



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### Mary Howard Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

School Lane  
Tamworth  
B79 9JJ

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Lichfield**

Local authority: Staffordshire

Date of inspection: 16 June 2016

Date of last inspection: July 2011

School's unique reference number: 124249

Headteacher: Sharon Wiltshire

Inspector's name and number: Lizzie McWhirter 244

#### School context

Mary Howard Primary School serves the local village and surrounding communities. The majority of its 57 pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and those who have special educational needs is below average. The headteacher has been deputy headteacher in the school since 2007 and will become substantive headteacher in September 2016. The benefice is currently in the process of appointing a new rector.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Mary Howard as a Church of England school are outstanding

- This is a 'Rights Respecting' school which is a nurturing and inclusive Christian family community where everyone is loved and accepted.
- The positive attitudes of the pupils who achieve highly in their academic and personal development. This includes a very good level of religious literacy which supports their spiritual development very well.
- The partnership between church and school is integral to the worshipping life of the school, and is valued by children and adults alike.

#### Areas to improve

- Governors to embed the systematic monitoring and evaluation of religious education [RE] as an important aspect of Christian distinctiveness, and to work in partnership with the diocese to secure training and support for staff.
- Enable pupils to grow in their understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit as part of their worshipping life and spiritual journey.

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

Mary Howard provides a very positive and engaging environment. It successfully embodies its vision to 'learn achieve and excel together' in all aspects of school life. A hallmark of Mary Howard is that it gained its Level 1 Rights Respecting award in 2013. This makes a positive difference to the lives of children who can articulate the

Human Rights Articles and make links to their own lives very well. Right conduct and right decisions influence behaviour, which is very good. As a result, pupils say, 'Jesus' teaching helps us to be responsible in our actions'. Relationships are excellent because all members of this inclusive community know they are accepted and loved as individuals as part of God's family. The school builds very strong relationships with the children and their families, seeing them grow as individuals into responsible citizens. All pupils thrive in this Christian culture, with its strong focus on the development of the whole child, which the school creates. This is because every child is important and everyone has high expectations here, with a regularly reviewed programme of interventions and pupil progress meetings. Positive play helps to build self-esteem and successfully promotes friendships. The school has developed its spiritual side through its Christian ethos and collective worship, making the links to Jesus' teaching in The Bible. Consequently, pupils are proud to belong, feel valued and achieve highly. In addition, progress is very good and well above the national average for many groups of pupils in this small school with small cohorts. This is because Mary Howard's strong Christian character positively encourages Christian values, such as their five human values of truth, love, peace, right conduct and non-violence, so pupils constantly achieve the best they possibly can. In addition, Mary Howard has full dyslexia status, valuing every child and inspired by many examples of famous figures in history and current celebrities who have achieved well in life. Pupils show great respect for different cultures and communities through religious education [RE] and worship. These make a very good contribution to the Christian character of the school and to pupils' personal development. Pupils show very good knowledge of Christianity, as one would expect in a church school. They are also very well informed about Islam and Ramadan. They acknowledge how Christian believers pray and the importance of the five pillars of Islam to Muslim belief. They ask important questions, such as what heaven might be like and 'What do you think God does when you pray?' In this time of interregnum, the lay reader helps them to answer such questions, saying 'He listens very well and serves and helps you'. Their experience of Christianity as a worldwide faith is enriched by visits to Lichfield Cathedral where Year 6 pupils recently met Christians from South Africa and Malaysia. Pupils can relate the Christian narrative well and give a detailed account of the Christmas, Easter and Pentecost story in their own words. However, their knowledge of Ascension-tide is less secure. Their sense of global awareness and diverse communities and cultures is well supported through fundraising activities, such as Fairtrade fortnight. This greatly supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective worship which informs and engages pupils and adults alike is greatly valued at Mary Howard and an important aspect of its daily life. This is because acts of worship involve everyone and are linked to Bible stories, including stories about people of faith and the school's values. Themes celebrate the church year and nurture pupils' spiritual development. A good example is the story of The Wise and Foolish Builders, encouraging pupils to firmly build their lives on Jesus' teaching. As a result, pupils pray a self-control prayer, asking God 'to help me make better choices with my actions and hurtful words'. The relationship between the church and the school, even during the current interregnum, is strong because of the lay reader's regular commitment to leading pupils' worship in school and at Holy Trinity Church. Children too such as the Rights Respecting leaders, help to plan and lead worship. Parents also comment on the child-friendly approaches used in worship. They say they enjoy school worship services in church, which they are invited to attend, such as the Christingle service. They reflect on the church as a 'pillar of society' and how 'everybody goes within the village to support and fill the church'. Pupils have written scripts for services such as Mother's Day and Harvest services in church and speak of how they would like to be more involved in planning and evaluating worship 'from Year 1 upwards'. Next steps, already identified, include the formation of a worship group, with children leading and evaluating worship more frequently so they develop as independent worshippers. For Mary Howard pupils, prayer and reflection is very important. Prayer features strongly in the life of this school, which pupils willingly contribute to. Well used prayer areas and prayer books containing deeply thoughtful prayers indicate insightful children. Pupils are growing in their understanding of the Trinitarian nature of God. They say, 'Jesus showed salvation by sacrificing his life'. They go on to say, 'It is The Holy Spirit who helps man to have belief in himself'. However, the school acknowledges the need to deepen pupils' understanding of The Holy Trinity, to whom their parish church is dedicated. This is part of the regular worshipping life of this school, to support pupils on their spiritual journey.

