

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

All Saints Church of England VA Academy

Houghton Road, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU5 5AB

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Satisfactory

Diocese

St Albans

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Date of academy conversion

1 September 2009

Name of multi-academy trust

Diocese of St Albans/University of Bedfordshire

Dates of inspection

19-20 June 2017

Date of last inspection

14 November 2011

Type of school and unique reference number

Secondary VA Academy 135946

Principal

Liz Furber

Inspector's name and number

Kathryn Wright 436

School context

All Saints is a secondary phase (11-18) academy, which converted from an upper school in 2014. The acting headteacher became substantive in September 2016. In January 2017, the school moved from an Ofsted category of concern to requires improvement. The governing body consists almost entirely of sponsors and their nominees. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of minority ethnic pupils and those with a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average. The proportion of students who are eligible for pupil premium and those with English as an additional language is above average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of All Saints Academy as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- As a result of new leadership and a fresh vision, All Saints Academy is developing its distinctiveness as a church school and this is starting to impact on its effectiveness particularly in relation to student wellbeing, progress and achievement.
- The Christian values of the academy are being re-established and this is beginning to permeate through the whole school community resulting in a sense of belonging and unity.
- Robust interventions, increased profile and positive student attitudes towards religious education (RE) are resulting in improving standards and progress at GCSE.

Areas to improve

- Embed the new vision 'Living well together in dignity, faith and hope' so that it drives school improvement through continued policy development and impacts on the lives of students, staff and parents.
- Ensure that students and parents can articulate the relationship between the Christian values and the biblical teachings on which they are based in order to deepen their understanding of the new vision.
- Increase student participation, leadership and engagement in collective worship so that they become partners in developing this aspect of academy life.
- Review the Key Stage 3 RE curriculum to ensure that students have an in-depth understanding of the Christian faith preparing them effectively for their GCSE studies.

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

Since the introduction of a new vision, 'Living well together in dignity, faith and hope' the Christian foundation of the school is beginning to permeate many aspects of academy life. This vision lies at the heart of initiatives to raise standards, progress, behaviour and attendance. Pupils say that clear boundaries and routines are balanced by staff who show them care, compassion and forgiveness. A restorative approach underpins the approach to pastoral issues, focusing on the dignity of all involved. This is resulting in improved attendance and students who are more emotionally intelligent. Support for the most vulnerable students is based on a holistic view of every child. The focus on increasing aspirations is rooted in hope and is resulting in improving standards and progress at GCSE.

The whole academy community is now united, so that pupils and parents say that they feel part of the school. Relationships between students, and between students and staff has improved as a result of the focus on Christian values with some staff saying that there is a sense of calmness in interactions. All members of the academy community now feel confident to talk about issues of faith and belief in a safe environment. However, students are not able to articulate the links between the academy values and Christian teachings, although they do connect them closely to the school strapline 'Aspire, Strive, Achieve'.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) is a strength of the academy provision. The personal development programme and specific SMSC tutor times enable students to respond to a range of complex issues within a Christian framework of values. They also provide opportunities for students to learn about local and global diversity, healthy living and staying safe online. In addition, a comprehensive audit of SMSC provision shows that there are opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to engage with philosophical and moral questions. However, students' understanding of spirituality is less secure; some associate it specifically with peace and reflection. The introduction of a new enrichment programme enables students to give back to the local community through voluntary and charity work, as well as to develop new skills. RE makes a good contribution to the Christian ethos. Students cite opportunities to learn about Christian beliefs about God, as well as learning about different expressions of Christianity around the world.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory.

The academy has transformed collective worship in the last 20 months, so that it is now well structured, planned and organised and rooted in Christian values. At the current time, the acts of worship lack explicit reference to Christian teachings and biblical material but this is being introduced on some occasions. There is regular use of a distinctively Christian prayer which underpins the theme for the week. This is shared in a staff briefing and tutor groups enabling the whole school community to focus on a Christian message at the start of the week. However, the way this is used, particularly in tutor group worship, lacks consistency and some opportunities for spiritual development are missed. The collective worship policy has recently been reviewed and clear aims for worship have been established. This is beginning to have an impact in terms of pupils becoming familiar with the school values such as resilience. Students valued the opportunity to reflect on recent tragic events in London and Manchester. In addition, the new protocols for worship are ensuring a calm and ordered start to the school day. The school is aware that worship does not yet fully reflect Anglican practice, but Christian festivals are celebrated and times of remembrance are observed.

