



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

The March Church of England VA Primary School, Chichester	
Address	Claypit Lane, Chichester, PO18 0NU

School vision

With God's help, we will live kindly, love each other, learn and laugh together!

This vision means that we take children by the hand and invite them to join us on a journey. Working in close partnership with our churches together we all discover our spirituality, and for some Christian spirituality. We promise to help nurture those of all faiths and to give a creative space for those of no faith to explore our distinctive beliefs.

'Let all that you do be done in love'

1 Corinthians 16:14

School strengths

- The school's deeply rooted Christian vision is lived out in every aspect of school life. As a result, pupils and adults thrive at The March School.
- School leaders have developed a curriculum that ensures the needs of all learners are met. Adults and pupils are enabled to develop their spirituality and a profound sense of belonging.
- Collective worship is valued by pupils and adults because it is inclusive, creative and inspirational. It enhances the spiritual development of all.
- Positive relationships are a hallmark of the school. This has a significant impact on everyone's mental health and well-being. They know that 'everything is done in love'.
- Creative religious education (RE) teaching and assessment provide consistent personalised feedback to pupils. This is recognised and appreciated by pupils. It ensures they make good progress.

Areas for development

- Provide opportunities for pupils to extend their action and leadership in issues of justice beyond their local community. This will enable them to realise their potential as agents of change.
- Develop understanding of different Christian religious practices around the world. This is so pupils can appreciate that encountering God, in worship, can be achieved in a wide variety of ways.

Inspection findings

The March School is a warm, vibrant and friendly school. Adults and pupils rightly refer to their community as 'The March family'. Everyone is welcomed and accepted for who they are. All are encouraged and enabled to become the best version of themselves. The school is proud of its status as a Church school. The Christian vision is the heart of the school and is lived out in every aspect of

school life. Excellent links with the Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust (DCAT) and the Diocese of Chichester provide support and challenge to school leaders. The DCAT peer review system ensures that leaders develop clear school improvement plans and share good practice across the trust. Governors know the school well. They ensure that strategic decisions are always grounded in the school's vision. For example, the choice to join DCAT was taken after careful deliberation and assurance that the Trust's vision aligned entirely with theirs.

Collective worship is carefully planned and always linked to the school's vision and values. As a result each day is grounded and reinforced in the determination to 'live kindly, love, learn and laugh together'. Pupils are invited to sit in 'family groups', entering and leaving the hall to carefully selected music. This enhances the spiritual atmosphere and the strong relationships across the school. Careful use of singing and the invitation to pray provide an inclusive, thoughtful, and happy environment which is enjoyed by all. Local clergy, from across denominations, make valuable contributions to worship. They encourage pupils to consider Christian worship from around the world. There is a termly Eucharist in the local church, as well as other celebrations such as Christmas and Harvest. These enhance spiritual development across the school community and are particularly valued by parents. The altar in the school hall was constructed through collaboration of pupils with apprentices from Rolls Royce, a neighbouring employer. This is one of many examples of effective partnership working within the local community, where the school is a real Christian witness.

Opportunities for spiritual flourishing are also found across the curriculum and throughout the school day. A 'prayer net' in the central hub of the school is well used by pupils to share their prayers. Classrooms have spaces for personal reflection. Teachers' planning routinely includes moments of quiet thought as well as the chance to consider 'big questions'. An annual prayer week in the summer facilitates prayer outside to celebrate the wonder of creation. As a result, pupils ask interesting and challenging questions about their own spirituality both in school and at home. Parents are delighted that their children are being given this opportunity for spiritual development. School leaders are determined that all pupils will fulfil their potential. The special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) co-ordinator works in close partnership with pupils, families and external agencies to ensure that the needs of vulnerable children are met. Careful use is made of teaching assistants and alternative provision. Pupils enjoy coming to school. There is a clear behaviour policy, grounded in the determination that 'everything be done in love'. This is well understood by pupils. As a result, attendance is above national average and exclusions are very rare.

The 'March family' ethos is evident across school life. Older pupils act as buddies to younger pupils, getting to know them before they begin school. When staff join, they quickly feel part of the school and recognise the opportunities provided for support and development. Leaders are aware that the context of the school means that the community is not diverse. They are determined that pupils are enabled to develop a rich understanding of a wide range of ethnicities and faiths. The school actively celebrates diversity in all its forms. For example, new murals at the centre of the school enable pupils to visualise and experience historical timelines and geographical concepts. They can see that they are part of a much bigger, more complex world. Support for the mental health of pupils is provided in a range of ways including in 'The Rainbow Room', the 'The Thrive Hive' and visits by the school dog. Staff are well supported by the school at difficult times. They can also access confidential counselling support through DCAT. There is no doubt that, because of the vision, 'learning, love and laughter' are part of each day. As a result, pupils and adults feel valued because they are treated well and enabled to thrive.

The school works with a wide range of local partners. For example, pupils regularly visit a local care home to spend time with its residents where they sing, talk, read or cook together. This enhances the quality of life of everyone involved. Pupils are quick to support others who are in need, for



example through Harvest food collections or toy collections for refugee families. ‘The March family’ ethos ensures they have a real heart for ensuring fairness and justice in their community. However, they are yet to explore fully how they can become agents of change beyond their locality.

RE is well-resourced and given high priority in the school. The high-quality teaching of lessons is creative and carefully planned meeting Church of England expectations. Excellent use is made of support from the diocese and local clergy to ensure that non-specialist staff feel confident in leading learning. Pupils really enjoy their lessons. They particularly appreciate the way that they are encouraged to record their response to their learning in a range of creative ways. They value the way they are given the chance to give their views on big questions and to hear the views of others. Feedback provided by teachers is exceptional, always providing challenge and extending learning. It also informs future teaching and learning since it quickly detects misunderstandings or concepts that need to be revisited. As a result, pupils make good progress in RE lessons. RE books from the school are used as exemplars by diocesan RE advisers.

The RE scheme of work enables pupils to explore a range of world faiths. They develop an understanding of increasingly complex concepts in Christianity through their time at school. The youngest pupils are able to discuss key events such as the Last Supper and are proud of their RE books. Older pupils describe their learning of the Trinity and their understanding of Incarnation. Many pupils say that RE is their favourite subject and appreciate its variety and challenge. However, pupils are not given planned opportunities to deepen their understanding of Christianity as a world faith in RE.

The inspection findings indicate that The March Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
Inspection date	1 February 2024	URN	146448
VC/VA/Academy	Academy	Pupils on roll	209
Diocese	Chichester		
MAT/Federation	Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust		
Headteacher	Nicky Metcalfe		
Chair	Luke Irvine-Capel		
Inspector	Nicki Edwards	No.	2207