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

Leadership at Mary Howard is in a strong position, building on its shared, collaborative roles with clearly defined

roles and responsibilities. This is because the headteacher has developed a close working relationship with the diocesan adviser and also with the foundation governor who is also the licensed lay reader. This ensures all have a strong vision and dedication to Mary Howard's ethos and culture. This is embraced by the whole community, with collaboration and commitment from all staff. Parents, pupils and staff value the supportive partnership between church and school. Very good community links extend beyond the parish church and includes the school valuing being part of the diocesan family. RE and worship meet statutory requirements and are well led, managed and resourced. Worship reflects values which humans should show in everyday life. As such, worship enjoys a high profile. All areas from the previous inspection have been addressed, with the school identifying clear priorities for future action. Governors look closely at data on standards and progress in pupil learning, reflecting on the ethos of this school and its Anglican heritage. The school's leaders and managers have worked hard to ensure standards have risen and they and the governors are committed to the wellbeing of pupils and staff. The school is very much on a journey, but good progress has been made in the last few years. Governors plan for, and monitor the development of the school's Christian ethos, ensuring that Christian principles and practice underpin everything. They acknowledge that ensuring the monitoring of RE continues in the absence of a rector, as well as training and support for staff in RE is important as part of the school's journey, going forward. Their robust, regular and rigorous self-evaluation continually and consistently informs the school's academic performance and the very good SMSC development of pupils. As a result, pupils experience love and respect in a context where Christian values are taught. Governors support staff professional development and training, including preparation for future leadership of church schools. The school values support from the diocese and staff and governors have benefitted from diocesan training. There is a real sense of belonging, identity and involvement with church, school and community working closely together. A very good example includes staff who say, 'we are like a family, we share respect for each other and support each other'. They go on to say 'the children achieve well because of the excellent start we give them on life's journey'. Many speak of the warm, friendly school with its inclusive ethos which has strong values in Christianity, human values and where the rights of all are recognised. Pupils have an important voice through the school council. Community links are strong, such as the annual Remembrance-tide commemorations with the school's close proximity to the National Memorial Arboretum. In addition, children greatly appreciated the Easter experience held in Holy Trinity Church. Parents testify to the fact that their children benefit greatly from the family community and pastoral care here. Thus, Mary Howard is a beacon in providing a Christian community.

SIAMS report June 2016 Mary Howard CE VC Primary School, Tamworth B79 9JJ