



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Ian Ramsey Church of England Academy

Fairfield Road
Stockton
TS19 7AJ

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Durham

Local authority: n/a

Dates of inspection: 23 & 24 May 2016

Date of last inspection: 4 & 5 May 2011

School's unique reference number: 111764

Executive Headteacher: Gill Booth

Head of School: Brian Janes

Inspector's name and number: Canon Brian Hedley NS619

School context

Ofsted judged the school to require special measures in March 2014. In December of that year it became Ian Ramsey Church of England Academy, under the Dayspring Multi Academy Trust; the Venerable Bede Church of England Academy in Sunderland is the lead partner. The school has been oversubscribed for a number of years and remains so. Numbers of students with special educational needs and those for whom the school receives extra funding are below average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ian Ramsey Academy as a Church of England school are good

- The Christian ethos is the heartbeat of Academy life. Strong, courageous leadership and focused governance ensure that it sustains relationships, supports achievement and well-being, celebrates diversity and contributes to rising standards
- The behaviour of students is massively improved; they enjoy respectful and inclusive relationships with one another and with adults; their voice is heard and valued
- Staff readily express the academy's vision through their commitment and the effective pastoral care they offer to students and their families
- Worship and religious education (RE) provide a strong skeleton to support Academy life; they sustain the spiritual development of the community exceptionally well

Areas to improve

- Continue the relentless pursuit of eradicating remaining inconsistencies in teaching in order to improve outcomes for all students
- Systematically analyse feedback about worship to provide more tangible evidence about the impact of provision, innovation and evolving practice
- Combine the SIAMS evaluation statements and evidence about the impact of Christian values on raising achievement with overall performance data, so that the Christian character and effectiveness of the Academy are benchmarked equally

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

'Together to learn, to grow, to serve', fully captures what lies at the heart of life at Ian Ramsey. Rooting the school's new mission statement in scripture, '*each of you should use whatever gifts you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms*', sets the bar high in terms of living and growing in community and service. This challenge is enabling a Christian understanding of human flourishing to be understood and embraced by all. As a result, Academy life now supports and sustains achievement and well-being at every level, celebrates diversity and is contributing towards steadily improving academic performance. At the present time the true impact of the Academy's strong Christian ethos in raising achievement is not fully quantified. This could be easily rectified if leaders ensured that formal procedures were put in place to gather evidence which could be considered alongside overall performance data.

Students talk with pride about their new building and uniform and the progress the school has made since becoming an Academy. They appreciate being partners in their education, being 'treated with respect' and having 'more freedom with our choices'. They speak warmly of the adults who work with them: 'they put in the effort to reach out to us', 'we feel safe and more cared for' and 'more confident in sharing our worries'. One student explained that, 'our values do matter to everyone here, but nobody is forced; not all of us are believers. It's important that everyone feels comfortable in their own skin'. These are some of the reasons students give for there having been a huge improvement in behaviour across the Academy. They are also eager to point out that, 'our core values are not just to do with religion - they help us to really learn about ourselves and others; they help us make choices and to take responsibility'. To illustrate this still further, a diverse range of charity work and links with Lesotho develop students' moral and social conscience. Excellent opportunities also exist for spiritual development, such as the recently opened chapel placed at the heart of the Academy, prayer stations and reflection journals. Outstanding Religious Education (RE) deepens students' thinking. It challenges them to consider seriously diversity and difference and the big questions in life.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Though collective worship takes a variety of forms, each provides a framework to support Academy life; because it is given high priority, worship has significant impact on the spiritual development of the Academy family. There is a strong Christian focus and arrangements ensure that planned themes expand upon the Academy's values. For example, 'tutor group worship' has each value placed within the context of the Bible; it then follows a four-fold structure of: gathering, engagement, response and sending out. In addition, philosophy for children sessions linked directly to a Bible passage provides a useful and appreciated feature; students say this gives them a vehicle for personal response in their worship reflection journals.

Student surveys and interviews demonstrate just how much daily worship opportunities are valued. They tell of how worship challenges them to think and how it sometimes galvanises them into action, for example in stewardship of the earth's resources or charitable fundraising.

