

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Churchfield Church of England Academy

Cheshunt Wash, Waltham Cross, EN8 0LU

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese / Methodist District	St Albans
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Academy conversion	March 2017
Name of multi-academy trust	St Albans Multi-Academy Trust
Date of inspection	18 May 2017
Date of last inspection	26 May 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Academy 136024
Headteacher	Kate Hardwick
Inspector's name and number	Mel Adams NS 58

School context

This is a larger than average primary school with 321 pupils on role. Governance is the responsibility of a Regional Academy Executive Board, which will transition in the autumn to a local Academy Council. Pupils are predominantly White British with the number from a range of ethnic minority groups around national average. Those eligible for the pupil premium grant, which provides funding for looked-after children and those eligible for free school meals, is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is below average. School leadership, well-established prior to academy conversion, continues and there have been no staffing changes.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Churchfield Academy as a Church of England school are good.

- The leadership of the headteacher, inspired by her deep Christian faith, is strategic in uniting in school leaders and staff their commitment to driving forward improvements, resulting in rising standards for all groups of pupils.
- Christian values, which translate vision into daily life and are practised by those who work and learn in the school, create an ethos where each pupil is valued and given the opportunity to be the best that they can be.
- Times of worship, including prayer and reflection during the day, provide rich experiences, which support spiritual development.
- The recently created Regional Academy Executive Board understands the importance of school's Christian character and is committed to sustaining this into the future.
- The vicar provides support and challenge as a governor, along with spiritual guidance and pastoral support.

Areas to improve

- Secure the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the Academy by ensuring that those new to governance work with school leaders to develop monitoring and evaluation.
- Deepen spiritual development by ensuring that pupils understand the persons and work of the Holy Trinity.
- Strengthen the experience of worship by supporting pupils to plan and lead acts of worship.
- Improve learning in religious education [RE] by consistently providing appropriately challenging learning tasks which enable pupils to fully express their understanding of religious concepts.

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

The dedicated staff team, united in their desire to secure improvement are inspired by the deep Christian faith of the headteacher. This is expressed through Christian values, which are embraced and underpin professional commitment, inspiring relationships, decisions and actions. As a result, there is a commitment to supporting every individual pupil, leading to improved attainment and progress throughout the school. Attendance is also improving, particularly for those with persistent absence, and there have been no exclusions. One member of staff explained, 'It's about raising self-esteem, we don't ever give up on children.' School leaders are aware of where there is work to still do and are diligently ensuring that any remaining gaps in attainment are closing. Respect, care and compassion are evident throughout the school, one pupil describing how when 'feeling a bit down, even though I thought I was hiding it', her teacher noticed and helped her. There are four principal values, care, aspiration, respect and endeavour, known as CARE. Along with a range of other Christian values taken from Bible stories, pupils speak of how they use them because they are 'what Jesus wants us to do, what he wants us to be like. He cares for everyone and he won't let us go.' Pupils refer to the parable of the Good Samaritan from which they learn care and respect, and the Easter story from which they learn about Jesus' perseverance and determination. They describe how they use such values in their learning and friendships. Through obtaining the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools award, whose values the school links to Christian values, pupils have a growing awareness of social justice. This is evident when pupils speak about situations such as the plight of refugees, or write letters to the Prime Minister about fair trade to ensure support for farm workers in different countries. The strong ethos nurtures spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development leading to good behaviour throughout the school. Through the partnership with St Clements church and the vicar, pupils gain a good understanding of Christianity and Anglican faith and practice, for example the colours of the church year and key events such as Ash Wednesday, and Pentecost. Pupils also understand that there are Christians all around the world who worship in different ways, with pupils speaking of their personal worship experiences such as Greek Orthodox and Free Church. RE is an essential factor in the development of the Christian character of the school, particularly when it is creative, illustrated by the Year 6 lesson where pupils, learning about the characteristics of the persons of the Holy Trinity, examine fingerprints to show how each one is unique. Relating RE to their own life and experience makes it relevant and meaningful and such learning experiences support pupils' spiritual and personal development.

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

Daily collective worship forms an integral part of the worshipping life of the school. Extending into the school day, pupils often say or write prayers, thoughts and feelings in classroom reflection areas. One pupil explained, 'It helps you calm down if you're stressed, no one disturbs you, you reflect and carry on.' End of day prayers, described by another pupil, 'help me look back on the day, and whatever has happened I know God is with me and tomorrow is a fresh start.' In daily collective worship, through song, prayer and story, pupils learn about Christian faith and values and how these are relevant to their own lives. Pupils speak movingly of how the songs help them, with one pupil saying, 'If things feel dark, the song reminds me I'm one of God's children. I may make mistakes but God still loves me.' Through stories from the Bible, pupils understand that Jesus is God's son and his importance in the Christian faith. One of the youngest pupils wrote a card to say sorry to Jesus that he had died on Good Friday and took the card to church where the vicar was able to help her to understand that Christians believe that Jesus is alive today. Older pupils speak of how the Bible stories tell them about values such as respect and endeavour, one pupil saying, 'They show us what Jesus wants us to be like.' Such experiences support pupil's spiritual development. Pupils are aware of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit from prayers in church but they do not have an understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The values inspire acts of service, described by one pupil showing responsibility by supporting a pupil who was unwell. A number of pupils speak of how peer mediation helps them to sort out disagreements by forgiving, 'because God forgives us'. The vicar leads weekly school services in church where pupils participate in Anglican traditions such as carrying the cross. Year 5 buddies sit with the youngest children, teaching them how to pray and respond. The vicar supports personal prayer through taking time at the end of worship for a pupil to light a candle and pray. This is particularly appreciated during times of sadness and loss. Parents and families attend and say they enjoy sharing worship with their children, and seeing how they develop understanding of prayer and Christian values. Although pupils take part in aspects of worship, they do not plan and lead acts of worship which was an area for development in the previous inspection. The leader of the local Free Church leads some worship in school, and pupils visit the church, giving them an understanding of another Christian tradition. One pupil explained, 'They do things in different ways but they still believe in God and Jesus.' The headteacher, staff and vicar evaluate, and staff and pupils views are invited. This informs future planning, such as coverage of key aspects of the church year and agreed Christian values. The newly formed Academy Board has not so far been involved in monitoring and evaluating the impact of collective worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

