



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### **Saint Andrew's Academy**

Sand Street,  
Soham,  
Ely,  
CB7 5AA

**Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: Ely**

Local authority: Cambridgeshire

Dates of inspection: 28 April 2015

Date of last inspection: 16 June 2010

School's unique reference number: 110828

Headteacher: Richard Liddington

Inspector's name and number: Stephen Green 809

### **School context**

This large primary school recently converted to Academy status as part of the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust. The headteacher and vicar have both been in post for over ten years, but otherwise there has been a high turnover of staff. Pupil numbers are rising steadily, with a large number of the new arrivals having Special Educational Needs (SEN) or English as an Additional Language (EAL). This has had an impact upon the drive to improve whole-school attainment. The OFSTED inspection of June 2013 categorised the school as requiring improvement, and much of the school's focus since then has been to raise standards of teaching and achievement.

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

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent.
- The leadership of collective worship, which heavily involves pupils as well as staff, clergy and visitors from other Christian traditions, provides participants with a rich and stimulating range of worship activities and a strong sense of ownership.
- The dedication, commitment and expertise of the headteacher and his senior leadership team are appreciated by pupils, parents and governors. Their Christian vision for the school is very evident and widely supported.

### **Areas to improve**

- To improve leaders' understanding of pupil progress by extending the system being developed for monitoring assessment in other subjects to include religious education (RE).
- To further develop pupils' confidence and worship by extending the use of individual prayer and reflection.
- To improve the knowledge and understanding of the newly appointed RE co-ordinator by arranging appropriate external support and training.

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

The school's Christian faith is obvious to all visitors and pupils as a result of displays, its website and the school prospectus. Pupils worked with the PCC to design and make banners for the hall. These show Biblical scenes and help to make the hall a more distinctive setting for collective worship. Distinctively Christian values permeate most aspects of school life and have a very real impact upon the personal development and wellbeing of the pupils. This is particularly true with underachieving pupils and those from vulnerable groups. Christian values have led to a culture where excellent behaviour and mutual support is the norm, where pupils respect each other and respect the opinions of others. The value being focussed upon at the time of the inspection was nurturing, which the school interprets as caring based upon the teaching of Jesus. Examples were seen of this being linked into work across the curriculum, as well as in RE and collective worship. Parents were well aware of the current focus thanks to newsletters and discussion with their children. The Christian character of the school can be seen in the caring attitudes of staff towards pupils, in the care the school provides for those needing a little extra support, and in the way pupils interact with each other. The strong commitment of staff to support underachieving pupils reflects both their professionalism and their Christian commitment. The school's reputation for supporting pupils with additional needs, and its reputation for excellent pastoral support have drawn many new children with additional needs to the school which reflects well on the school's Christian values and commitment to inclusion. The school is making effective use of the additional funding which vulnerable groups bring to fund work with individuals and small groups throughout the school. Although the school has put in place several measures to raise overall academic achievement, achievement and progress data still compare unfavourably with similar schools nationally. The standard of teaching, which was deemed to be requiring improvement by OSTED in 2013, is being addressed through staff-to-staff mentoring and in-class support from a director of teaching and learning. In addition, learning mentors provide in-class support for pupils. This determination to take every possible opportunity to improve underperforming teachers reflects the school's Christian beliefs. Pupils have a very good knowledge of other faiths and of other traditions and denominations within the Christian faith, which makes a major contribution towards the respect pupils have for those who either have different beliefs or come from different cultures and backgrounds to themselves. RE and CW are both used to reinforce the school's Christian values, and weekly 'thunking' sessions allow classes to explore the nature of them in circle time discussions. The themes for these are set by the headteacher as co-ordinator for CW, and are very wide ranging. Pupils regularly visit the church and cathedral, and have a good understanding of the Holy Trinity and Christian worship. They are invited to participate in a Eucharist service regularly, and the vicar uses this as a teaching opportunity, explaining the significance and symbolism of parts of this as he goes along. Very few parents ask for their children not to participate, but their wishes are respected. Parents are very involved in the life of the school, and parent assemblies are held regularly. These have become so popular that the school has to now split them into separate key stages in order to fit everyone in.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective worship (CW) is of a very high standard. Pupils have a significant role in planning and leading worship, with groups of older pupils planning weekly acts of worship and every class preparing annual class assemblies. Pupils who lead worship prepare it together using a useful proforma designed to ensure that all the key elements of good worship are present, and that it involves a variety of drama, readings and involvement by other participants. Parents, governors and pupils all said how much they enjoy these sessions, and they do much to develop pupils' confidence. Pupils, staff and governors all have an active voice in monitoring CW, and there is evidence that many of their reflections have been valued and acted upon. Worship is used as the primary method of developing the school's Christian values. These