One striking innovation and force for exciting development has been the creation of a chapel and the training of Year 9 and 10 worship leaders. Of particular note is their work around prayer stations; they offer one-to-one peer support in the exploration of resources in the chapel to stimulate prayer and reflection. However, students are keen to point out that for non-believers the 'space is just as relevant', because they encourage use of what's available to support personal spiritual awareness and growth. Some students said how much they would like their parents to be able to access the prayer stations as they did following a concert recently. Others talked about developing a similar reflection space outside in the extensive grounds. This is currently being considered.

At the moment, although the student voice is heard and acted upon informally or at agreed times during the year, the views of all stakeholders are not gathered and systematically analysed on a frequent basis; this means that the impact of the worship policy and evolving practice goes largely unreported during the year. Plans to involve worship leaders in evaluations will go some way to addressing this. However, a broader range of participants would provide even more poignant evidence.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education (RE) has recently been given the status of a core subject; this is a bold and visionary step. The newly appointed subject leader is highly enthusiastic and an excellent ambassador. Her departmental colleagues offer well-planned, carefully targeted and relevant opportunities for learning. The majority of teaching is outstanding. As a result, standards are high; in-house assessment shows that students make excellent progress. Learners say they enjoy the pace and challenge of lessons. They talk confidently about their attainment, explaining that they achieve well because they have to think 'deeply and succinctly' and to 'justify their point of view'. When asked how the skills developed in RE might support them in other subjects or life in general, one student had no hesitation in suggesting the mantra: 'summarise, analyse, and explain'. Given the Academy's drive for overall higher attainment and progress, it might be useful to look at which transferable skills acquired in RE can be usefully drawn upon in other subject areas.

RE anchors the Academy's values and contributes significantly towards students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Rigorous monitoring, evaluation and assessment guarantee that course-work keeps pace with the growing maturity of learners' responses. Teachers spend a good deal of time providing developmental marking for students (green pen). This can help them deepen or justify their thinking or offer prompts about how they might improve their work in order to take them to the next level. Sadly, questions raised by teachers are not always responded to, and this leads to a number of lost opportunities for additional learning.

In the continual drive for excellence the subject leader should consider matching the SIAMS RE evaluation statements to priorities in the subject action plan so that specific success criteria are automatically included in performance data reports to Academy leaders.

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

Strong, insightful leadership from the executive headteacher and head of school, ably supported by capable governance and a pro-active senior leadership team, nurtures the uniqueness of each individual and keeps the needs of students at the heart of Academy life. A strong Christian vision shapes decision-making, drives action and raises levels of aspiration and achievement. A wholehearted commitment from adults is evidence that they too have an understanding of what it means to be a church school. Staff say they are now seen as 'trusted partners' by their leaders and that they feel 'supported, valued and well-cared for'. This shows that core values, drawn from the Christian tradition, are having a clear impact on students and adults alike, so that, 'together, the community will grow both spiritually and academically, with the intention of offering service to others'.

Academy council members and directors bring a wealth of experience to the table. There is a strong belief in the vision for the Academy and an active interest in vigorously reviewing its progress. In terms of the evaluation of the Academy as a church school, leaders should consider broadening the range of people involved in both providing feedback and analysing distinctiveness and effectiveness. The SIAMS evaluation statements need to be placed alongside overall performance data to benchmark effectiveness more robustly.

Parents say that the Academy is better led and managed and has a much stronger sense of community and service. Support and care for students and their families is reported to have grown rapidly. One poignant example of this was given by the mother of a child on a 'managed move' whose daughter had recently been accepted as a permanent student; 'the Academy has given me my daughter back. I can't thank them all enough'.

Collective worship and RE are well led and managed. Both areas meet statutory requirements. Tenacious leadership and management are ensuring that professional development is closely related to the development plan and performance management priorities. This keeps everyone accountable. Despite earlier setbacks morale is now high because the Academy community have complete confidence and trust in their leadership team and in one another.