

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary of Charity Church of England Academy (VA)	
Orchard Place, Faversham, Kent, ME13 8AP	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Canterbury
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Date of Academy Conversion	1 August 2015
Name of Multi-Academy Trust	Aquila Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust
Date of inspection	10 July 2017
Date of last inspection	July 2010
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary Academy VA Equivalent - 141220
Headteacher	Hannah Tudor
Inspector's name and number	Pamela Draycott (161)

School context

This is a smaller than average sized primary school. Most pupils are White British. The percentage with some sort of special educational need or disability (SEND) is broadly average. The percentage for whom extra funding is received due to social or economic disadvantage is around the national average. Since the previous denominational inspection, the school, before it became part of the Aquila Diocese of Canterbury Academy Trust, received an inadequate judgement by OfSTED. There is a new leadership team in place and standards are on an upward trend.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary of Charity Primary Academy as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The perceptive and well-focused leadership of the headteacher is ably supported by an effective leadership team, governors and the Aquila Trust. It leads to the school's Christian vision and values having a deep impact on the rapid improvement in attainment and progress made.
- As a clear expression of the school's Christian values and its motto, pupils have a positive attitude to learning and their behaviour is very good both in classrooms and around the site.
- The worship programme and religious education (RE) make positive contributions to enhancing the school's Christian and inclusive foundation. Both areas provide relevant experiences that impact well on pupils' developing understanding of religious, spiritual and moral issues.
- There are meaningful links between the school and the parish church which make an important contribution to the school's spiritual life.

Areas to improve

- Extend opportunities for including more visits and visitors focused on broadening and deepening pupils' appreciation and understanding the range of faiths and cultures represented locally, nationally and internationally.
- Increase the leadership of pupils in planning the overall worship programme in order to refine practice further.
- Embed effective assessment practice so that pupils consistently know how to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills in RE in order for them to take the next steps in their learning.

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

The school's core Christian values, introduced in 2015, now clearly inform all aspects of its life and work. They are plainly linked with Bible characters who displayed them through their actions and belief in God. These values are honesty, respect, faith, forgiveness, independence, aspiration and determination. They are well known and articulated within the school community. Adults refer to them often and appropriately as part of the school's daily life both when teaching and to praise pupils who act on them. They also impact positively when, on those few occasions, it is necessary to remind a pupil of the high expectations of behaviour and attitudes required. 'It's important to be honest because if you aren't people can't trust you. Being forgiving, even if someone doesn't ask for it, is also important,' as a Key Stage 2 pupil reflected. Pupils can relate the values to the Bible character linked to it by the school in a simple way. Based on its Christian underpinning, the school is a happy, welcoming and inclusive place. There is a developing sense of belonging and of pride. Pupils are well known and relationships are strong and mutually respectful. Overall, pupils are excited and challenged by their learning, including in RE, explaining that 'lots of the time learning is fun'. Pupils enter broadly at age-related expected levels and make at least good progress. Many make accelerated progress. This includes disadvantaged pupils and higher attaining pupils. Both groups make more than expected progress when compared with their peers nationally. This is because leadership has successfully shared their aspirational vision for academic improvement. This is expressly based on the school's Christian vision for learning, as expressed in its motto, 'Empowered to Succeed'. Consequently, teachers and support staff encourage pupils to 'rise to the challenge'. They do this through setting appropriate and wide-range tasks that boost learning appropriately. Whole school policies towards deep, open-ended questioning, impact positively on the consistency of experience that pupils receive. The progress of individuals is closely mapped, with appropriate interventions put in place as necessary.

