

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### St Paul's Church of England Academy

Hornbye Road, St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex, TN37 6RT	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Chichester</b>
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	1st August 2016
Name of multi-academy trust	Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust
Date of inspection	26 <sup>th</sup> April 2017
Date of last inspection	October 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary Academy (VC equivalent) - 143034
Headteacher	Richard White
Inspector's name and number	Pamela Draycott (161)

#### School context

This large primary academy, with nursery provision and an inclusion centre for those with particular special educational needs or disabilities, has a long history of Christian service to its community. It offers an extended school hours service both before and after the formal school day. The percentage for whom extra funding is received, due to social disadvantage, is above the national average. There is a growing percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language, particularly from Eastern Europe. The majority of pupils are White British. Most come from Christian family backgrounds with other faiths, especially Islam, represented.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Paul's Church of England Academy as a Church of England school are good

- There is a deep awareness of the importance and influence of the school's Christian values and their impact on academy life. These are securely underpinned by biblical teaching and are reflected well through the academy's leadership, the strong relationships and the very good behaviour of pupils.
- Based on its Christian foundation, pupils' wellbeing has a high priority and clearly influences their personal development. Likewise the professional development of staff is well supported through the academy and now through its recent membership of the diocesan multi-academy trust.
- The worship programme is of central importance and successfully promotes and celebrates the academy as an inclusive Christian community to the benefit of all its pupils and staff.
- The provision of opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is good resulting in positive responses from pupils.

#### Areas to improve

- Improve the worship programme by extending pupils' involvement in planning and leading whole school acts of worship held on the premises.
- Work to embed the benefits of belonging to the diocesan multi-academy trust whilst maintaining the individual character of the academy.

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

The academy's Christian and inclusive ethos is clearly expressed and supports pupils' development as it works towards them becoming, 'well-rounded citizens of the future'. It does this, in no small part, through its focused emphasis on its Christian values of love, respect, forgiveness, honesty, patience, service and thankfulness to God. These are evident across the academy's life through, for example, their approach to policies and the vocabulary that is used in day to day interactions. They also impact constructively on pupils' very good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Consequently, most pupils make good and some very good progress from their various starting points. However, there are some gaps in attainment and progress in existence, especially for pupils with special educational needs and those from disadvantaged backgrounds when compared with their peers. The academy is aware of this and has good strategies in place to address this well, including a more rigorous and effective system for monitoring pupil progress. This is beginning to be used to target learning and appropriate interventions, especially for pupils with particular behavioural or academic needs or those who are falling behind. As befits its Christian foundation, relationships across the academy are strong and mutually respectful. 'Our values teach us to be kind and helpful towards each other just like Jesus did' as a Year 5 pupil reflected. The academy's Christian values are appropriately linked with the Department for Education's (DfE's) British values. Pupils are well known and treated as individuals with varying gifts and talents which are rightly celebrated. Pupils' personal development and wellbeing have a high priority and are fittingly supported, for example, by good pastoral systems. These structures are caring and are a clear reflection of the academy's Christian foundation. Most pupils are happy in school and consequently attendance has improved and is now slightly above the national average. On those rare occasions where negative behaviour or poor attendance gets in the way of learning the academy deals fairly and compassionately with pupils and their families in order to bring about improvement. The academy's buildings and grounds are very well maintained and the academy uses its resources effectively. Appropriate displays enhance the positive learning climate. This reflects the respect that adults and pupils have for their environment and evidently impacts on pupils' appreciation of the academy's Christian ethos and values.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is appropriately catered for especially, for example, through personal, health and social education (PHSE), the worship programme and religious education (RE). Pupils respond well to the opportunities provided. RE, delivered in line with the locally agreed syllabus, appropriately focuses on developing knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other world faiths. It also encourages pupils to reflect on the impact and relevance of religion in the world today. Consequently, it explicitly supports SMSC development and the school's underpinning Christian ethos, encouraging pupils to appreciate difference and diversity. The academy's long-standing link with a school in Sierra Leone similarly supports this understanding. An approach to sharing Christian stories with pupils in a reflective and questioning way called 'Godly Play' is used appropriately and impacts positively on developing pupils' reflection and reasoning skills. As a Year 4 pupil said, 'RE is good because it helps you think about God and about how people should behave'.