'Jesus had a choice, to stay alive or die to save his people', said one of the younger pupils, demonstrating developing knowledge and understanding of this central Christian belief. Pupils of all ages speak about RE and how it often links to what they hear about in worship. Referring to learning about parables, such as the story of the lost coin, one pupil described how this inspires determination and endeavour. They speak of the Easter story describing Jesus' perseverance and determination and how this inspires them to apply these values in their learning or when they face challenges. RE supports spiritual development, illustrated by a pupil playing with a model of Noah's ark saying, 'The animals are all in the ark. God isn't in there, he's looking over them.' Assessments against the objectives in locally agreed syllabus indicate that achievement in RE, for the majority of pupils, is good, supporting the school's judgement that teaching in RE is good. However, the work in pupils' books does not always reflect their level of understanding, for example, where tasks do not match the learning objective or lack challenge such as picture sequencing activities. In lessons pupils are able to show their understanding, as in a Year 4 class where a pupil was able to describe how faith in Islam affects the lives of believers, explaining, 'Their rules help them live good lives.' The school has recently developed marking of work through written teacher feedback to deepen understanding. This is beginning to support questioning and enquiry, indicated where a pupil responded 'Why did God create the tree of life?' RE supports moral and cultural development, and awareness of social justice, where pupils show empathy and compassion by role-playing making and selling paper bags, speaking of how the experience day after day affects the child and the family. One pupil concluded, 'It's a boring job, but you wouldn't have much choice would you?' The headteacher, as RE leader, demonstrates the commitment to RE by ensuring weekly lessons throughout the school. Termly assessment and moderation between classes leads to evaluation and informs planning for future sequences of learning. She also ensures that all staff have appropriate training, which recently has been in a new national resource, 'Understanding Christianity', with plans to adopt this alongside the new locally agreed syllabus for RE. Pupils appreciate learning in RE and demonstrate a good knowledge of Christianity. They enjoy studying different faiths such as Judaism, Sikhism and Islam and speak of how learning about different faiths helps them to understand festivals and traditions and how faith communities worship. Arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

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

The Christian faith of the headteacher, expressed in the school vision 'Living God's Love', is strategic in leading improvement in the school throughout a period of challenge and uniting staff through a period of improvement. Adopted from the diocesan vision, the vision underpins the life of the school day by day. Describing the headteacher's leadership, the vicar says, 'The way she is, her faith, who she is and the way she acts, spreads to others.' This is also recognised by the diocesan advisor, also a new board member, explaining how this deeply rooted faith is evident in the way she has led the school through a difficult period. Demonstrating Christian values of forgiveness and redemption, she galvanises commitment to the ethos in which every member of the school community is valued and values others. Appointed since the previous SIAMS inspection, the headteacher has taken on the responsibility for leading RE and collective worship, to ensure that these remain central to the life and work of the school. Staff are deeply aware of this and say that through this powerful Christian leadership, Christian values permeate the school 'like words through a stick of rock'. Consequently, school leaders are empowered and equipped to face the challenges of moving the school forward, through demonstrating a clear understanding of their responsibilities as church school leaders. The diocese supports school leaders well through rigorous and effective school improvement strategies which have led to improvements in both safeguarding and standards. Leaders and those in governance share a resolve for 'every child to be the best that they can be'. Staff throughout the school follow this lead and through good relationships form a cohesive team who model compassion and understanding. School evaluation accurately describes the Christian distinctiveness of the school, identifying areas for development such as deepening understanding of the Holy Trinity. The commitment to improve is evident in the embedding of Christian values, identified as an area for development in the previous SIAMS inspection. The headteacher, as RE and Collective worship leader, supports staff in planning to ensure that the values shared throughout the school are intrinsic to daily worship and learning in RE. The Academy Board has not begun monitoring and evaluation, although some have supported in their capacity as diocesan advisers. Some parents say they choose the school because they want their children to be in a place where they will be taught faith and values. They recognise how the school will support their children and 'go the extra mile'. One gave as an example an instance when staff and the vicar supported a distressed pupil. Parents know that they can approach the school and that concerns are heard. Many work on behalf of the school to raise funds through the Friends Association. Pupils' good behaviour is evident in good relationships and commitment to learning. Pupils develop empathy and a desire to serve, showing awareness of the needs of those around them and the wider world, for example, through supporting and visiting the local foodbank. Supporting the Christian vision, church members help with activities such as telling the Christmas story and making Christingles. The vicar is strategic in maintaining the vision and ethos through worship, pastoral support and governance. Staff, pupils and families support the work of the

church through events such as the 'Tree Festival'.

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