

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Giles Church of England Academy

Skinner Lane, Pontefract, WF8 1HG	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Leeds
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	1 September 2013
Date of inspection	6 December 2016
Date of last inspection	20 June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 140453
Headteacher	Mary Gibbons
Inspector's name and number	Lynne Gillions 662

School context

Since the last inspection, the school converted to academy status in September 2013 under the diocese. There have been significant changes to staffing since the conversion. The school is expanding and currently has 290 pupils on roll. New buildings have been added to cope with the increased demand for places in the locality. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportions of pupils who are disabled or with special educational needs or in receipt of pupil premium funding are similar to the national averages.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Giles Church of England Academy as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The commitment and passion of the headteacher, ably supported by governors, staff, the diocese and the church, to embed Christian values such as respect, forgiveness, hope, peace, compassion and trust has led to a culture of improvement where achievement is now broadly in line with national averages and behaviour is excellent.
- The school environment celebrates and promotes the Christian ethos so that it is explicit and all stakeholders recognise that it is the beating heart of school life.
- The pastoral support available to pupils and their families is exemplary and successfully breaks down barriers to learning and enables children to flourish.
- Relationships are strong and supportive and this results in a positive approach which supports both children and staff in their development and creates a culture of teamwork throughout the school.
- Learning is enjoyable and this motivates and challenges children to achieve their best.

Areas to improve

- Provide more opportunities for children to broaden their vocabulary and build their confidence so that they can express themselves precisely and speak more deeply about spiritual matters.
- In religious education (RE), encourage children to take more ownership of their learning and respond to teaching in ways which are diverse, creative and original.
- Build on the current excellent practice demonstrated in the Collective Worship Group so that it is shared more widely and more pupils become involved in planning and leading collective worship.

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

St Giles is a school which confidently and explicitly promotes Christian values to the whole community. Biblical quotes are inscribed on walls throughout the building accentuating the strong Christian foundation. Specific values such as hope, peace, respect, compassion and trust have been identified and these are also displayed and influence all aspects of school life. All stakeholders speak of the effect they have on achievement, behaviour, pupil welfare and relationships. They have been the cornerstone on which school improvement has been built. This is a school which has been transformed from an under-achieving school to one where results are broadly in line with national averages and where there is a culture which encourages learning. Children put these values into practice and they are actively demonstrated by all members of the school community. Indeed, the school is an exemplar of outstanding practice in this area.

Behaviour in school is excellent. Children are able to sort out problems for themselves and they understand that forgiveness and respect are important when resolving conflicts. They know that they can approach staff with any difficulties. Exemplary support is offered to pupils and families through the safeguarding and pastoral support manager and all stakeholders recognise the contribution she makes to removing barriers to learning and enabling children to flourish. She also works in partnership with the church to provide meals for families in need during the holidays.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children is strong and the school's Christian values have a significant impact in these areas. Where appropriate, spirituality is explored throughout the curriculum and there are areas of reflection throughout school. Children know the importance of making good choices and they are well motivated to do the right thing. Their social development is enhanced by the excellent, supportive relationships throughout the school community and the opportunities they are given to work co-operatively. They can take on responsibilities as monitors or buddies or on the Junior Leadership Team. Children understand the importance of learning about other faiths and cultures and have explored them through a half termly focus on the arts. Their link with a school in Tanzania is giving them a good understanding of a community beyond their own.

Children feel safe and parents comment on how much their children enjoy school. Children describe learning as fun but not pressurised. These outcomes arise from a culture where Christian values are central to all areas of school life and have been pivotal in the school's overall transformation.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is highly valued and pupils and staff speak of the contribution it makes to school and to them personally. Its influence can be seen in all aspects of school life. There is a half termly focus on a Christian value and this is supported by Bible stories and teaching and other materials. This emphasis is enabling children to give practical expression to the values in their daily lives. Children enjoy worship and behave appropriately by singing heartily, praying and reflecting thoughtfully and responding enthusiastically. Children understand the importance of Jesus in the Christian faith and they have a developing understanding of the Christian view of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Aspects of Anglicanism are incorporated into worship. A liturgy welcoming the new day was described by one child as an opportunity to turn himself around if he felt sad by saying, 'We will rejoice and be glad in it.' The use of liturgical colours is giving children an understanding of the rhythm of the church year. Children know that Advent is a preparation for Christmas and that Lent, leading up to Easter, is associated with the time Jesus spent in the desert. The local clergy regularly lead collective worship and special celebrations are held in church. Parents are very appreciative of this link with the church.

