

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Aidan's Primary School – A Church of England Academy

Norfolk Street, Mill Hill, Blackburn BB2 4EW

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Blackburn
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Date of academy conversion [delete as appropriate]	January 2015
Name of multi-academy trust	Cidari
Date of inspection	16 March 2018
Date of last inspection	May 2015
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary academy 141350
Headteacher	Rachel Senior
Inspector's name and number	Fiona Ashton 860

School context

This is a smaller than average size primary academy. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average as is the number of pupils supported by pupil premium funding. Part of the Cidari Multi-Academy Trust, St Aidan's benefits from stability in leadership and governance. Ofsted graded the academy as 'Requires improvement' in September 2017. Key Stage 2 outcomes were disappointing in 2017. The academy has received awards for sport and Early Years provision.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Aidan's as a Church of England school are good

- The dedicated leadership of the headteacher who, supported by governors and school colleagues, ensures that St Aidan's brings Christ alive in the daily experience of learners.
- Worship is carefully planned, inspiring and gives pupils an invitation to welcome God in their lives.
- Religious education (RE) challenges learners to think deeply and reflect maturely upon their place in God's world.
- Relationships are respectful, enriching and based on carefully understood Christian values

Areas to improve

- Maintain the academy's focus on Christian values so that they continue to drive the initiatives that support achievement and well-being throughout the academy community.
- Further develop the use of 'big questions' in RE so that, pupils develop as independent learners with an enquiring approach to Christianity and other faiths.
- Develop the available outdoor spaces to reflect the Christian values of the academy and provide its community with opportunities for enhanced spiritual reflection.

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

St Aidan's is an academy that cares deeply about each member of the community. It is faithful to its mission statement 'Fulfilling potential, growing in God' and each pupil is nurtured to be 'the best that they can be'. Excellent use is made of additional support from the Cidari family of schools, the diocese, professional services and community partners. Thus, the governors and headteacher robustly support the spiritual, academic, social, emotional and physical well-being of the pupils. The level of care, support and guidance offered to pupils is exceptional and is having an increasingly positive impact upon the behaviour, well-being and the academic outcomes of learners. However, Key Stage 2 outcomes in 2017 were disappointing. Pupil mobility can be an issue for the school and in 2017 negatively affected pupil outcomes. Those pupils, who join St Aidan's in reception, make very good progress during their time at the academy. The academy's accurate analysis of standards indicates that currently Year 6 pupils are on track to make much better progress and overall, standards within the academy are currently good. Through careful appointments and partnerships, leaders effectively develop pupils to fulfil their potential. However, as yet, the school has not secured consistently good outcomes for all learners.

Christian values have a high profile throughout the academy and underpin all decisions and activities. They are clearly articulated by pupils who recognise how the values make a difference to their daily lives. They are very clear that the key Christian values of faith, hope and love are everywhere in their school. They understand these values both in their Biblical context (1 Corinthians 13:13) and as placing a responsibility for each individual to use them in their daily life. Relationships are a strength throughout the academy. Pupils are respectful of each other and of adults. When relationships break down, pupils are clear that reflection, forgiveness and reconciliation should occur. Behaviour is very good. A Year 6 pupil carefully explained that when things go wrong between people it is helpful to reflect upon the academy's values and repair things. Exclusions are rare but when they do occur it is as a last resort and in order to provide the best outcomes for the academy community. Pupils are reintegrated as swiftly as possible and so as to enable the individual to 'fulfil their potential'. Attendance is very good. The academy's family worker is proactive in ensuring that pupils attend regularly and punctually and offers wider guidance to families to support well-being. A trained counsellor, she provides opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills so that individuals can grow their friendships. Leaders are intently aware that enabling pupils to build their self-esteem and aspiration is a daily task if they are to enable them to thrive. Building pupils' resilience is paramount but undertaken because each child is seen as a uniquely important child of God.

RE is very well led and managed and contributes to pupils' wider development by encouraging them to value themselves and others. Through worship, prayers and learning in RE, pupils are encouraged to recognise Christianity as a global faith. Year 6 pupils explained with great clarity and detail how Christians live and worship in other parts of the world. They demonstrate great empathy for persecuted Christians in Syria. Through links with other local Christian traditions, pupils are increasingly knowledgeable about the breadth of the Christian tradition locally.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is outstanding because it is carefully and collaboratively planned to bring God into the very heart of the academy community. It brings joy to the academy day and is welcomed and treasured by both pupils and adults. There is a robust cycle of monitoring, evaluation and development planning for collective worship that involves adults as well as the very capable pupil worship committee. The vicar from the neighbouring church regularly leads worship for the academy community both in school and in church. Pupils enjoy visiting the church and one Year 5 pupil described being in church as 'special'. All year groups lead church based worship at least once per year. The parish and the school are very proud of each other. They pray for each other and attend each others' worship.

Worship is enhanced by visiting speakers all of whom are invited for the contribution that they can make to pupils' understanding of their place in God's world and the importance of a Christian approach and response. Staff are confident to lead worship because they receive exceptional guidance from the headteacher. Through carefully chosen music, prayers and Bible stories worship encourages pupils in their understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Throughout the academy worship tables and reflection areas in classrooms encourage pupils to consider their relationship with God and each other. Worship reflects the liturgical year and makes it a practical reality for pupils. For example, by undertaking the 40 Acts programme, St Aidan's community has engaged in 'doing Lent generously'.