Students are respectful during acts of worship and value the time to come together as a school community. Some students value the educational nature of the worship experience and talk about its impact in terms of how they treat others. Year 7 and 8 students listened attentively to one student talk about his experiences of sportsmanship linked to the values of integrity, respect and fairness. However, planned opportunities for student leadership of and participation in worship are at the early stages of development. Students have a limited understanding of the purpose and nature of prayer; although in times of personal, local and national tragedy, students spoke about responding through prayer and reflection. This was particularly evident at the time of a tragic loss of two lives in summer 2016 and a subsequent memorial service, when students appreciated opportunities to light candles, spending time in silence and supporting one another.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory.

Religious Education (RE) is valued highly by students and staff. Students talk about its importance in terms of understanding the world in which they live, future job opportunities and creating a more tolerant society. One student said, 'Everyone has something to say about religion'. All students take a recognised and appropriate qualification at Key Stage 4. Standards of attainment (Full Course GCSE 2016) were below national expectations (44% A*-C), but a significant number of interventions mean that students are on track to attain more highly in 2017. Relative progress for students in Year 7-10 shows improvement. In most year groups, more than 50% are now making more than expected progress. Assessment procedures are established and understood by pupils. Students' progress is meticulously tracked. However, opportunities for students to respond to feedback and next steps is not always implemented consistently.

Quality of teaching is at least satisfactory. The most effective lessons are well structured to enable pupils to engage in higher order thinking, developing their skills of logical reasoning and interpretation. Through careful differentiated planning, some lessons challenge pupils and enable them to engage deeply with complex philosophical ideas. Although lessons are usually well structured, some students remain passive and are not fully engaged in the learning process. The design of the curriculum at Key Stage 3 means that students lack an in-depth understanding of the Christian faith, and theological ideas are rarely explored. This means that the requirements of the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for RE (2016) are only partially met. Provision for RE in the sixth form is good. Dedicated opportunities are promoting students' religious literacy through a compulsory enrichment programme and the curriculum for 2017-18 is being driven by responses to a students' survey. Students particularly value discussions and debates with a member of a local Christian organisation.

The current subject leader has helped to raise the profile of the subject and student perceptions have improved considerably over the last year. She supports colleagues well through her enthusiasm, and sharing of planning and resources. Monitoring and evaluation takes place regularly and is resulting in improvements to marking and assessment.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is satisfactory.

The new vision 'Living Well Together in Dignity, Faith and Hope' is embraced by the leadership team and the academy has now turned a corner in terms of its journey towards being an effective church school. The principal spoke of the academy now having a soul. Following the previous denominational inspection, the governing body did not hold the school to account in relation to its Christian foundation, and this led to the key issues not being fully addressed. However, the re-ordered governance and new senior leadership team are taking a robust approach and this is resulting in rapid change. Monitoring and evaluation of the school as church school is formalised, and actions have been taken as a result. This means that two of the three key issues from the last inspection in relation to succession planning and the leadership of RE are being addressed. Some elements of the third key issue relating to collective worship are in initial stages of development. The academy's self-evaluation at the time of the inspection was broadly accurate. Whilst at the early stages of embedding the vision, the impact can already be seen in relation to policy reviews and a new whole school curriculum rooted in Christian values. The new vision is beginning to drive improvement. Middle leaders are embracing the vision and talk about its impact in their own areas of responsibility within the school. The academy has benefited from professional development opportunities provided by the Diocese. These have resulted in significant changes to the strategic approach and a more coherent understanding of what it means to be a church school. This means that the academy has very good capacity to improve before the next inspection.

The academy was unable to recruit an RE subject leader for September 2017 and a distributive model of leadership has been put in place led by the senior leadership team. In the short term, this continues to raise the profile of the subject and ensures that it is valued as an important subject. After a period of neglect, collective worship is now exceptionally well led and managed, and its place in the life of the academy is now secure. Some parents are aware of the vision through newsletters. However, they have less understanding of how the vision or the Christian teachings on which it is based underpin all that the academy does. The leadership team is beginning to utilise opportunities to share the vision through the website, letters to parents and at a new intake evening. Links with the local community are good, particularly in supporting vulnerable families and groups. The partnership between the academy and churches is good. This was particularly reflected in the response to the time of a tragic loss of two lives in summer 2016. Clergy visit the school regularly and a new form of chaplaincy on rotation was being introduced during the inspection week. This follows discussions about implementing an effective form of chaplaincy within the context of the new vision in order to support the spiritual development and wellbeing of students.