

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mark's Church of England Primary School

Vision

Everyone Welcomed. Everyone Included. Everyone Belongs.

"But I came to give life – life in all its fullness" (John 10:10)

At St Mark's Church of England Primary School, we strive to bring all together as one loving family. Through strong relationships, we offer a sense of belonging by nurturing all to flourish as unique and responsible children of God.

St Mark's Church of England Primary School is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. It has the following notable strengths.

Notable Strengths

- This vision at St Mark's strongly permeates through the school. It is lived and breathed by the school community, ensuring a prevailing sense of inclusion and belonging. This carefully crafted vision strongly reflects the needs of the people it serves.
- Wellbeing of staff, pupils and families is a priority. This focus enables the pupils and adults to thrive. They are well supported and given opportunity to grow as leaders enabling them to serve in the school and One Excellence, multi-academy trust (MAT).
- Collective worship fills those involved with positivity and love. The rhythm of this worship allows for pupil and staff engagement providing opportunities for spiritual moments of reflection.
- A curriculum that has nurture and support at its heart has been created to enable pupils to thrive. Staff thoughtfully plan personal development opportunities that enable pupils to succeed.
- The religious education (RE) leader expertly drives the subject, ensuring staff have regular opportunities for high-quality professional development. Alongside this, time to talk and reflect on the best approaches for each lesson result in strong teaching of this subject.

Development Points

- Ensure the school's planned approach effectively impacts how pupils and adults experience spiritual flourishing across the wider life of school. This is so that their spiritual development is recognised and lived out with confidence.
- Expand opportunities through the curriculum to explore justice in the wider world so that pupils can make ethical choices effectively.
- Develop assessment to reflect the specific skills pupils are learning in RE. This is to further inform teaching and deepen pupil's understanding.



Inspection Findings

Vision and Leadership

The school's distinctly Christian vision enables the community it serves to flourish with love. 'Everybody welcomed, everyone included and everyone belongs' is a lived reality at this school. Empowered by collaboration within the MAT, this is further underpinned by the biblical extract 'living life in all its fullness'. The vision to bring everyone together as one loving family can be seen in action, through policy and practice. Rigorous governor evaluations ensure the Christian values are embedded across the school, while alignment with the MAT's vision strengthens leadership, teaching, and pupil flourishing. The school successfully runs an additionally resourced provision (ARP) that caters for a range of pupils with complex needs. This provision means that pupils from outside the school are also welcomed into the caring and nurturing environment that embraces diversity of need. As a result, the school is a beacon for inclusivity within the local area. Leaders of the school ensure that decisions are taken back to the strong ethos, ensuring that the pupils feel that they belong to this school family. The MAT enables staff to put the school's vision into action by supporting other schools within and beyond the trust. This provides staff with enriching professional opportunities, allowing them to develop leadership skills and broaden their experience. They contribute meaningfully to other school communities which helps them 'to live life in all its fullness'.

Vision and Curriculum

Leaders have carefully designed a curriculum that best serves their learners. Pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities that raise aspirations and promote success. The vision for 'everyone to belong' sits at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils access inspiring play activities, swimming lessons, and varied after-school clubs. This broad offer ensures inclusion for all, including pupils with complex needs. As a result, pupils at St Mark's thrive and grow in confidence. Pupils deemed vulnerable receive extra nurture support to help them access school and learning. A well-established team approach to pupil welfare provides exceptional and comprehensive support to families of the school. This work has a positive impact on attendance. Learning is not accidental, with planned times to practise and review so pupils can remember what they have been taught. While some pupils struggle to articulate their understanding of spirituality, this does not prevent moments of profound reflection. These are starting to be inspired by 'striking moments'. Opportunities for spiritual development remain isolated to key subjects like RE and English. They are not routinely integrated across the wider life of the school and so the overall impact remains limited.

