

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Saint Cecilia's Church of England School

Sutherland Grove, London SW18 5JR

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Southwark
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	1 March 2015
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A
Date/s of inspection	22 & 23 November 2016
Date of last inspection	November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy 141808
Headteacher	Niall Gallagher
Inspector's name and number	Lyn Field 151

School context

The school serves a diverse community with the majority of students from the London Borough of Wandsworth,

It is heavily oversubscribed and two thirds of places are currently reserved for children who meet the foundation criteria. 10% are designated as specialist music places. There is a high proportion of minority ethnic groups with White British students as just over half the school population. The proportions of disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs and who speak English as an additional language are all higher than the average in schools nationally. The school is part of the Wandle Teaching School Alliance.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Saint Cecilia's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The courageous and inspiring leadership of the headteacher has instilled a deeply Christian understanding of all aspects of the school's work.
- This is a forward thinking school where leaders and governors are ready to engage with the national agenda for education whilst remaining true to the school's Christian vision.
- Students grow into mature and compassionate young people who are confident to discuss issues of faith and spirituality and to challenge all forms of injustice.
- The chaplain plays a key role in ensuring there is cohesion between the school's Christian vision and how it is implemented through worship, prayer, pastoral care and the work of the Bethany Centre.
- Succession planning to sustain the high quality of senior leadership is effective.

Areas to improve

- Develop the work of the of the faith committee so that it plays a key role in ensuring the academy's strength as a church school remains secure and influential in a changing education landscape.

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

Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds flourish as a direct result of the school's deeply embedded Christian character. The truly exceptional quality of care for staff and pupils is widely recognised to be a direct result of biblical inspiration from Ephesians 4:2: 'Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.' The Bethany Centre demonstrates this in full measure. It provides a vast range of services closely linked with chaplaincy including restorative justice sessions, parenting groups and bereavement support through the Unicorn Club so that all pupils, not just the more vulnerable, are in the best position to tackle academic and personal challenges. Consequently, attendance is improving and above average. The achievement of pupils in a wide range of subjects including English, maths and RS demonstrates consistently good progress that is above that of similar pupils nationally and has been so over time. Pupils in vulnerable groups make strong progress across all key stages. Sixth formers do well and are fully prepared for the next stage of their education with most moving on to the university, college or career of their choice.

Biblical teaching about the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) provides a helpful lens for pupils through which they explore Christian values. Hospitality, although not part of the list, is at the heart of the school's inclusion agenda. Pupils of all cultures, faiths and backgrounds are warmly embraced by the school and new students settle quickly. Relationships are exemplary because diversity and difference are seen as things to be valued and accepted. Stigma and prejudice have no part to play in the school and are vehemently rejected by pupils. The rare incidents that do occur are addressed through support systems that completely align with the Christian teaching in the school.

The Christian ethos anchors the curriculum because all departments now give prominence to the spiritual and moral dimension of the subjects they teach. Pupils now draw parallels, for example, between topics they have covered in RS with projects in drama, science or textiles and it shows how the work of all subjects is having a cumulative effect on pupils' spirituality. This work has been led by RS staff in response to a development point from the previous inspection and has been highly successful. The RS specific skills of reflection, analysis and disagreeing respectfully are transferrable to all subjects. The real impact, however, is demonstrated in the comments of sixth form students who recount a whole series of instances where their studies have unlocked their inner sense of justice and challenged their assumptions. This has instilled in them a deep commitment to charity work and volunteering. Staff spot their potential as leaders and, consequently, they have a strong sense of self-belief that they can be courageous advocates of social justice. Major trips in the UK and beyond are life changing for many students. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is impressive and compelling.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

A rich experience of prayer and worship is on offer to all members of the school community and is genuinely valued by all staff and pupils. It has been refined over time to become what sixth form students rightly see as their entitlement in education and leaves a powerful and lasting impression on their spirituality as they move into adulthood. Although many pupils have grown up in Christian families, worship and RS still open their eyes to new possibilities without undermining the faith with which they have grown up. Communion in the Community is an excellent arrangement where all students attend a service of Eucharist in a rotation of different churches. It increases pupils' understanding of the breadth of Anglican tradition and challenges any stereotyping in this respect.

The prayer life of the school is exceptionally strong and shows the deeply Christian nature of the school. An impressive structure of regular prayer activities is in place that defines the shape of the school day and is essential to the wellbeing of the whole community. Every school day begins with the headteacher and chaplain praying together. All meetings begin with prayer and the day ends with prayer in all classrooms. Pupils therefore observe at first hand how Christians make use of the Grace and understand God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This simple act of sending every child out with prayer demonstrates how the Christian character of the school is thought through in every detail. It extends to a parent prayer group and a group that meets at the vicar's home so that the school is regularly held in prayer by the wider community.

