

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Nicholas Church of England Primary Academy

Fairfield Road, New Romney, Kent, TN28 8BP

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Canterbury
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Date of academy conversion	June 2016
Name of multi-academy trust	The Aquila Trust
Date/s of inspection	10 July 2018
Date of last inspection	February 2016
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy (voluntary controlled equivalent) - 142814
Headteacher	Christopher Dale
Inspector's name and number	Pamela Draycott - 161

School context

This larger than average primary academy serves pupils from Reception through to Year 6. Its pupils are mainly of White British heritage. The percentage for whom extra funding is received due to social or economic disadvantage is above the national average. The percentage with some sort of special educational need or disability (SEND) is around average. More pupils than is usual come to or leave the academy at times other than is usual, reflecting mobility in the local community. There are more girls than boys across the academy. There are close links with the parish church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Nicholas Primary Academy as a Church of England school are good

- The leadership of the headteacher and the academy's membership of the Aquila Trust are positively influencing the building of a cohesive staff team following an extended period of change and instability.
- Reflecting the academy's strengthened Christian vision and values, academic standards are on an upward trend, as is attendance.
- The behaviour of pupils has improved significantly and the quality of relationships and sense of community reflects the academy's Christian values in action across its daily life.
- The links with the parish church are strong and mutually supportive.

Areas to improve

- To reflect the school's Christian underpinning, ensure academic standards are consistently at least at national averages.
- Consolidate the role of the recently formed parents' council in developing deep links between home and school to the benefit of learning.
- Address spiritual development opportunities across the curriculum to increase pupils' opportunities for reflecting on deep questions and aid them on their spiritual journey.

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

St Nicholas is a warm, welcoming and outward looking primary academy where everyone is valued as a, 'unique child of God'. Its values of ambition, community, friendship, perseverance, respect and trust are appropriately linked to biblical teaching and well known across the academy. Its denominational basis was inspected just before the school became an academy in 2016. Since then it has made very good progress in embedding its Christian values. This means that the academy's Christian foundation is effectively supporting it on its improvement journey. It has a positive impact as demonstrated, for example, in the mutually respectful relationships evident and by the pupils' very good and improved behaviour and attitudes to learning. It is also evident through the appropriately high level of expectations demonstrated by staff for both behaviour and academic attainment. This consistency is impacting constructively on pupils' confidence, aspiration and their wellbeing. It also explicitly influences their good attitudes to learning and consequently the good, if not better, progress they make, from their various starting points. 'One of our Christian values is perseverance. So when some work is hard it means you have to try again and again. Sometimes I pray and ask Jesus to help me', as a pupil commented. Attainment across the academy has improved significantly so that it is now at or just below national and local authority averages. Phonics in Key Stage 1 is above the national average this academic year for the first time although the attainment of the current Year 6 pupils is overall below the national average. Nevertheless the majority of these pupils have made good or better progress especially over the past two years. Current in-school data, verified by the Trust and other outside agencies, indicates a strong picture for both attainment and progress from Reception through to Year 5. The gap between the attainment of different vulnerable groups of pupils, and between girls and boys has closed significantly. This is well supported through the clear tracking of attainment and progress that has been introduced which leads to targeting teaching and appropriate intervention as necessary. Pupils who enter at other than the usual starting time integrate well and their progress is good during their time in the academy. As a clear expression of the academy's Christian underpinning pupils feel safe and well cared for. There are strong pastoral systems in place which effectively support pupils and their families. This means that the attendance of pupils, whilst still just below the national average, has improved appreciably. Likewise, incidents of high level unacceptable behaviour have decreased significantly. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development opportunities are good. Spiritual development is well catered for in religious education (RE) and through the worship programme. Opportunities to extend reflection and the exploration of deep questions about life and living to support spiritual development is less well developed across the whole curriculum. Extra-curricular opportunities and trips extend SMSC development well. Pupils are increasingly taking responsibility for themselves and others through, for example, being playground buddies and the school council. There is an extensive sports programme which encourages pupils to consider the academy's Christian values such as community, ambition and perseverance. In July 2018 the academy has gained the Shepway District Sports and Primary School of the Year Award and the Kent Sports Award Gold Mark. Charitable giving is well linked to the academy's Christian foundation. This supports, for example, an age-appropriate understanding of issues of justice and fairness. 'Jesus helped people, like with the miracles and feeding the crowd. It's important to help others just like Jesus did,' as a pupil reflected. The academy uses the International Primary Curriculum (IPC), a thematic and creative curriculum, which meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Drawing on the IPC supports pupils well in their growing appreciation of difference and diversity and the importance of showing respect to all. Similarly in RE pupils explore Christianity as a world faith as well as addressing a range of other faiths as laid out in the Kent Locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils engage well in RE saying that, 'it's fun and it helps you think and be respectful'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The daily act of worship plays an important part in the academy's life being valued by both adults and pupils. It is held at the beginning of each day and thus helps to set the tone for what follows. It is well planned, drawing appropriately on guidance from the Canterbury Diocese, the school's values and Christian festivals and key teachings. This leads to pupils having a good grasp of the Christian year and the significance of Jesus for Christians. The act of worship at the end of the academy's week gives all who participate an opportunity to celebrate their individual and corporate successes and have time for reflection. The awards given include ones for demonstrating the academy's Christian values. A variety of people lead worship. This includes senior leaders, teachers, clergy and pupils. Worship is well developed around a weekly theme and acts of worship are both informative and reflective. The daily acts of worship are enhanced through regular school worship held in the parish church, to which parents are also invited. This enriches the academy's community feel strongly alongside the voluntary 'Messy Church' held monthly. Around 14 percent of pupils and their families attend this regularly. Parents do not regularly take part in worship held in the academy, for example, when their children are leading a class worship for the whole school. Biblical teaching, especially focusing on the example of Jesus, is well used and related to the pupils' everyday experiences. Worship is rooted in some key Anglican worship practices such as

