

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

The John Wallis Church of England Academy

Millbank Road, Kingsnorth, Ashford, Kent, TN23 3HG

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Canterbury
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	September 2010
Dates of inspection	7 – 8 March 2018
Date of last inspection	March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy – Voluntary Aided equivalent - 136197
Principal	John McParland
Inspector's name and number	Pamela Draycott (161)

School context

This larger than average sized, all-through academy serves nursery through to sixth form. The majority are White British. A wide range of other ethnicities are represented in smaller numbers, the largest being Nepali. The percentage of disadvantaged pupils and students is well above the national average. The percentage that speaks English as an additional language and those with a special educational need or disability (SEND) are above average. Just under 50 percent identify as Christian, with over a third claiming no religious affiliation. The primary phase is moving from its old building into a purpose-built facility on the same campus as the secondary phase.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of The John Wallis Church of England Academy as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Highly effective leadership expressly promotes a Christian and inclusive ethos which drives forward the academy's service to pupils and students and their families.
- The academy's Christian vision leads to a deep concern for the individual as a 'child of God'. This is expressed through exemplary pastoral care that impacts positively on both personal development and academic progress.
- Very good behaviour and mutually respectful relationships are clear expressions of the academy's Christian vision. This supports a calm and purposeful learning environment.
- The worship programme draws specifically on Christian beliefs and practices. It has a very positive impact on the strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils and students, irrespective of their faith or non-faith background.
- Religious education (RE) has a high profile and is treated as a core subject. Well-focused subject leadership results in an appropriately balanced curriculum and a very good range of activities. This leads to at least good and often very good progress being made across both the primary and secondary phases.

Areas to improve

- As a continuing expression of the academy's Christian and inclusive ethos, improve academic outcomes, ensuring that the gap between the more disadvantaged and their peers nationally continues to close.
- Extend the role of the RE, worship and ethos ambassadors in academy life so that their developing influence is embedded.

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

The academy's Christian and inclusive ethos is a clear driving force for its life and work. Its motto is, 'High Aspirations, High Expectations and High Standards'. This expresses very well its aim of enabling all to flourish as individual 'children of God', since, 'The glory of God is a human being fully alive' (St Irenaeus). The imagery of 'LIGHT' is embedded and used to express its Christian values of love, integrity, generosity, hope and tolerance. Pupils and students are able to explain how these values are lived out. As one Year 4 pupil said, 'Jesus showed these values and so too should we'. A sixth former reflected that the values impact positively on relationships and the 'family feel' of the academy. Its Christian ethos is expressed effectively through the calm, nurturing and aspirational learning environment which allows most to make at least good, and often better, progress from their various starting points. Whilst the majority make positive progress, academic attainment is at or below the national average. For the disadvantaged, attainment is less than that of their peers nationally. The academy is fully aware of this. It has worked compassionately and successfully since the time of the previous denominational inspection to raise academic standards further. Clear structures, based on effective monitoring of attainment and progress, are in place to continue to 'close the gap'. This includes a focus on addressing the significant barriers to learning outside of the academy which some experience, as well as establishing high quality teaching and appropriate learning interventions. This has resulted in nearly 200 students attending university, many the first in their family to do so, since the academy was founded in 2010. Attendance remains stubbornly just below the national average but shows significant improvement since the time of the previous denominational inspection. This is due, in no small part, to the very strong pastoral care in place to support those with attendance or behavioural issues. In turn, this exemplary pastoral care, is rightly seen as an expression of the academy's Christian foundation. SMSC development and the way that pupils and students respond is very good. Opportunities across the curriculum are fittingly taken to explore a range of issues of religious, spiritual and moral concern. Pupils and students are very well supported in taking responsibility for themselves and others. They recognise the importance of charitable giving as a way of showing the academy's Christian values, particularly of love and generosity. There is a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities to deepen pupils' and students' outlooks and to expand their horizons. An example of this is the way in which parents from a range of ethnic and religious backgrounds recently took a leadership role in a 'diversity day' in the primary phase. There is another such day planned for the summer term. RE makes a very strong contribution to helping the appreciation of difference and diversity, which includes a developing understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural, world-wide faith. Worship and RE contribute deeply to the academy's Christian ethos and values.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The daily worship programme is central to the academy's life and work. Its themes are very well developed to explore the LIGHT values which keeps them fresh and their importance reinforced for both pupils, students and staff. A well-focused RE policy and high quality planning successfully intertwines biblical teaching with Christian values. Consequently, the programme effectively supports the understanding and appreciation of Christian teaching about Jesus and the belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Christian festivals and key events locally, nationally and internationally are appropriately included and responded to. Accordingly, the relevance of worship to daily life and to the world today is well recognised. Through worship, pupils and students develop a deepening understanding of the church's year as they explore the biblical foundation and symbolism of festivals. Whilst being explicitly Christian, it is inclusive of the whole school community. Pupils and students have an age-appropriate and developing understanding of Anglican practices. This includes the lighting of a candle to represent Jesus 'who Christians believe is the light of the world', as a Year 6 pupil said. Prayer underpins academy life well. The Lord's Prayer is said regularly which reinforces an understanding of its significance for Christians. The academy prayer places its daily life in God's hands. Pupils, students and adults request prayer regularly, including some who would not recognise themselves as being 'religious'. This provides support in times of difficulty. Pupils in the primary phase are able and keen to share a spontaneous prayer with their peers based on the worship theme. Pupils and students are well involved and respectful during worship. Their leadership of worship

