



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

### St Columba Church of England Primary Academy

Tewkesbury Avenue  
Fareham  
Hampshire

**Previous SIAMS grade: Not applicable**

**Current SIAMS grade: Satisfactory**

**Diocese: Winchester and Portsmouth**

Local authority: Hampshire

Dates of inspection: 20 March 2015

Date of last inspection: Not previously inspected as an academy

School's unique reference number: 138509

Principal: Jane Hoggarth-Allen

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

#### School context

St Columba is smaller than the average size primary school with 177 children on roll. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is significantly above the national average as is the number entitled to receive the pupil premium. The majority of children come from a white British heritage. Attendance is just below the average for primary schools nationally but is improving. The school opened in September 2012 as an academy sponsored by the Dioceses of Portsmouth and Winchester.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Columba Church of England Primary Academy as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- An appreciation of the academy's church distinctiveness by children means that they talk with confidence about matters of faith and belief.
- The academy's strong pastoral care for children has made a significant impact on the quality of behaviour throughout the school.
- The accuracy with which the principal has identified areas for improvement means that the academy has a good potential to improve as a church school.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop the children's understanding of the core Christian values so that they are able to use them to a greater extent to explore and express their growing spiritual awareness.
- Ensure that there is greater consistency in the quality of teaching of religious education (RE) across the school.
- Develop the evaluation role of school leaders and managers, including governors, by using existing monitoring strategies more effectively in a church school context.

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

A significant improvement in the academy's promotion of its Christian ethos has been the extent to which children appreciate that matters of faith and belief are normal things to talk about and share views on. Children do this naturally and openly, without embarrassment and with a seriousness that reflects the respect that they show for another person's beliefs. The impact of learning values such as respect, resilience and being a team player on the quality of behaviour and in creating a learning environment is contributing to the children's academic attainment. Increasing numbers of children are achieving levels that reach national expectations. The focus towards identifying a set of core values that have explicit Christian roots has identified love, hope and compassion. These three values are currently being implemented and are helping the academy's understanding of Christian distinctiveness to move forward. Progress in achieving this is good because the introduction of these values has been strongly led by the children in the school council. This has given the core values a greater sense of ownership by children. These Christian values have not yet been explored through collective worship or as part of the children's learning. Children are beginning to make links between these three Christian values and the already firmly embedded learning values. The academy has made good progress in developing a shared understanding of spirituality. Staff training has enabled teachers to identify more clearly opportunities for developing children's personal spirituality. For example, making use of the solar eclipse, some Year 6 children experienced moments of frustration and wonder as they waited in the cold and cloud for it to happen. When they finally saw it, via the internet, there was a real sense of awe. The fact that children were given time to think about these experiences on their own gave them the opportunity to reflect which therefore produced high quality responses. These opportunities have not yet been fully explored or become an established aspect of the children's learning across all subjects. Relationships in the school have improved significantly. Children are considerate and respectful. They appreciate the views of others and care for those less fortunate than themselves. They are developing a clear sense of social justice. This is especially apparent in the children's sense of fairness for all, whether in the United Kingdom or abroad.

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

Collective worship has been central to the improvement in behaviour throughout the academy. Acts of worship have promoted examples of good behaviour and have equipped children with learning values that have made an impact on the classroom environment and approach to learning. Through the encouragement for children to be team players as well as independent at other times, and the need to respect each other, lessons taught in worship have made a difference to the quality of life in the academy. The messages learnt in collective worship often centre on Bible stories which, through the involvement of the Open the Book team, children are becoming more familiar with. Acts of worship have yet to make the same impact by exploring in depth the school's new distinctively Christian core values of love, hope and compassion. Children now have positive opinions about worship. They are attentive and engaged and respond well to times for singing, reflection and prayer. Children have a good understanding of prayer. Older children, for example, are beginning to appreciate that 'prayer doesn't always work' because it 'might depend on what you are praying for'. There are adequate opportunities for children to pray in the life of the academy outside of collective worship. When sharing their ideas on prayer, children refer to God as Father and Jesus as Son. They are developing their understanding of the relationship between God and Jesus but have yet to explore further the nature of the Trinity including the Holy Spirit. Children are involved in acts of worship through their responsibilities for choosing hymns and other tasks. They sometimes write prayers for special services. They do not have sufficient opportunities to plan and lead acts of worship on a more regular basis. An audit of the Open the Book worship identified improvements that have made a positive difference to their impact. The regular and systematic monitoring and evaluation of the impact of worship involving gathering views from children is not as robust as it should be.

### **The effectiveness of religious education is satisfactory**

Standards in religious education (RE) are satisfactory by the time children leave the school at the end of Key Stage 2. The school is at an early stage in implementing a system that accurately assesses children's attainment and progress in RE and it is therefore difficult to measure the children's achievement in both their knowledge and understanding of RE. Evidence from observations indicates that there are strengths in the teaching of RE in the school and that this leads to progress being made in lessons and, at its very best, teaching that challenges the children to raise their expectations and strive to do better. Evidence from children's work shows that this high quality of teaching in RE is not consistent across the school. At present the school does not have an effective way to assess the standards that children reach in RE or measure the progress they are making in the subject. When challenged, children respond with enthusiasm and a real enjoyment to engage in discussion about questions that challenge their understanding. At times, when children are given time to stop and reflect on their learning and think, their responses show that children, both the very young as well as the older pupils, have the potential to explore and explain complicated religious concepts in a very articulate way. Children have a good knowledge of Christianity and can apply this in their learning. For example, an RE lesson with younger children progressed at a quick pace because the children's secure understanding of the Easter story enabled the teacher to move the children's understanding forward rapidly. Religious education makes a good contribution to the Christian ethos by making clear links to the children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development as well as supporting their personal development. At the moment, opportunities to strengthen SMSC through links with the new core Christian values are being missed. Leadership of RE is currently the responsibility of the principal who works hard to ensure that RE maintains a high profile in the overall curriculum. Staff training in RE, as well as providing guidance for staff in delivering units, has helped to raise the status of RE.

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

The principal has a very clear understanding of the meaning and purpose of being a church school and articulates a vision that has the welfare of all children at its heart. She is very clear that for the academy's Christian distinctiveness to have meaning for the whole community, its development needs to involve them all and be done in such a way that it is embedded throughout the life of the school. A particular characteristic of academy leadership is the integrity with which the principal approaches self-evaluation with a strong ability to reflect. To this end, the principal has an accurate grasp of the priorities needed to improve as a church school. She is fully supported in this by her senior staff and the governing body. The leadership and management of the academy have a good capacity to bring about further improvement as a church school. Governors have some role in monitoring as a church school but have yet to use the existing effective systems of self-evaluation and apply them to church school matters. The inclusion of priorities to develop the Christian distinctiveness in the academy development plan is a positive step towards ensuring that it is an integral aspect of school improvement. The current discussions regarding the most effective way to ensure that future leadership of RE has the capacity to take it forward is a good example of the realistic approach to academy improvement. Links with the local parish church are strong and the vicar plays an important role in the life of the school. There are good links with the parish community through the 'Open the Book' team and the regular visits to the church that enhance the RE curriculum. The involvement of church members with the breakfast club is a further example of the commitment between school and church communities to work together for the benefit of children. The academy meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report March 2015 St Columba CE Primary Academy Fareham PO15 6LL