



5th February 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

On the 14 and 15 January, we were inspected under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005. This is known as the *Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools* or *SIAMS*. The last time St Mary's School was inspected, there were four possible grades: 'outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' or 'inadequate'. The SIAMS process has now been reviewed and these grades have been changed. The old 'outstanding' grade has now gone, and the criteria that would previously have attracted an 'outstanding' grade have been merged with those for a 'good' grade. A new grade of 'excellent' has been introduced with a higher threshold than the old 'outstanding' grade. It will be awarded only in exceptional circumstances. The link to our report is at the end of this letter.

During the inspection, St Mary's school was praised for strong Christian leadership, inspirational collective worship (involving performing arts), exceptional support for wellbeing and mental health. The inspector felt that RS provides a safe place to explore beliefs and enables students to value diversity. She also said that, whilst most students in RS make good progress the most able are not always appropriately challenged.

To improve further, the inspector said that we need to monitor and evaluate the Christian vision, collective worship and the subject of RS more routinely, and provide training for all staff of RS to ensure that all lessons support good progress, especially the more able. These are areas we have already started to address, and are at an early stage, but will continue to focus on over time.

The report the inspector has written says that St Mary's is "an exceptionally inclusive and caring community" where "vibrant, inclusive and relevant collective worship is highly valued by the whole community". She goes on to say that "the warm and caring atmosphere within the school means that both adults and students feel safe in sharing life experiences for the benefit of others". The report states that "Support for the wellbeing and mental health of students and adults is a significant strength. This is driven by the vision for removing barriers to learning."

Removing these barriers is something we pride ourselves on and will remain a focus for is over time ("A richly varied range of support strategies help vulnerable students to engage with school and succeed. Pastoral support is highly effective...").

I have not made a secret of the fact that there has been some poor behaviour from a small number of students, and the inspector commented on this: "There has also been poor behaviour from a minority of students". However, she goes on to say that "The leadership team are working on a range of initiatives to address these issues. Securing consistently good behaviour has been the first priority. Initiatives include restructuring leadership to provide capacity for change, staff development with regard to behaviour management, introducing a silent starter for lessons and addressing uniform issues. Staff and students comment on the impact of recent changes and the way these are contributing to a calm learning environment". We recognise we have a way to go, but there will be a continuing focus on changing the culture at St Mary's to one where learning is always respected.

I was delighted to read that "Strong leadership from the RE leader contributes to RE being a safe space to explore beliefs...". We are aware of the strengths of the team, but it was great to read this powerful testament to the work of the RS Team, led by Ms Sandiford. The inspector went on to say, "Students enjoy the subject and the number of students choosing to follow it at A' level has increased significantly".

The Inspector had a wide evidence base, talking to students, parents/carers, staff and governors, and drew her evidence from substantial meetings over the two days. I have summarised the report in this letter, but you can read it in full on our website here [SIAMS 2020](#)

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nicholas Simms', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nicholas Simms
Headteacher