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

The worship programme is central to the academy and makes a significantly positive contribution to its life as a community, sharing different ideas and beliefs together. Aspects of the academy's values as well as celebrations associated with the Christian year form the backbone of the programme. Appropriate use is made of biblical material. Consequently, pupils develop a good understanding of the importance of Jesus for Christians. However, their appreciation of the Christian understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit through the worship programme is less developed. The exception to this is in Year 6, where links with the RE curriculum enable pupils to explore this concept well, alongside differing beliefs about God. In keeping with its inclusive nature the academy closely recognises through the way that worship is conducted the variety of beliefs and practice represented within its community. For example, pupils and staff are invited rather than expected to join in with saying the 'Amen' at the end of prayer times. Many choose to do so but those who do not listen respectfully. Prayer is given a high priority and contributes significantly to the academy's underpinning Christian ethos. For example, pupils know the Lord's Prayer which is said regularly during worship. They are keen to write their own prayers knowing that it is, 'listening and talking to God' (Year 3) and that there are different types of prayer such as 'thanksgiving, being sorry and asking God for things'. A Year 6 reflected, 'I sometimes pray when I see bad things happening in the world like war. It helps me to know that my prayers help those who are suffering'. Prayer punctuates the school day. As well as praying in collective worship pupils pray at the end of the morning and before going home. This helps in the understanding of the importance of prayer for Christians and in pupils' own spiritual and religious journeys. The reflection areas in each classroom are appreciated by pupils. Each reflects the age and needs of pupils in that year group. As a Year 4 pupil reflected, 'It's good that we can put our thoughts and prayers in the reflection area. Prayer helps me feel like I've made a sort of fresh start.' Worship is carefully planned by the headteacher, the rector and the RE subject leader. Governors, staff and pupils evaluate individual acts of worship and their comments are taken on board to enhance future practice. This has resulted for example in pupils being more actively engaged in writing and sharing prayers during worship. The rector leads worship weekly and the programme in the academy is fittingly extended by worship in St Matthew's church at various times. This greatly supports the academy's Christian ethos through helping pupils to develop their understanding and appreciation of the cycle of the Christian year, as well as some Anglican aspects of worship practice. Parents are invited to these occasions in church with many taking the opportunity to join their children. This enhances the community and 'family feel' of the academy very well. Pupils and staff have positive attitudes towards the worship opportunities provided. An example of this is the fact that all teaching staff take part in leading worship regularly with their class. Pupils take responsibility for leading class worship and worship in church but their involvement in planning and leading the whole academy acts of worship held in the hall is less evident. Pupils enjoy worship and engage positively with it because they feel valued and 'find it interesting'. Many recognise its impact on them saying, for example, 'It helps you feel like you belong and it's interesting and calming. It gives us an opportunity to celebrate with each other and be thankful to God' (Year 6). Simple and yet effective displays in the hall celebrate key aspects of the RE curriculum and act as aids to worship.

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

Significant changes have occurred since the previous denominational inspection. The school has chosen to become an academy and part of the diocesan multi-academy trust. This was a positive decision made through the shared vision of governors and senior staff, after thorough and prayerful consideration. Its membership of this new 'family' of schools is already impacting positively in terms of, for example, support for leadership and management and the moderation of samples of pupils' work. The new pupil attainment and progress tracking system is being developed by the school and shared with others across the trust. However, there is a firm recognition of the need to expand and deepen the impact of belonging to the trust over the coming years. This is forming the bedrock of the academy's vision for future developments with firm plans in place to ensure continued improvement. The governing body is closely and strategically involved in the academy's life and is deeply committed to improving the academic outcomes for all pupils alongside continuing to support the personal wellbeing of pupils and the professional development of

staff. This is expressly recognised as an important aspect of the academy's Christian service to its community. Senior leaders and governors know the strengths and areas of development for the academy well. This is through thorough and accurate self-evaluation which leads to strong development planning. There is a rigorous staff appraisal system and challenging targets for pupils' progress are set alongside appropriate support and training, including for working and leading in the church school sector. In 2016 Year 6 attainment and progress was not as good as it should have been. The academy has responded positively by ensuring greater consistency in teaching and learning across the year groups and by targeting interventions to improve outcomes further. Governors have secured good leadership and management for RE and for the co-ordination of worship. The RE subject leader is appropriately supporting the introduction of new RE materials based on teaching Christianity alongside the locally agreed syllabus. This material has begun to impact positively on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. There is now more emphasis when teaching Christianity on addressing key concepts, ideas and beliefs and some elements of deeper questioning already developing. Both RE and worship are appropriately resourced and statutory requirements are met. A helpful partnership between the academy and the church is in evidence. An example of this includes the rector providing practical and spiritual support to the academy, including being involved in its governance. Likewise, the school has involvement in some church services and activities. This provides a clear expression of the shared mission of service to the community. Parents are appropriately engaged in the academy's life and are kept well informed of their children's progress. Any issues of concern are dealt with quickly and supportively. Overall, parents are supportive of the academy's expressed and inclusive Christian ethos as evidenced, for example, through responses to the regular parental questionnaire and high attendance at school events in church.

SIAMS report (April 2017) St Paul's CE Academy, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN37 6RT