Worship and Spirituality

Collective worship is a strength of this Church school, offering pupils and adults space to grow and reflect spiritually. Joyful moments of song and prayer enrich this experience. The school vision and values are embraced by pupils, who are inspired to put them into action in their own lives. When pupils enter that special space, they know they are one family where everyone is welcomed and accepted. This inclusive approach builds confidence and a sense of belonging. The 'worship crew' enjoy leading worship and feel proud to contribute to school life. Through their roles they are able to develop the spiritual flourishing of their peers. Partnerships with the diocese, local churches and the MAT ethos lead, support St Mark's in delivering diverse worship experiences.

Vision and School Culture

The vision of school is 'an anchor' for their community through challenging times. Staff talk with passion about the care with which they have been supported by the school. The MAT also fosters a strong approach to staff wellbeing and a shared commitment to the school's vision. Leaders in school create a culture where positive relationships flourish. Staff access a wellbeing support scheme and pupils can access nurture support. The MAT's commitment to building strong relationships strengthens the sense of belonging and unity in this school. This



enables adults and pupils to live and learn well together. Because of this care, pupils and adults feel safe and supported. Many staff at St Mark's support other schools. This approach to supporting and igniting leaders are living examples of service in action.

Vision, Justice and Responsibility

Through their vision leaders see justice as providing opportunities for all their pupils to succeed. Justice and acceptance are actively put into practice. Pupils can articulate understanding of fairness, responsibility and justice as Christian concepts. Hope is fostered through opportunities and a behaviour policy embedding forgiveness, reconciliation, and fresh starts for all pupils. Pupils feel secure and connected at this school and so are able to thrive in their interactions with one another. A culture of dignity and respect for staff and pupils is fostered, enabling pupils and adults to 'live life in all its fullness'. This is exemplified when older pupils share experiences with younger ones during worship, such as when a child donated their hair to the Princess Trust charity. Whilst there is a strong sense of justice and responsibility within the school, the pupils have little time to reflect on this in the world beyond the school gates. This means that their understanding is not as deep as it could be. Through inspiring worship many pupils and adults act and support one another in times of need. For example, making bracelets to support charity.

Religious Education

RE at St Mark's provides a strong and balanced curriculum in which pupils learn about the diversity of global faiths. The curriculum is engaging and thought provoking, building progressively on prior learning. RE is treated as a core subject, with appropriate focus given on the weekly timetable. The quality of RE planning provides staff with support to deliver high-quality, varied lessons. Pupils speak knowledgeably about stories and practices across a range of faiths, demonstrating a secure understanding of religious concepts. Pupils' books demonstrate a consistent approach to reflecting on prior learning. This enables concepts to be embedded and supports pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to remember more. Professional development for staff is prioritised, supported by high-quality resources and diocesan training to strengthen staff subject knowledge. This results in increased staff confidence, more effective teaching, and improved pupil outcomes across the curriculum. Trust leaders act decisively to build expertise and develop staff at every level. This strategic investment ensures RE continues to flourish across the school.

The school's approach to RE provides pupils with valuable opportunities to explore questions about the world. Consequently, pupils experience thought-provoking and challenging learning experiences. Plans provide detailed information and vocabulary for each unit. These are further enhanced by a national research project the RE lead took part in. Clear planning, delivery, and attention to building vocabulary are focused on in lessons. The research project has allowed the school to grow and develop further in this area providing strong practice for others to share. Vocabulary development is a clear priority, and its positive impact on pupils' understanding of key concepts is well recognised and effectively demonstrated. Whilst knowledge in this subject is strong, the specific skills of learning in RE are not yet sufficiently embedded. This limits pupils' deeper understanding, reasoning, and ability to express informed, balanced views. Assessment takes place at the end of each unit, with pupil achievement measured against defined knowledge outcomes rather than skills outcomes. Tools for reflection and discussion are provided for pupils, positively influencing the depth of their thinking about a range of faiths and worldviews.

Information

Address	St Mark's Close, Farfield, County Durham, TS19 7HA		
Date	16 October 2025	URN	144551
Type of school	Academy	No. of pupils	431
Diocese	Durham		
MAT	One Excellence Trust		
MAT Chair	Lindsey Vollans		
Headteacher	Stacey Rand		
Chair of Governors	Debbie Carr		
Chair of Trust	Tom Cunningham		
Inspector	Abigail Clay		