

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

The King's (The Cathedral) School, Peterborough

Park Road, Peterborough. PE1 2UE	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Peterborough
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	January 2011
Name of multi-academy trust	N/A
Dates of inspection	25-26 January 2018
Date of last inspection	20-21 November 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	All -Through (KS2-5) 136398
Headteacher	Darren Ayling
Inspector's name and number	Kathryn Wright 436

School context

The King's (The Cathedral) is an all-through (Key Stages 2-5) stand-alone academy which includes a large sixth form. Students travel from a wide geographical area to the school. The junior department admits 15 pupils into Year 3 every year which enables the Cathedral choristers to be educated in the Cathedral school, alongside a number of non-chorister pupils. In Key Stage 2 there is an average number of pupils entitled to Free School Meals (FSM), and an above average number of pupils with special educational needs (SEN). In Key Stages 3-4 there are below average numbers for both FSM and SEN. A significant proportion (approximately 30%) of pupils come from non-White British heritage.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of The King's School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian vision of 'A Family Achieving Excellence' is shared by all members of the school community leading to excellent academic outcomes and exceptional spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all students.
- Inclusive and creative collective worship lies at the heart of the school ensuring the Christian ethos is effectively upheld and celebrated.
- The prominent profile and dedicated leadership of religious education (RE) affirms its place as a core subject and leads to excellent outcomes for all students.
- The central role of a highly committed chaplain supports and inspires the school in faithfully sustaining its Christian foundation.

Areas to improve

- To implement more formal self-evaluation processes with all stakeholders in order to ensure the Christian foundation of the school continues to be effectively upheld and celebrated.
- To invest time in building positive relationships with the new cathedral and diocesan personnel in order to strengthen the mutual benefits for all.

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

The Christian ethos and values are fully embedded into the life and culture of the school creating an overwhelming sense of belonging and family. All members of the school community can articulate clearly the vision of the school as 'A Family Achieving Excellence' rooted in the values of forgiveness, courage, honesty, kindness and love. This excellence is understood in terms of living out the Christian values, service to others as well as academic achievement. Students readily make connections between narratives such as the Good Samaritan, the Lost Son, the life of Daniel and David, and the Christian values on which the school is founded. Some students make explicit links between the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5) and the five core values.

This very strong sense of family impacts positively on relationships and behaviour. The emphasis on forgiveness and opportunities for change and transformation underpin approaches to pastoral care, mental health, attendance and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable. A personalised approach towards every student reflects the school's belief in valuing everyone as a child of God. This has resulted in successful mentoring programmes and students recognising the school as fully inclusive of all.

Students have a comprehensive understanding of spirituality as being a personal journey. Students talk about faith and belief naturally with one another and adults, and demonstrate an openness to everyone. The promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is prominent in all curriculum areas and through enrichment opportunities. All departments audit their provision and consider how it can impact on their approach to teaching and learning. In addition, clear links are made between the season of Lent and charities through a focus on sacrificial giving. Thus, students understand clearly the Christian teachings behind fundraising and service to others.

RE makes an excellent contribution to the Christian character of the school by providing foundational knowledge of Christian teachings and symbolism (Key Stage 2). An understanding of Christianity as a global faith is well developed through, for example, exploration of the church in China as well as the impact of mission and the lives of inspirational people such as Jackie Pullinger (Key Stages 3-4). Students have a good understanding of the diverse community in which they live through visits to the local mosque as well as welcoming visitors from a range of belief communities in their RE lessons.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Collective worship is intrinsic to the life of the school. It is enthusiastically valued by the entire school community. Through a range of whole school, group and form time settings, worship is a distinct part of the day which is inclusive and inspirational. It has a significant impact on students, staff and parents including a sense of awe and wonder, peace and calmness and for some the desire to act differently and serve others. Collective worship enables pupils to have a good understanding of Jesus's teachings, life and work of salvation. Students are able to articulate their understanding of the Trinitarian nature of God making references to the Apostles' Creed and expressions of belief in hymns and songs. Students' understanding of the seasons of the church year as well as values such as trust, praise and fellowship are promoted through well organised themes. Students understand Anglican faith and practice through well-established use of liturgy, as well as through regular services in the cathedral including an annual Eucharist. Cathedral services are described as moving, powerful and awesome by students. They have a strong sense of the symbolism of being together as a school community and the heritage on which their school is founded. Regardless of faith or background, students feel welcomed into a community of believers and enjoy opportunities to consider their own spiritual journey in a special place.