As a result of exceptionally creative worship, pupils have a deep and theologically accurate understanding of concepts such as salvation and redemption. Through Bible stories and the use of formal and informal prayers, pupils are encouraged to see the place of God in their lives and the impact that he has. Pupils have a rich understanding of the Bible. Stories such as that of Zacchaeus the tax collector are used exceptionally well to help pupils appreciate the theme of 'being valued'.

Activities during worship capture the imagination and attention of all pupils. They retain their learning throughout the week. Higher order thinking is frequently evident in pupils' responses to questions and activities during worship. The pupil worship committee and the staff who coordinate it make an excellent contribution to worship and its monitoring. The pupils are proud of their role and explain it as 'helping other children to learn about God and other religions'. They are increasingly confident in leading worship and choose important themes to address through worship. For example during Black history week they led a worship exploring the impact of Rosa Parks. They redesigned the certificate for the weekly

awarded Christian Values certificate. They have ambitious plans to develop their role through the Fairtrade application and wish to develop further the school's available outside spaces as places of worship. Parents appreciate the enjoyment that their children derive from academy worship that encourages their children to be more prayerful.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE is excellent because it is led and managed by a subject specialist who is passionate about the subject and the impact that it can have upon the lives of the pupils. Standards in RE are very good and at least in line with standards in other core areas. The RE co-ordinator is confident of standards within RE because she undertakes robust monitoring and employs appropriate support strategies to develop excellence. Standards in RE are moderated with other Church of England schools and therefore there is a confidence that the assessment of pupils progress is accurate and that the pupils are frequently making better than expected progress in RE. Pupils know how to improve their work in RE because their teachers provide helpful guidance and feedback.

The curriculum encourages pupils to work hard and to learn academically but also to reflect maturely upon Christianity and other faiths. There is an appropriate balance of learning about Christianity and other faiths. Pupils show a genuine interest in, and knowledge about, the worship practices and beliefs of people of both other Christian traditions and world faiths. The RE curriculum is challenging because it focuses upon engaging pupils with big questions and because the quality of teaching is always good and frequently outstanding. This results in pupils who have a genuine love of their learning in RE. Pupils' confidence in learning in RE is enhanced because excellent relationships and routines are established in classrooms. In a Year 6 lesson pupils very successfully worked collaboratively and individually to consider 'Who is Jesus?' Their depth of appreciation of the power of God is evident in the questions they wish to ask of Jesus. For example, 'Why did you create the world and all the people?' and 'What was your best miracle?' In a Year 2 lesson, pupils reflecting upon the symbols of Easter treated the parish Paschal candle with reverence. As a result of excellent teaching, pupils experienced the awe and wonder of the resurrection of Jesus as they were introduced to the theological concept of Jesus as the alpha and the omega (Revelations 22:13). Pupils love their RE learning because it embraces their experiences.

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

St Aidan's academy is on a trajectory of improvement. Underpinning all that it achieves, and aspires to be, is the deeply held and inspiring Christian leadership of the headteacher. It is a tribute to her success that parents, staff and pupils all speak of her role in bringing Christian values to the fore in this now very good Church of England school. Following the last inspection, governors and leaders undertook a wide ranging review of the academy's mission and values. This involved all stakeholders and has brought a renewed energy and focus to the academy's understanding of its Christian distinctiveness. This now needs time to embed and flourish. The academy maintains its focus on its purpose as a Church of England school because it keeps the review of its Christian distinctiveness ongoing and uses outcomes to promote further developments. There are ambitious milestones for new initiatives and the same level of concern is shown for this aspect of the academy's development as is shown for everything else

Members of the local governing body are highly effective in the support and challenge that they provide to the academy community. They achieve this because they have an appropriate range of experience and skills and because they engage in appropriate training for their roles. Governors are very well informed about the work and standards of the academy because they have robust and appropriate channels of communication with the whole academy community. They review standards in subject areas regularly. They are frequent visitors to the academy and feel that they are valued for the level of support and challenge that they provide. In particular the chair of governors and the local incumbent provide excellent support for leadership, collective worship and RE and ensure that the Statement of Entitlement for RE is met. Staff feel that they are supported and developed in their professional roles but also in pursuing ideas that they believe will benefit the pupils. Colleagues are respectful of each others' strengths and expertise and there is an evident willingness to share ideas and support initiatives. The academy's mission statement of 'fulfilling potential' is understood as applying equally to staff as it does to pupils and as a result, staff feel valued, supported and enabled to be the very best that they can be for the benefit of the pupils and community that they serve.

The Christian purpose of St Aidan's is evident to all who work in the academy. Ensuring that adults are supportive of the academy's Christian ethos is rigorously pursued through the recruitment processes. Equally, the academy leadership, through internal opportunities and external training, supports colleagues to be effective leaders in church schools. Parents appreciate that the academy asks their opinions on a range of issues and that it supports the whole family. The academy keeps parents well informed of their children's progress and activities. Parents value this relationship and the secure start that it gives to their children. A member of staff summed up relationships within the academy by stating 'we need the children and they need us'. While staff give pupils some of the tools by which to live their lives, 'children make staff become better, they take you to places that you otherwise wouldn't think about'.

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