opening and closing sentences with responses, lighting candles and using different coloured cloths to mark the seasons in the Christian year. This means that pupils have a growing understanding of these practices. The Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is reinforced appropriately when the candle is lit at the beginning of worship. This contributes to pupils having an age-appropriate grasp of the Christian understanding of God as being 'three in one'. A Key Stage 2 pupil said, '... they are all one but different aspects of God'. Prayer is of increasing importance across the academy's life. Regular prayer in morning worship is extended through reflection stations in class and by a spiritual area in the school grounds. These are well used. Pupils understand that the Lord's Prayer, 'is important to Christians because Jesus taught it'. They say it regularly at the end of the school day. Pupils have a basic appreciation of different types of prayer including, for example, 'being thankful, asking for forgiveness and asking God to make things better for some people'. The interim board, which has temporarily replaced the governing body, is very proactive in developing the Christian character of the school, including through worship. They attend worship and provide relevant feedback which leads to improvements being made. Staff and pupils also have appropriate opportunities to review worship practices and changes have been made in the light of their suggestions.

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

The advances made in improving behaviour, attitudes to learning and standards of attainment and progress is impressive. Under the very effective leadership of the headteacher, really well supported through its membership of the Aquila Trust, the academy is on a palpable improvement journey. The academy's Christian foundation and values have been, and continue to be, a focus for its development. This means that its Christian ethos successfully drives forward its life and work. Following an extended period of instability and staff turnover, the headteacher has established a cohesive staff team who rightly recognise the importance of the school's Christian underpinning in supporting developments. The board of directors of the Trust oversee the work effectively. The academy's local interim board is well involved in its life and provides particularly good support and challenge as necessary. Members monitoring and evaluation of all areas of the academy's life, including RE and worship, draws on its Christian foundation well. Both RE and worship meet statutory requirements. Self-evaluation is accurate and well-focused which results in clear action planning, always with a focus on what is best for the pupils. Leaders are firmly committed to, and effective in, ensuring high academic standards and strong personal development are at the heart of the academy's vision. Staff are given strong support for their wellbeing and professional development. This means that they are very well supported for working within the church school context. The partnership with the local church is strong and has developed significantly over the past few years. The incumbent and other members of the parish church community are deeply involved in academy life: for example, through leading worship and providing pastoral and practical support for families in times of difficulty. The vast majority of parents are supportive of the academy's leadership and its Christian foundation. They rightly recognise the impact and changes that have occurred over the past three years especially with regards to improved behaviour and the more expressed and positive relationship with the parish church which reflects its Christian underpinning very well. Links with the Canterbury Diocese are strong with, for example, good use being made of the expertise of the education team through training opportunities. Similarly the school is outward looking and involved in many local activities including the choir singing at various area events and participation in civic services such as at Remembrance time.

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