



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| Mark Church of England VC First & Pre-School Academy | |
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| Address | Mark, Highbridge, TA9 4QA |

| School vision |
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| <p>Creating a love of learning.</p> <p>We create a love of learning where everyone is respected and encouraged to reach their full potential.</p> <p>Based on ‘I can do all things through God who strengthens me’. St Paul’s letter to the Phillipians 4:13</p> <p>Our school vision underpins every aspect of school life and is our core purpose. Through our vision, we strive to reflect our culture and ethos, which is that we can all achieve our best and succeed with support and guidance from God.</p> |
| School strengths |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of the Christian vision of the school and the way it is underpinned by biblical teaching. This positively affects pupils’ learning, wellbeing and behaviour. • The vision is inspired by a well-known set of Christian values. This promotes a deeply supportive, caring culture which ensures that adults and pupils treat each other well. The wellbeing of all is a priority and as a result, they flourish both emotionally and spiritually. • The school’s innovative and creative curriculum enables the vision to be lived out through the school community’s ‘love of learning’. • Collective worship, shaped by the school’s Anglican foundation is at the heart of daily life. It provides meaningful moments for all to flourish spiritually • Very effective leadership in religious education (RE) has established a challenging and relevant curriculum which enhances pupils’ learning. Consequently, pupils enjoy RE and this has a positive impact on their understanding of a range of faiths, including Christianity. |
| Areas for development |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the way the Christian vision drives the work of the school. Ensure that robust systems are in place to monitor its impact and identify areas for improvement. • Develop pupils’ ability to plan and lead collective worship. This is in order to increase their own and others’ spiritual flourishing. • Provide opportunities for pupils to explore issues of injustice in the world and encourage them to respond. This is to increase their awareness that they can be agents of change in the school, the local community and beyond. |
| Inspection findings |
| <p>The school’s vision, rooted in the words of St Paul, is widely understood and has a good impact. It is supported by a set of well-chosen values which weave through daily life and unite the school</p> |

community. The vision promotes aspiration and enthusiasm and enables a very positive effect on pupils' learning and behaviour. The school's well established place within the multi-academy trust (MAT) has a powerful effect in sustaining the impact of the school's vision. This has been evident particularly during the recent changes of school leadership. The MAT promotes beneficial working relationships between its Church schools and the diocese. Good practice, particularly in RE, is shared very effectively. The substantial contribution of the clergy to the life of the school, enriches the lives of the whole community. Focused monitoring by senior school leaders, mainly of collective worship and RE has ensured some understanding of the effectiveness of the vision. However, the self-evaluation process is underdeveloped because specific areas for improvement have not been identified. This is due to the limited involvement of governors and other members of the school community.

The school's creative curriculum is an expression of its vision enabling all to develop a 'love of learning'. It is engaging and exciting, motivating pupils to aspire to fulfil their dreams. Pupils say they can 'surprise themselves' by what they can achieve. In this way, they recognise how their enthusiasm for challenges set by staff is one of the keys to their success. As a result, pupils talk with animation about their favourite subjects, even commenting that they love 'everything'. Themed learning such as topics on space combined with a visit to the Concorde exhibition in Bristol fully engage learners. A prominent focus on creative aspects of learning such as through dance, drama, art and crafts enhance pupils' enjoyment of school. The outdoor classroom is used in a wide range of ways to stimulate learning with positive outcomes. Staff have a good understanding of spiritual development. They promote opportunities to maximise experiences which develop pupils' creativity, imagination and curiosity. These activities described as 'fun' by pupils are integral to life at Mark.

Collective worship is the heartbeat of the school community, encouraging all to flourish spiritually. This is because worship enables themes such as Christian values to permeate the whole of the school day. For example, perseverance and enthusiasm are conveyed successfully through considering inspiring role models from society and history. The Christian vision promotes a deep sense of spirituality that sustains and inspires all aspects of school life. It empowers pupils to participate and they contribute very effectively. Monitoring by leaders has recognised pupils' desire to engage in leading worship and they are responding to this. Older pupils aspiring to be worship leaders describe their recognition of the special quality of collective worship. They talk of their desire to be leaders so that they can share these peaceful feelings with their peers. Moments of quiet reflection, stillness and spontaneous as well as written prayer are integral to worship and school life. As a result, collective worship has a profound impact on spiritual flourishing. The clergy play a substantial role in sharing the vision by welcoming pupils and families to church for special events. Mark First School is a warm and caring community where all are treated well. Christian values such as empathy and trust enable a strong focus on the need to live well together. The vision and values have a positive impact on the way pupils support and care for one another. Strategies are in place to support pupils' wellbeing, including opportunities for exciting trips and a residential visit. A wide range of school clubs enrich pupils' lives and their enjoyment of school. Close partnerships between staff and parents enable pupils to flourish, including those identified as vulnerable. Staff greatly value the support provided by the MAT both at a professional and personal level. They form a warm and cohesive team, encouraged and supported by one another and by leaders who prioritise their wellbeing. As a result, staff morale is high.

A calm and respectful atmosphere permeates life and is evident throughout the school. Difference and diversity are celebrated in this accepting community. The inter-faith weeks are enthusiastically supported by the school's partnership with the church. Events share an understanding of the lives of people living in cultures beyond the local area as well as with Christians. Older pupils enjoy a wide range of leadership roles. An example of this, is the way they take responsibility for supporting pupils during social activities in the 'quiet area.' The school is used as a base for the food bank charity ensuring that pupils recognise the needs of local residents. However, the school's vision does not explicitly encourage pupils to seek justice and to pursue courageous advocacy. Consequently, they



do not feel motivated to engage in social action projects which challenge injustice and inequality. RE is an enjoyable and inspiring subject at the heart of this Church school curriculum. It reflects the school's Christian vision in line with all other aspects of the whole curriculum. RE is well planned, effectively balanced and focused on meeting the needs of all pupils. Relevant training has a beneficial impact on leadership which has a passionate and clear vision for the subject. Staff feel well supported by leaders. Pupils find the curriculum inspires learning which is challenging and motivating and relevant to their lives. They are encouraged to reflect and think about their own beliefs and those of others. The use of questioning such as 'I wonder if' enhances pupils' engagement in RE. Stimulating discussions provoking insightful responses also make a substantial contribution to spiritual development in RE. Events such as the annual inter- faith weeks featuring a variety of religions are used very effectively. Themes such as welcoming babies into a family's faith develop pupils' interest and engagement.

The inspection findings indicate that Mark Church of England VC First and Pre-School Academy is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

| Information | | | |
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| Inspection date | 16 January 2024 | URN | 143332 |
| VC/VA/Academy | Academy | Pupils on roll | 127 |
| Diocese | Bath & Wells | | |
| MAT/Federation | Wessex Learning Trust | | |
| headteacher | Lorna Parle | | |
| Chair | Brian Kirkup | | |
| Inspector | Daphne Spitzer | No. | 37 |