

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

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| Acton Church of England Primary Academy | |
| Chester Road, Acton, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 8LG | |
| Current SIAMS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Diocese | Chester |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Date of academy conversion | 1 September 2016 |
| Name of multi-academy trust | Real Life Learning Multi-Academy Trust |
| Date of inspection | 19 January 2017 |
| Date of last inspection | 22 February 2012 |
| Type of school and unique reference number | VC 143159 |
| Executive Headteacher | Beverley Dolman |
| Inspector's name and number | Anne B. Woodcock 445 |

School context

The school serves a predominantly affluent, rural area near Nantwich in East Cheshire. Pupil numbers have increased substantially since the last inspection. The vast majority of the 173 pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding is well below average. The school supports a lower than average proportion of pupils with additional needs. The school converted to academy status in September 2016, following a period of collaboration and federation with Calveley, a neighbouring community school. It is the lead school within the Real Life Learning Multi-academy Trust (MAT). The executive headteacher works three days per week in school. The deputy headteacher has a 50% class teaching commitment.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Acton Primary Academy as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The outstanding Christian leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, dedicated staff and skilled governors, directs and inspires all aspects of school improvement.
- Well-established, explicitly expressed Christian values impact strongly on pupils' exemplary behaviour and very positive attitudes to life and learning.
- Pupils' very good spiritual and personal development is promoted through excellent provision for the creative arts and sports.

Areas to improve

- Provide regular opportunities for pupils to plan and lead collective worship independently to extend their understanding of the nature and purpose of worship.
- Extend pupils' understanding of diverse cultures and faiths by providing more regular first-hand experiences through visits and visitors.

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

Extremely well-established Christian values are clearly expressed and understood by all members of the school family. 'Jesus gave us our Christian values and we use them to give us a firm foundation and help others,' stated a Year 5 pupil. They make clear links between Jesus' teaching and their own actions. As a result, children are compassionate and kind. They show genuine Christian respect for the needs of others. Their behaviour is exemplary. Children thoroughly enjoy all that the school offers. They are confident, eager and reflective learners who strive to achieve the high expectations set for them. High quality teaching and the innovative, creative curriculum meet the needs of all learners extremely well. As a result, standards of attainment are consistently high and pupils make good, sometimes rapid progress from their starting points. Those with additional needs are very well-supported, reflecting the school's aims and focus on 'developing learners and equipping them with the skills to flourish and succeed'. Parents are confident that their children thrive in school. 'Our children come home buzzing with excitement about the topics which motivate and inspire them. They are happy and eager to be in school,' commented one parent.

Children's emotional well-being, spiritual and personal development is extremely well-promoted. Creative arts and sports feature strongly across the curriculum. Children express their ideas honestly within an atmosphere of trust and acceptance. 'We can let our imagination go in art,' explained a Year 6 pupil. The exceptionally high quality of their work and depth of personal response is reflected in dramatic displays across the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is very good because it is well-promoted across the curriculum. For example, the Queen's birthday topic explored the cultures and faiths of Commonwealth countries and developed children's understanding of British values such as democracy.

Religious education (RE) makes a substantial contribution to the school's Christian character. It supports and enhances pupils' SMSC development extremely well. They explore diverse faiths and beliefs through enquiry-based approaches which excite and inspire reflective thinking. 'RE helps us to respect what others think and express our opinions. Often, there is no right or wrong answer, which is good!' explained a Year 6 pupil. However, although they visit the church regularly, their first-hand experience of different places of worship and diverse faiths and cultures is limited. As a result, their ability to understand and make links between beliefs and practices is not fully developed.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is a valued and integral feature of the daily life of the school. The vast majority of children say that they enjoy worship, especially when they help to act out a story or read. Worship is very well-planned and recorded. It is based on Christian values and rooted in Bible teaching. Other themes, such as global events and personal and social education, are appropriately linked to the term's Christian value focus. As a result, children have a thorough knowledge of Bible stories and of the life and teaching of Jesus. Older pupils make very clear links between parables, Christian values and their own actions and behaviour. 'Jesus told stories like the Lost Sheep to show how God loves us and wants us to follow his ways,' explained a Year 5 pupil. They talk confidently about events in Jesus' life celebrated by Christians at Christmas and Easter.

Young children understand God as a father, shepherd and creator of the world. Older children have a well-developed understanding of the Christian concept of the Trinity. 'One God in three forms, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,' explained a Year 6 pupil. 'It is a bit like my plait is three separate strands making one strong braid.' Pupils are familiar with some traditional Anglican practices, such as the use of greetings and responses. They visit the church regularly at festival and other times and benefit from weekly worship led by the vicar and a very supportive Methodist minister. Children lead the worship in church. Parents value and attend these services in considerable numbers. However, pupils have limited opportunities to plan and lead acts of worship independently at other times, so they do not regularly demonstrate their understanding of the nature and purpose of Christian worship.

Prayer and reflection are key features of worship. Children know the Lord's Prayer. They write their own prayers, some of which are used in the services in church. Prayers are said at different times of the day. Children use the classroom reflection areas, contributing their prayers and ideas. For example, staff, governors and pupils have contributed their hopes, reflecting on the term's Christian value of hope. The monitoring and evaluation of collective worship is highly effective. Governors monitor the planning and delivery of worship through frequent visits and meetings with staff and pupils. Pupils and staff provide regular feedback which informs future planning and provides insight as to the impact worship has on their attitudes and beliefs. As a result, collective worship continues

to evolve and inspire.

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

The school is exceptionally well-led by the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher who are ably supported by dedicated staff and a pro-active, skilled governing body. Christian values inform and direct all aspects of school improvement. They form the basis for the extremely positive relationships which nurture and support staff, pupils and their families. The collaboration with Calveley, a small neighbouring community school, which resulted in the academy conversion in September 2016, has brought about some changes and many benefits. The process has been extremely well-managed by leaders who have ensured that all members of the school family have been involved. Governors, now known as directors, have ensured that the school's distinctive Christian character continues to be strong and effective within the MAT. Substantial benefits to staff and governor training and curriculum development support strategic planning and career development. This has a very positive impact on the middle and senior leadership of the school.

Governors have secured very high quality leadership for RE and collective worship. Both meet statutory requirements. They support and resource the development of both subjects to ensure continued improvement. Issues from the previous inspection have been fully addressed and improvements continue to be monitored. Governors and leaders ensure that the needs of all pupils are met through the effective use of human and financial resources. This is exemplified by the provision of emotional intelligence support for groups of Year 5 and 6 pupils.

Robust church school self-evaluation processes result in church school issues being prioritised within whole school improvement planning. Governors visit regularly, meeting with staff and pupils through events such as the recent 'directors day'. They support and challenge the work of the school and have a thorough knowledge of pupil progress and achievement. Links with the local church and the Methodist church are strong. Partnerships with the diocese, local authority and Nantwich Educational Partnership are used effectively. For example, as a result of the RE leader's involvement in the development of the new agreed syllabus, the school was able to trial units of work and develop a new assessment system. Leaders have identified ways to further support children's understanding of diversity and wider world issues through engagement with the global learning programme. The school is therefore very well-placed to move confidently into the future as the lead school within the MAT.

SIAMS report January 2017, Acton Church of England Primary Academy, Acton, Nantwich, Cheshire CW3 8LG