A renewed emphasis on student engagement in worship as a result of monitoring, has led to a revision of the school hymn book, and further support for form time worship. The latter is led by students, giving them all an opportunity to be worship leaders. Some students also provide service to the cathedral as stewards and vergers for public as well as school events. Students benefit from a range of clergy perspectives on Christian teachings, and the regular 'alternative worship' opportunities give students space to experience different styles and expressions of worship. Students develop spiritually through the use of thought-provoking visual stimulus as well as engaging material such as film, activities and texts.

The role of the ordained chaplain is pivotal in ensuring the school's distinctiveness has a positive impact on every student and the wider school family. Her presence around the school, and in providing a place of sanctuary and reflection for students through the prayer room is valued by all. Students talk about using the prayer room for times of confession, as well as thankfulness and celebration. Many students take part in confirmation classes, including a spiritual retreat, which for those involved has led to spiritual transformation and growth.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.

Religious education (RE) has an exceptionally prominent place within the school. It is regarded as a core subject essential in helping students understand the Christian foundation on which their school is based. Strategic decisions

have been taken to ensure a highly qualified team leads the subject across all key stages. Students value the subject highly, seeing its importance in terms of religious literacy and being wise and responsible citizens in an increasingly complex world. The enquiry based approach to learning enables students to engage in analysis of biblical text, critically evaluate the work of theologians and interpret images and artwork. The most effective teaching establishes robust tasks and enables students to enquire in depth, providing opportunities for higher-order questioning, creativity and original thinking. Some tasks in Key Stage 2 do not provide enough challenge for the more able students to engage deeply with religious concepts.

Standards are outstanding. GCSE attainment (48% A*-A, 86% A*-C, 2017) and progress (+0.39) are exceptional. This is significantly above the national average and slightly above the school average. A good number of pupils continue to A level, and some are inspired to continue their studies in higher education. Detailed analysis of results means that effective actions are being taken to further support lower prior attainers. High aspirations and the desire to meet the needs of all learners means teachers are focused on providing highly effective assessment and feedback. There are targeted interventions to close the achievement gaps between the most vulnerable and other students. Progress across all key stages is at least very good, and in some cases outstanding.

The Key Stage 3 curriculum, although well designed around biblical and theological literacy, is under review by the department to better meet the needs of the new GCSE. Students in the Sixth Form learn about religion, morality and values as part of a research studies programme preparing them for life in modern Britain. Students spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also promoted through opportunities to visit places of worship, conferences and most recently by taking part in BBC Big Questions. The curriculum and the priority given to the subject development reflects the Church of England Education Office Statement of Entitlement (2016).

The subject is well led. The relatively new head of RE is a reflective practitioner who has benefited from excellent line management and professional development. The newly qualified teacher is well supported both within the school and through engagement with a national 'New to RE' scheme. The department priorities are appropriately challenging and developed through rigorous monitoring and self-evaluation.

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

The leadership team and governors uphold and actively live out a distinctive Christian vision rooted in a belief that every young person is valued by God. The headteacher models commitment to Christian leadership through his regular involvement with cathedral life and worship. Policies and strategic decision making are rooted in Christian values and teachings, particularly dignity, respect and hope. Prayer is central to all governors' meetings and a service of dedication takes place annually in the cathedral putting Christian values at the heart of everything the school does. The distinctively Christian curriculum has spiritual, moral, social and cultural development at its heart. New staff, including support staff, are inducted well into the Christian life of the school, providing a sense of unity and togetherness.

The school improvement plan makes explicit references to upholding the Christian ethos, including the development of collective worship. The two development points from the previous inspection have been thoroughly met. The role of the chaplain is well established and understood by all members of the school community, including parents. The review of policies to reflect the Christian values can be seen in restorative approaches to behaviour, the personalised approach to vulnerable pupils and the compassionate approach to staff well-being. The school has informal self-evaluation processes in place. However, these do not yet engage all stakeholders in a systematic way and are thus not as effective as they could be in holding the school to account as a church school.

Within a climate of financial pressures the school has continued to give significant resources to RE as a core subject and has worked hard to maintain the quality provision provided by the chaplain. The chaplain's role is highly valued by the leadership, staff, pupils and parents, and has been instrumental in helping the school develop its understanding of being an inclusive, yet diverse Christian community. Statutory requirements for collective worship and RE are comprehensively met.

Links with local clergy, Christian organisations and the cathedral are very strong, although links with the diocese are less well established. With recent changes in personnel at the cathedral and diocese, the school has plans in place to promote closer relationships which can be of mutual benefit to all. Parental satisfaction is high, and they feel well listened to. Many appreciate space and time to be able to pray with one another on the school premises thus feeling involved as part of the King's school family.