

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Mark Cross Church of England Primary School			
Address	Mark Cross, Crowborough, East Sussex, TN6 3PJ		
Date of inspection	29 January 2020	Status of school	Weald Federation Voluntary aided primary
Diocese	Chichester	URN	114558

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	Good
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Good

School context

Mark Cross is a primary school with 104 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below the national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national averages. There have been significant staff changes, including the executive headteacher, head of school and RE leader, since the last SIAMS inspection. The school has been part of the Weald Federation from September 2019 when the Aspire and Saxonbury federations combined.

The school's Christian vision

To be an inspirational place of learning where we Live, Love and Learn in the likeness of Jesus.
'Let your light shine!' Matthew 5: 14

Key findings

- Underpinned by the vision, there is a strong focus on the wellbeing of everyone in the school community. As a result, the personal development and behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils and adults flourish.
- The strategic leadership of the school is effective. However, governor monitoring of the Christian distinctiveness of the school is not sufficiently robust.
- Inspired by the vision, the school community has a strong commitment to ecological and environmental initiatives. Pupils are increasingly leading developments in these areas.
- The vision and values are explored through daily collective worship. However, pupils have limited input into the planning and leading of collective worship.
- RE contributes to the spiritual, moral, social and culture development of pupils. Pupils learn about a number of world religions but do not have the opportunity to visit a range of places of worship.

Areas for development

- Increase the frequency of governor monitoring of the school's Christian distinctiveness and the consistency of reporting to the governing body, to aid the review and evaluation of the school's effectiveness.
- Strengthen pupil involvement in the planning and leading of collective worship so that they help to shape future developments.
- Broaden the scope of visits to places of worship across a range of world religions in order to deepen the pupils' understanding of how people express their faith and beliefs.

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 vision at Mark Cross underpins the importance placed on community, where every individual person is valued and supported to be the best that they can be. This enables pupils and adults to flourish. Pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6 ready for secondary education and with the knowledge and skills needed to be successful and caring members of society. There is a strong focus on the wellbeing of pupils and adults and this has been maintained consistently despite significant staff changes since the last SIAMS inspection. Membership of the Weald Federation has been beneficial in relation to staff training, shared development priorities and core policies for all the schools in the federation. This is increasingly supporting best practice at Mark Cross.

The vision threads through the whole curriculum and collective worship so that the academic and spiritual needs of all pupils are met. Sharing expertise between the four schools in the Weald Federation, across a range of subjects including RE, has strengthened the quality of the curriculum received by pupils. Staff and governors have also benefitted from diocese led training. This has resulted in improvements to teaching and learning in RE and in a better understanding of Church school effectiveness. However, the continuous monitoring of the Christian distinctiveness of the school by governors is insufficiently robust. There are inconsistencies in both the frequency of monitoring and the sharing of visit reports with the governing body. However, informed by thorough, accurate evidence from the senior leadership, governors and leaders are effective in their evaluation of the effectiveness of Mark Cross as a church school. This then informs school developments and priorities.

In line with the school's vision, school leaders ensure that every pupil has the opportunity to develop their unique God-given potential to the full so that everyone flourishes. Pupils experience a broad, balanced and inspiring curriculum which meets the needs of individual learners and reflects the school's context. This encompasses opportunities for spiritual development as well as academic progress and includes learning about the rich local Sussex heritage. Parents value the school's holistic approach to their children's welfare and education. The impact of the vision is evident in the pupils' extremely positive attitudes to learning and good pupil outcomes for all pupil groups. Pupils share with enthusiasm how the vision encourages them to, 'reflect back to others what they learn about God' and to, 'live what they learn.' Pupils regularly consider their own spirituality through debates, sharing their thoughts and asking big questions. This helps them to develop their own views about the meaning of life and faith. The addition of a prayer space last academic year was uplifting for both pupils and adults. As a result, there is the desire for this to be repeated and for an adult prayer group to be formed.

Shaped by the school vision and values, pupil behaviour is outstanding. Pupils understand about good and bad choices and seek to encourage their peers to make good decisions too. The vision and values also help them to forgive others and to move on positively. The school's buddy system is an example of older pupils caring for younger children and is praised by pupils and adults for its inclusivity and effectiveness. Pupils of all ages develop a respect for the views, beliefs and feelings of others by studying a number of world religions in RE and through input in collective worship. Pupils benefit from exploring different viewpoints across the curriculum and specifically through quality time given to discussions and opportunities for drama in RE. However, there is a lack of visits to places of worship across a range of world religions and this impacts on the depth of the pupils' appreciation and understanding of how people express their faith in practice.

Reflecting the vision, the school community is outward looking, letting its light shine in the likeness of Jesus, through its strong partnerships with school families, the parish, the local community and beyond. Parents and pupils find the school leaders and staff very approachable and the school offers additional support to families facing challenging situations. The school's Christian vision is important to parents. They value the inclusive and caring community that it promotes. It ensures that their children benefit from Christian based moral teaching which they consider to be sound principles to apply to everyday life. Parents state that their children flourish emotionally, spiritually and academically and 'grow into well rounded individuals.' The school is well integrated into the parish and village community through participation in a range of events. The involvement of school families at the two local parish churches has grown as a result of invitations to activities run by the parish, such as Messy Church. The partnership that Mark Cross has with Nkuringo School in Uganda helps pupils to consider wider global issues and to explore the similarities and differences in the education and worship that pupils

experience. Through this global link and teaching in RE pupils gain a clear understanding of Christianity as a living world faith and how this impacts on the lives of Christians around the world.

Shaped by the vision, the school's strong commitment to the care of the natural world is evident across a range of effective ecological and environmental initiatives and ethically based partnerships. Initially championed by school leaders, pupils are increasingly suggesting and leading projects. This has included initiatives relating to reducing the use of water and increasing recycling. The school is currently exploring more sustainable options for the school uniform including a tie made from recycled milk bottle tops. Parents are highly supportive of the school's focus on sustainability and believe this is important for their children and the community as a whole. Similarly, pupils of all ages have a real energy for social action and charity fund raising activities. For example, raising money to buy the school uniform for a child at Nkuringo School in Uganda.

Collective worship is made relevant for pupils and staff by linking bible stories to the school vision, values and examples from everyday life. Pupils and adults value the opportunity that collective worship provides for spiritual development through reflection and moments of awe and wonder. Through collective worship and RE, pupils learn about the Trinity, a range of Christian festivals and the importance of the Communion service for Christians. As a result, they have a growing understanding of the Christian faith and significant events in the church year. However, there is scope for increased pupil participation in planning and leading collective worship. Worship is broadened by local clergy and members of the parish leading collective worship each week. This adds further variety and creativity to the Anglican worship that pupils experience. Parents welcome the opportunity to join with the school for church services. Pupils benefit from opportunities to reflect and/or pray at different times in the school day and the outdoor reflection area is particularly well used by pupils.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

Across the school pupils make good progress in RE, including pupils with additional needs. As a result, all groups of pupils flourish in RE. Assessment has been strengthened further this academic year by broadening the scope of assessment. Teaching is good across all classes. Standards are consistent due to the good level of support and training provided for staff.

Executive headteacher Head of school	Debbie Bennett Lucy Hazeldine
Inspector's name and number	Gillian Bradnam 935