primary School			
Address	Brundhurst Fold, Mellor, Blackburn, BB2 7JL		
Date of inspection	27 February 2020	Status of school	Voluntary aided primary
Diocese	Blackburn	URN	119529

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Excellent
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Excellent
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Excellent

School context

Mellor St. Mary's is a primary school with 140 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is below national averages. Since the last inspection there has been a restructuring and a consequent reduction in the number of classes. There have also been extensive changes in governance and staffing, including a new headteacher and leadership team.

The school's Christian vision

Through our Christian faith, we acknowledge our responsibility to all, to enrich lives and show love and respect within our school family.
We believe in lifelong learning aiming to equip our children to live life today and for tomorrow rooted in Christian love.
'For with God nothing shall be impossible.' (Luke 1:37)

Key findings

- The vision and mission is strongly embedded in Christian narrative. All stakeholders articulate that this underpins the inclusive and respectful relationships throughout school.
- There has been a period of significant change driven by the Christian vision and managed extremely effectively by the new headteacher and leaders. There is now a strong focus on the Christian heritage of the school, illustrated through the virtues of Mary, the school's patron saint. These virtues permeate the high quality academic, spiritual and pastoral provision.
- Religious education (RE) is very effective in developing understanding of Christianity and world faiths in general. Consequently, pupils have an impressive respect for people of other faiths.
- Collective worship is highly valued by the whole school community. There are extensive mutually supportive shared opportunities with the local church and Diocese.

Areas for development

- To make greater use of the external environment, in order to further extend the current range of opportunities for prayer, worship and spiritual reflection.
- To develop the role of pupils as future leaders, so that they can make a more significant impact in their roles as global citizens.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

The highly respected headteacher has a passion and commitment to demonstrating that 'with God nothing is impossible. Through effective consultation with all stakeholders, this vision is shared consistently by school leaders. It has driven the improvement at Mellor St Mary's school throughout significant change since the last inspection. Leaders ensure that all pupils flourish, including those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). There is very rigorous analysis of individual pupil's needs to support academic and social and emotional progress. Appropriate provision and intervention is rapidly put in place, so that all pupils can maximise their achievements. Data shows that pupils' attainment is at least in line with national expectations, if not above. Leaders make challenging strategic decisions to ensure sustainability of the Christian vision. This has included changing distribution of pupils within a reduced number of classes. Governors make certain that staff are facilitated in new roles through effective professional development. The school has extensive engagement with the Diocese and partnerships with other schools. These generate high quality opportunities for staff to thrive and develop as future church school leaders.

An innovative curriculum structure, driven by the school's Christian vision, features 'big questions', such as 'How courageous are you?' Planning incorporates excellent opportunities for pupils to explore spiritual and ethical dimensions of all subjects. In RE, learning structured through questions, such as 'Is Easter the end or the beginning?' engages pupils in deep, meaningful dialogue. Throughout the curriculum, pupils recognise they are learning about God's world and curiosity is highly developed. Pupils recognise growing awareness in their own spiritual understanding and confidently explore solutions to problems. When asked how they deal with questions they cannot answer, one pupil said that, if a teacher cannot help, they can leave it with God. Some parents explained that children's inquisitiveness extends to the home, initiating debate on global issues.

Pupils identify exciting ways that they can be advocates of change when they identify a need, whether within school or globally. They are eager to undertake a wide range of social action projects. These include Friday Food Bank collections, sponsoring endangered animals and raising significant funds for woodland preservation, amongst a wealth of other projects selected by individuals, classes, staff and the whole school. Children embrace the vision that 'with God, nothing is impossible', one stating that they have a responsibility to 'stand up for people and do what is right'.

Pupils demonstrate exceptional development of character, such as taking responsibility for writing the school prospectus. They take their many leadership roles very conscientiously, including running the eco team and the school council. The care and support for younger pupils through the Year 6 buddy system is highly praised by parents for the impact it has on pupils' wellbeing. Parents say that pupils are recognised as individuals, look out for one another and are able to resolve differences.

A comprehensive range of strategies address pupils' understanding of faiths other than Christianity. Secure, quality teaching of RE and a range of interactive displays are enhanced by numerous occasions of welcoming people of other faiths into school. There is a clear fruitful impact demonstrated in extremely courteous conversations between pupils of different faiths, evidencing a great respect for diversity. This attitude extends to true understanding and kindness for everyone. Pupils also recognise how Christianity is expressed in diverse ways in other cultures. They speak highly knowledgeably about the way Epiphany is celebrated as a major festival in different countries. The enthusiasm with which pupils share what they had learnt through visitors from Africa and the Bethany Project is palpable. These are undoubtedly excellent learning experiences helping pupils appreciate others.

Parents explain that the school has a superbly welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, as well as a very strong sense of community. They feel that staff frequently go beyond their teaching roles in being readily available to talk to parents and understand their family issues. The Christian vision is demonstrated by the attitude of staff to never give up on a child. Staff build up pupils' confidence and self-esteem so that they are encouraged to fulfil their potential. There is clear respect shown by all pupils and they treat each other with dignity and worth. One said

that pupils ‘try and treat everyone the same, as they feel bad if they feel different’. The weekly kindness award has numerous nominees.

Leaders ensure that the Christian vision extends to protecting the wellbeing of adults. Exemplified through the many ‘anonymous’ acts of kindness shown by the headteacher, staff feel appreciated. Leaders and governors consider staff work-life balance regularly when reviewing school policies, ensuring that targets set for the school do not create unnecessary workload.

Collective worship is integral to the life of the school. When gathering for worship, pupils focus on the Trinitarian nature of God through lighting three candles and singing a specially written school song. Staff and pupils feel worship is essential in giving each day a thoughtful, spiritual focus on the school’s selected Christian virtues linked to the example of Mary, mother of Jesus. The use of the worship resource ‘window on the world’ impacts positively on pupil discussions throughout the day and empowers them to action. One pupil said ‘Because of worship today, I can hold my temper for longer when people are annoying’. The evaluation of worship by all stakeholders is robust with pupils feeling that their voice is heard clearly. Pupils lead both class and whole school collective worship. Abundant interactive prayer activities and displays provoke pupils to reflect and grow spiritually. One pupil said that they use prayer spaces to sort out bad thoughts, whilst many appreciate the areas to think and pray to God quietly. RE also offers opportunities for pupils to reflect safely, through role play, poetry and art.

Even during the current waiting time before a new clergy appointment, the church and school community have continued to build exciting and mutually supportive partnerships. The enormously encouraging supernumerary vicar is proactive in leading worship, supporting RE lessons and supporting staff professional development. Consequently, pupils have a good understanding of the church calendar and Anglican traditions, including Holy Communion. Partnerships with church laity enable pupils and adults to develop spiritually, such as through development of a village prayer trail. Pupils have also been empowered as worship leaders, especially through the very popular ‘kiddie choir’ and orchestra. Pupils enthusiastically participate in leading worship in church and cathedral services, even accompanying the wedding of a member of staff. Parishioners describe the school’s pupils as a blessing to the church community.



The effectiveness of RE is Excellent

Teachers are very well supported in teaching RE through admirable subject leader support. Through regular assessment and moderation, the excellent progress in knowledge and understanding of pupils is ensured. Pupils develop an impressive depth of understanding of a range of religious beliefs.

Headteacher	Jo Embley-Peers
Inspector’s name and number	Jan Potter (939)