Much of the planning and development of worship is skilfully masterminded by the chaplain. It is always distinctively Christian but delivered by staff and pupils in a way that invites everyone, whatever their faith position, to engage with the themes and use the time for their own personal reflection. The response to this is hugely positive and results in an unusually high level of interaction. Pupils find the material thought-provoking so say 'it doesn't go in one ear and out the other.' All staff play an active role in leading mentor groups which means they all take some responsibility for the spiritual life of the community. The chaplain's regular training for all staff in leading worship sets clear expectations and builds confidence. This is particularly important for staff

who do not profess a Christian faith but who observe the deep spiritual impact and become strong advocates of mentor group worship. Mentor groups are an efficient means of gathering feedback to inform changes.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The team of three specialist teachers maximise their individual expertise to produce high quality materials that challenge pupils' thinking. There is an excitement about this team that transfers to pupils in all year groups. The staff have a clear vision for exactly what they want pupils to gain from the subject and this influences the way they make decisions about the curriculum even though the school's policy for religious education lacks the same clarity.

The Year 7 curriculum, with its first hand experience of a retreat, completely wins over pupils to the subject and helps to even out the variation in pupils' previous experience of RS. The subject leader is very well informed about developments nationally so the Key Stage 3 schemes already provide the basis for the new GCSE course. All pupils take RS as an examination subject and support for this is unanimous because they see the subject as essential for living and working alongside people of different faiths and cultures.

This team have achieved a rapid recovery from the dip in progress in 2016, although standards were still broadly in line with national results. This dip was the result of lengthy and unexpected staff absence. Excellent decisions at a senior level and close monitoring by governors meant that the current team was back in place before the end of the last academic year and recruitment to A level courses was not only unaffected but higher than previously. The department retains the majority of students into the second year of the sixth form. Students are highly motivated and some look to study the subject at university.

The quality of teaching is consistently good and often outstanding because teachers are relentless in their drive to improve. At the moment they are setting themselves very ambitious targets because they are determined that the department catches up with developments that were missed in the previous year. Pupils are also keen to improve and readily adopt any new systems because they trust their teachers and relationships are excellent. Tracking indicates that results in 2017 at both GCSE and A level will once again be well above national. RS is genuinely treated as a core subject and has been granted additional 'drop-down' days. Initially this was to allow teachers to revisit some topics from the previous year but it is characteristic of this team that they are planning something far more ambitious to challenge and inspire pupils.

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

The work of the school is unashamedly driven by biblical teaching. This has become deeply embedded in the school because of the headteacher's clear and uncompromising commitment to the Christian faith. It is expressed in the overarching statement 'Glorifying God through outstanding and enjoyable education' (drawn from Romans 15:6). Significantly, a series of biblical quotations develop this in greater depth and explain exactly how unique features of the school are directly shaped by the school's Christian mission. 'Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!' (Amos 5:24), for example, accurately describes how the school prepares students to make a difference in society. There is, therefore, a very coherent approach to Christian leadership in which the role of chaplain is a vital link. It is crystal clear to all members of the wider community what defines the school. RS and collective worship are given a very high profile through funding, timetabling and recruitment. Statutory requirements are fully met and they make a major contribution to sustaining the Christian character of the school. The excellent leadership of the RS department over time means the school delivers the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for RE.

The senior leadership team is highly effective because it operates with equal attention to detail and to the bigger picture of the school's impact. The school 'grows its own leaders' through finely tuned professional development and the exceptional pastoral care that is modelled by senior leaders. As a result, staff stay. Leaders recognise the risk of becoming an insular organisation and overcome this by forming partnerships to extend the experience of leaders. The school has a generous yet humble spirit and partnerships with the Diocese and local churches are mutually beneficial and enriching. Governors willingly 'lend' staff to support schools in difficulty but leaders also seek advice so that practice is the best it can be.

The process of self-evaluation is rigorous and insightful in bringing about improvement. The headteacher has created a culture of self-reflection that exists at many levels. 'Trios' of teachers, for example, are currently working to devise innovative classroom strategies that work across all subjects. The school continues to evolve and each year, a new biblical text is used to renew the focus on the Christian vision.

Strategic thinking is built into the regular work of senior staff and governors. They constantly keep an eye on the horizon and the topic of how the school can best achieve its Christian mission regularly figures in their meetings. The school has already consulted on changes to the admissions policy so that this is more closely aligned with the school's clear commitment to serve its local community. Governors have reviewed their committee

structure and have set up a faith committee with the express purpose of ensuring that the Christian vision remains at the core of the school's development in the future. This is a wise decision because it recognises the importance of having a specific structure and systems in place to hold the school to account as the bigger picture of education changes.

SIAMS report November 2016 Saint Cecilia's CofE School London SW18 5JR