An example of outstanding practice is the response board where children, on leaving collective worship, can write their personal responses to what they have heard. This is used regularly and reflective areas in classrooms could be further developed to allow for more personal responses from the children. Children can talk about the impact that collective worship has on their lives and how they try to demonstrate Christian values. They can link Bible stories such as The Good Samaritan to the way they should treat others. The impact of collective worship is clearly evidenced by their actions but they would benefit from developing a broader spiritual vocabulary so that they can express their thoughts more clearly.

Collective worship also has an outward focus and children respond by supporting a range of charities and by, for example, singing at a local care home.

Prayer is an integral part of school life. Prayer boxes are used throughout school for children's own prayers and these are sometimes used in collective worship. Prayers are also written in lessons and these may have a specific focus like the natural world or for people in need, such as those in their link school in Tanzania.

Pupils in Key Stage 2 have opportunities to lead collective worship, particularly class-based worship. There is a Collective Worship Group for pupils and they are exploring their own spirituality through a range of creative

experiences. They are now well placed to take a role in leading collective worship thereby further increasing pupil involvement.

Collective worship is well planned and involves members of the ethos committee which comprises staff and governors. All teachers lead worship along with local clergy and some visitors. It would be helpful to include more people from other denominations to widen children's understanding of different expressions of Christianity. Monitoring is undertaken by pupils, staff and the foundation governor and outcomes have led to changes in practice and the purchase of more resources to keep children fully engaged in worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards of attainment in RE are mostly in line, with some above national expectations. Children enjoy RE and are learning well. There is evidence of some outstanding teaching as exemplified in Year 1 when children explored the Christmas story as though on a story train. This activity enabled children to engage with the story in preparation for retelling it themselves. Teachers are supportive and encouraging to children. However, pupils would benefit from greater differentiation in lessons and opportunities to respond with more creativity and originality when presenting the outcomes of their work. Marking is well focused and enables children to make progress. Good assessment procedures are in place but these need time to become embedded for accurate information on progress to be available.

Children have a growing understanding of Christianity and other major faiths. By Year 6, they are able to work collaboratively to deliver presentations on different faiths and compare similarities and differences. Children understand the importance of learning about other faiths. They would benefit from visits to different places of worship including those of different Christian denominations.

In lessons, links are made to the school's Christian values and this is making a significant contribution to children's commitment to these values. Whilst children can make these links and apply them in their lives, they have difficulty in expressing deeper views. RE is not yet outstanding because pupils need more opportunities to develop their vocabulary and explore and express spiritual ideas.

The new subject leader is an inspirational teacher and is sharing good practice and monitoring the subject appropriately. She has an action plan in place which should lead to further improvement.

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

The school is led by an outstanding headteacher who has forged together a team of staff and governors who are totally committed to the school's vision of 'growing together'. Leaders have ensured that Christian values are threaded through all areas of life. They have provided an environment which celebrates the school's Christian principles and these values are recognised throughout the school community. Under the guidance of the headteacher, with support from the diocese and governors, the school has been on a journey of improvement which has transformed outcomes for their children. Along with dedicated staff, their combined drive is ensuring that the school is on an upward trajectory of improvement. Children now achieve standards in line with national expectations. All leaders acknowledge that the school's Christian values have made a vital contribution to this process.

As well as academic progress, the implementation of Christian values has had a profound effect on behaviour and relationships. The sense of teamwork in the school is palpable and staff speak of the support they receive from each other and from the leadership team. They share expertise and develop less experienced members of staff. Leaders and staff also receive appropriate training. The RE subject leader, for example, is undergoing training on new resources which are set to be implemented in school.

Governors are regularly in school and have a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for development. They believe an important part of their role is to demonstrate the love of Christ as they seek to serve the school. They are keen to encourage the exemplary care which children and families receive as an outward expression of the school's Christian values.

The school benefits from excellent links with the diocese which has supported the school's move to academy status. There are also supportive links with other church schools and staff from St Giles also support teachers in other schools. The partnership with the church is a vital element in promoting the school's Christian vision. Parents are very supportive of the school which constantly seeks to involve them and has put in place a new electronic communications system to ensure parents are kept well informed.

Overall, leaders are successful in securing an effective education for the pupils in their care and providing an outstanding environment where children are nurtured and encouraged. Consequently, Christian values are embedded into the lives of the children and they reflect them back into the school community.