Pupils work well collaboratively and individually. They are beginning to share ideas openly, within an atmosphere of mutual respect. This means that standards of attainment and the progress has improved considerably since the time when the school was judged to be inadequate by OfSTED. Similarly, through consistent approaches and based on its Christian vision, attendance has improved from a low starting point. It is now slightly above the national average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is well catered for and pupils respond well to the opportunities provided. The curriculum is broad and balanced. There are detailed plans in place to improve the curriculum further by including greater reflection and creativity. These plans are to be introduced from the beginning of the academic year 2017 onwards. Pupils take responsibility for themselves and others through, for example, the school council. They understand that raising money for charity is a good thing and reflects 'our school value of respect because its helping others to live good lives just like Jesus did'. Pupils benefit from a growing range of extra-curricular activities. The recent introduction of new 'spiritual gardens' in the school grounds has been well received by pupils. They rightly recognise the need to 'pray or if you're not religious to reflect, and know that the spiritual gardens are places where they can do that. Through RE, they are beginning to develop a respect for the beliefs and practices of Christianity and of other world faiths. This is helping them to consider issues of difference and diversity. However, there are too few planned opportunities to receive visitors into school or make visits out of school that reflect cultural diversity, locally, nationally and internationally.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The profile of worship within the school community has been highlighted and extended under the leadership of the current headteacher and vicar. The well planned programme for daily worship is broadly based around the school values, festivals in the Christian year and school events. It is also responsive to significant news events. Pupils' attitudes towards the worship programme is positive and they engage well with it. They enter and leave the acts of worship that take place in the hall respectfully. They listen well and respond to key questions through talking with those around them and sharing ideas. Pupils take a lead when their class provide the worship. They give their views on worship periodically and these have been used to refine worship practices. However, their leadership in planning the worship is limited. Saying prayers is a key part of the worship programme. Pupils understand that prayer is, 'talking and listening to God'. They know the Lord's Prayer and have a basic understanding of its importance to Christians. The relatively recently introduced school prayer was written by a group of pupils. It is known and said regularly and, consequently, it is embedding into school practice. Some pupils talk about how they pray outside of school and that it helps them when they feel sad and to 'be peaceful inside'. Prayer and reflection opportunities have been well extended through the increased use of prayer stations in classrooms which give the pupils opportunity to offer their concerns to God. They say that praying, 'helps you be calm and think about things more clearly'. Appropriate use is made of biblical stories in worship which contributes well to pupils' developing an age-appropriate understanding of the importance of the Bible for Christians. They also appreciate something of the central role that Jesus has within Christianity and can outline key events of his life appropriately. Through worship,

pupils have opportunities to consider the key Christian belief of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is further developed by work in RE. Daily worship in school is well extended by worship held in the parish church, a short walk away. Parents' attendance at these services has increased considerably since the time of the previous denominational inspection. Those who are able to attend recognise its importance and how it adds a sense of belonging to the community for them. The involvement of the vicar and other members of the congregation effectively supports the spiritual growth of members of the school community. Pupils are familiar with aspects of traditional Anglican worship practices. This includes a lit candle representing Jesus as the light of the world, different coloured coverings to mark times of the Christian year, and opening sentences with responses.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Pupils' attitudes are positive towards RE because they enjoy it. They are well engaged through a wide range of activities and approaches used to help them to learn. They investigate key 'I wonder...' questions which successfully encourages them to apply their learning and to express their own responses. A good balance is achieved between learning which focuses on knowledge and understanding and that which encourages reflection and application of religious beliefs and practices. Under the supportive guidance of the subject leader, RE is taking on a higher profile as befits a church school. It is taught weekly and well linked with other curriculum areas as appropriate. There is a good balance between content that addresses Christianity and that which explores a range of other world faiths. There are firm and detailed plans in place for introducing an approach to teaching Christianity based on addressing key concepts. Elements of this approach have been trialled and show positive impact. Teachers mark pupils work regularly with some opportunities for pupils to respond. This is not, however, consistently the case. Pupils are not sufficiently aware of what they need to do in order to take the next steps in improving their learning. Attainment overall is broadly in line with national expectations, with all groups of pupils making at least good progress. This is evidenced well through their written, display and oral work. Effective monitoring and evaluation by the subject leader, senior leaders and governors leads to developments in teaching and learning which are improving the quality and the range of the RE curriculum appropriately.

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

The headteacher, firmly supported by her deputy and governors, is working effectively to embed a shared Christian vision. This has led to correct decisions being made to bring about the swift improvements necessary to raise standards of attainment and progress. Consistent approaches to providing open-ended questions for pupils to explore has impacted positively on their learning. There is a clear vision for sustaining and embedding the rapid improvements to teaching and learning based on high aspirations. This is founded on encouraging pupils to flourish because they, 'are special and made in the image of God'. In turn, this leads to firm and accurately focused next steps in place to bring about sustained improvement. This is well evidenced by two consecutive years of raised standards and progress in nationally accredited test results. Governors are well engaged with school life, providing effective support and challenge. The school's membership of the Aquila Trust is mutually supportive. The school's links with the diocese are principally through the trust. It provides a range of training and moderating opportunities which support staff well for working in the church school sector. There is very good leadership for RE and worship. Both areas meet statutory requirements. They are appropriately resourced and make effective contributions to the school's overarching Christian vision and values. Issues from the previous denominational inspection have been well addressed, particularly in the previous two years. During this period also, rapid progress has been made from a much lower starting point in terms of pupils' attainment and progress. Robust monitoring and evaluation processes by senior leaders, governors and the Aquila Trust lead to accurate self-evaluation. Church school issues are correctly identified, prioritised and kept under review. Longstanding links with the parish church have been revitalised in the time since the previous denominational inspection. Pupils' art work is displayed in church and the church holiday club uses the school site for part of the programme. The parochial church council meets in the school. Clergy and members of the congregation and staff have planned and delivered a spiritual reflection day for pupils. These things are enriching for church and school and express the strong links in evidence. Parents are well informed about their children's progress. They are helped to support their children's learning at home. Parents appreciate the school's Christian foundation as providing a moral framework as they grow.

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