were based upon the Values for Life scheme until 2014, but were then reviewed and personalised to the school. The values the school encourages are distinctively Christian and are listed clearly in the school's foyer, on its website and in its prospectus. Pupils and parents were well aware of both the current value being focussed upon and those from recent terms. There is much evidence to demonstrate that the values have a strong effect on relationships and attitudes within school. Parents spoke of the values changing pupils' lives beyond school, and were keen to praise RE and CW for deepening pupils' understanding of Christianity and Christian traditions and festivals. All the parents interviewed agreed that CW is having a strong and positive impact upon the lives of their children. They were particularly impressed with pupils' understanding of the deeper meanings of Christmas and Easter. The programme of CW has an appropriate basis upon Biblical material and the life of Jesus Christ. Pupils sing a variety of modern hymns enthusiastically, and are keen to offer answers and opinions when invited to. There are regular opportunities for participants to say prayers together, both in worship and the rest of the school day. However, the school recognises that there are fewer opportunities planned for pupils to reflect or pray individually. The vicar has a strong influence in the school, being a member of the governing body, leading worship once a week, running extra-curricular activities during Golden Time, and playing the piano for productions.

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

School leaders readily articulate an explicit Christian vision that has a very real impact upon relationships, wellbeing and behaviour in the school. School improvement is led by the headteacher and has the support of his senior leadership team. It is based upon accurate self-evaluation by the headteacher, which was subsequently circulated to allow parents, staff and governors to have an input. Many strategies have been put in place to bring about the improvements in teaching and standards of achievement required by OFSTED but the effectiveness of these cannot yet be shown through available data. The school has recently extended its senior leadership team to include a director of teaching and learning who works with teachers to raise the standard of teaching within the school. CW is led by the headteacher, ensuring it has a high profile in the school. He has recently delegated the leadership of RE to another member of staff. She has prepared action plans, controls a subject budget, and co-ordinates monitoring within it, which are an important part of her professional development. However, as she is new to the role of subject leadership, the school recognises the need to supplement this with external training when the opportunity arises. She has already identified the need to develop a system of assessment and recording in order to accurately monitor pupils' performances, and supports colleagues as they deliver RE lessons. There is a very close relationship with both the local church and the wider diocese. The headteacher has had SIAMS training and opportunities have been made for staff to develop middle leadership skills. Pupils attend both the local church and the cathedral in Ely regularly. Parents spoke enthusiastically of the approachability of both the headteacher and the vicar, and said that this reflected their Christian commitment. All the development points from the last SIAMS inspection have been addressed effectively and arrangements for RE and CW satisfy statutory requirements. School governors were involved in the recent development of core Christian values, and regularly monitor aspects of the curriculum and CW. Although governors have some involvement in SIAMS self-evaluation and school improvement, this could be developed, especially with the RE co-ordinator. This judgement is not outstanding because the measures put in place to improve teaching and achievement have not yet made an impact, and because the inexperienced RE co-ordinator has not yet had the training she needs or the time in post to make a significant impact. Although there is some evidence to show shared strategic leadership around Christian distinctiveness (e.g. joint work to review the school's values and mentoring teachers), too much still revolves around the headteacher which has implications for succession planning and sustainability.