has increased since the time of the previous denominational inspection. From the beginning of this academic year, a group of students act as worship, RE and ethos ambassadors. They are developing a key role in planning, leading and evaluating the worship programme but this is not yet embedded or extended to the primary phase. The monitoring and evaluation of worship by senior leaders is regular and purposeful and leads to continued improvement. Governors take their oversight role seriously and support the worship programme appropriately. Pupils, students, parents and staff rightly appreciate that worship brings a sense of belonging and impacts positively on personal development, helping reflection on Christian beliefs and practices.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE has a high profile across the academy. Standards are broadly in line with, or above, other core subjects. However, the majority of pupils and students make good or better progress. The balance of the curriculum content between a focus on Christianity and on other world faiths is appropriate. A wide range of well-focused learning activities engages pupils and students so that they enjoy RE and find it both interesting and challenging. In the secondary phase, the new criteria for GCSE and A level has been well implemented. This means that most Year 10 students, for example, are able to address the requirements of the different styles of questions in the examination with confidence. Higher attaining students achieve very well in GCSE and make very good progress. However, those whose academic attainment is not as high make less progress. A new approach to the non-examination RE in the sixth form has been introduced from the beginning of this academic year. As part of the enrichment programme in the sixth form, all students take part in off-timetable RE days rather than in a weekly lesson. This was at the request of the students. It has been well received as providing opportunities to consider issues of religious, moral and ethical concern in greater depth over the course of a whole day. In the primary phase, an approach to teaching Christianity based on key concepts such as God, incarnation and resurrection has been introduced. It is based on a training and resource package called, 'Understanding Christianity' and covers Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. The concepts are revisited and extended across the age range. Understanding Christianity approaches are very well rooted across the primary phase but have not been embedded across Key Stage 3. There are clear plans in place to do this. Primary teachers and pupils have found the new approach refreshing and challenging. Consequently, pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity is blossoming. For example, pupils' recent responses to the Easter story and its significance based on a sound knowledge base, show a deep understanding. For example, in a Year 1 lesson observed, pupils could answer factual questions accurately but also apply their learning. One pupil, in response to a question about who Jesus is, said, 'Jesus is God's good idea... and also God's son'. In a Year 6 lesson observed, pupils tackled the story of the resurrected Jesus meeting with followers on the road to Emmaus. They discussed the meaning and significance of the biblical text with insight. Assessment procedures have been appropriately refined, in the light of alterations to examination criteria and changes to general assessment practice in the primary phase. Teachers mark work regularly and pupils and students are provided with opportunities to reflect on the marking so that they know how to extend or improve their work. Subject leadership is effectively shared across the primary and secondary phases, with the secondary subject leader acting as the overall co-ordinator. This approach works well and provides clear support for subject development. Monitoring and evaluation are firmly embedded through staff line management systems.

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

The very effective leadership of the principal is strongly supported by three vice principals, one of whom is the head of the primary phase, and by the assistant principals. Under his inspirational leadership the team has firmly established and embedded the academy's Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness. Its clear Christian vision is based on a theological understanding of the value of the individual created by God. This leads to and directs the academy's service to the pupils, students and their families. It encourages human flourishing as an outworking of the belief that God cares for all. The school's vision sees education as transformational, both for the individual and for the community. This vision is consistently articulated by leadership at all levels, including by governors. It closely directs developments. Staff are very well supported for working within the church school context which has led to some promotions of staff to other church schools. The academy is strongly committed to the professional development and wellbeing of staff. Governors are proud of their academy and the improvements that have been made since its inception. However, they are not complacent and strive effectively to support ongoing improvements. They are well

aware of, and contribute to, the academy's priorities and to its effective and accurate development planning. Governors ensure that statutory requirements for worship and RE are met. Leaders of these two fundamental areas of the academy's life are well supported. Likewise, the chaplaincy role is rightly recognised as central to the academy's vision, life and work. The full time chaplain is well established and well known across the academy and in the wider community. For example, he visits all Year 6 pupils and their families when they are given places in Year 7. He is closely involved with the exemplary pastoral work undertaken across the academy. Relationships with parents are very good. The majority rightly recognise the impact of the academy's Christian foundation on their children's behaviour and attitudes. Within the primary phase, parents are more often involved in events and in their children's learning than was the case in the early days of it becoming part of the academy. Links with local churches are effective and mutually supportive. This means, for example, that the diocesan synod is hosted periodically in the academy and that the chaplain is regularly welcomed to the deanery chapter meetings. The team rector is a member of governors and local clergy regularly support the worship programme. Diocesan support is well drawn upon through governance, attendance at courses and meetings and advisory support. Issues identified in the previous denominational inspection have been well addressed.

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