

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Bishop Stopford School

Headlands, Kettering, NN15 6BJ

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Outstanding**

**Diocese**

**Peterborough**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Date of academy conversion

August 2011

Date/s of inspection

28 February and 1 March 2018

Date of last inspection

19 and 20 February 2013

Type of school and unique reference number

Academy 137086

Headteacher

Margaret Holman

Inspector's name and number

Jo Fageant 104

#### School context

An academy since August 2011, Bishop Stopford School is larger than average and includes 400 Sixth Form students. Most are from Kettering and elsewhere in Northamptonshire, with a few attending from Rutland and Leicestershire. The majority are from White British backgrounds but the cultural composition of the school is changing to include increasing numbers from ethnic minority backgrounds and students for whom the school receives additional government funding. These groups are smaller than proportions found in schools nationally and are mainly concentrated in Years 7-9. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is greater than in schools nationally.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bishop Stopford School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Five deeply embedded, long established, Christian values, which are relevant to everyone, create an ethos in which harmonious and respectful relationships enable everyone to flourish.
- Leaders' balanced focus on high quality education and Christian ethos ensures that pupils benefit from consistent attention to academic learning and personal and spiritual wellbeing.
- The belief that every individual is of value and loved by God motivates leaders' determination to make appropriate provision for pupils even if this has a negative impact on published data which is so often used to make judgements about the school.
- Through her high profile and genuine concern for everyone, the chaplain demonstrates Christian love for all which enables her excellent contribution to the pastoral care of staff and pupils.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop the Key Stage 3 religious education (RE) planning so it is consistently as good as that developed for GCSE and A level groups. It should be based on clear enquiries that enable all teachers to build in challenge appropriate to all groups ensuring high standards as students move through the school.
- Enrich the school's understanding of spirituality and support all teachers and departments to embed it in their planning and teaching.
- Find even better ways to capture responses to worship that enable students to understand their spiritual journey and provide the school with a valuable record of its ongoing spiritual life.

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

A sense of responsibility to live out God's love for all individuals characterises the way in which this school cares for its pupils. Rigorous interrogation of data enables teachers to have a good understanding of the achievements and needs of all pupils. The school has a record of high standards. However, there is no sense of complacency and they work hard to find ways for any barriers to learning to be overcome. For example, pupils who arrive in Year 7 with below expected attainment in key subjects are given additional 'catch up' support. Some speak of developing a 'can do' attitude to learning compared with a previous desire 'to hide'. Each faculty has a teacher who takes specific responsibility for the most able pupils to ensure they are adequately stretched and challenged. Careful provision is made for the induction and introduction of all students new to the Sixth Form. This responds to an awareness that they have achieved less well than students who have come all through the school. Every effort is made to demonstrate the belief in the value of every individual. Examples have been the purchase of equipment to support learning and paying taxi fares to improve attendance. The success of measures taken is illustrated in a letter from a pupil who had experienced fixed term exclusions thanking the school for not giving up on him.

The school also recognises that wellbeing influences pupils' ability to learn. With this in mind, lessons about resilience have been introduced in Year 7. A consistent and high profile focus on five core Christian values of faith, justice, truth, responsibility and compassion creates an ethos in which people's personal and religious beliefs, and their sense of identity are respected. Bullying of any sort is very rare. Understanding the beliefs of one another is becoming increasingly important in the daily life of the school as the proportion of pupils from various ethnic and religious backgrounds increases. Pupils appreciate the vital importance of RE in improving their understanding of and deep respect for Christian and religious diversity. Through this work the subject strengthens the school's welcoming and inclusive Christian character and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Christian pupils benefit from Christian union meetings and other voluntary Christian groups, the chapel, the chaplain and local clergy. Plans are developing for the creation of a prayer space other than the chapel for those who wish to use it. Some Muslim pupils appreciate being able to attend Friday prayers in the nearby mosque.

Importance is accorded to SMSC development. Provision for each element has been audited revealing that all curriculum areas contribute. However, the shared interpretation of spirituality does not reflect the richness of spiritual experience found within the school. Departments which struggle to identify how they can support spiritual development have not been adequately helped to understand their potential. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to take on roles of responsibility such as school council representatives and ethos ambassadors. Sixth formers are keen to take on voluntary roles with the lower school. Comments such as, 'we should not just look to other people to make change but take responsibility ourselves' reveal how they exemplify the school's values and commitment to serve others.

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

Inclusive, thought-provoking worship helps define the school's distinctive Christian character. Themes the chaplain devises develop a highly reflective ethos in which staff and pupils speak easily about faith and also their responsibilities as citizens of the world. In addition to worship led by the chaplain, local clergy and staff, students often take responsibility for planning and leading in year group and form contexts. They do so with confidence using resources they find for themselves. Some of them inspire charitable initiatives and deep thinking about issues of social injustice and ways of combatting it in its many forms. Feedback about the themes is gathered through form blogs or alternative records which are used as the source material for summary acts of worship. This innovative way of discovering the impact of themes does not guarantee that the views of all pupils contribute to ongoing development. The chaplain's enthusiastic promotion of the idea that using talents can be a form of worship draws in contributions that enrich the experience of worship.

Pupils also develop a good understanding of more traditional forms of worship. They can talk about the continuing relevance of biblical teachings because they are consistently used in resources created to support form time worship. Pupils relate examples to some of their own experiences and know they are the source of the school's core values. The celebration of Christian festivals develops pupils' knowledge of the shape of the church year. Through attendance at Eucharist services three times each year, they are able to talk about central practices and beliefs of the Anglican Church. Their ability to engage with these and their understanding of them is supported by their learning in RE. Through the combination of lessons and experiences they are able to explain the importance given to Jesus in Christian worship and the belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Prayer and reflection are important elements of the worship life of the school. They extend well beyond form and year group worship. For example there is a well-used prayer board in the chapel, staff 'still waters' times twice a week and a group of 'praying parents'. The chaplain and some teachers report that colleagues and pupils occasionally ask for prayer support.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

The RE department is blessed with a strong team of subject specialist teachers and the majority of teaching is at least good. Some is clearly outstanding. The best lessons are characterised by pace and challenge with tasks appropriate to the range of ability within the class. In these lessons learning objectives are shared and pupils develop a range of skills including interpretation, evaluation and reflection. Some Key Stage 3 lessons, however, have engaged pupils with tasks that are insufficiently challenging and limit the depth of their learning. In GCSE and A level lessons, pupils learn not only the subject matter but also skills they will need to use in the examination. As a result, most pupils make good progress and attain standards at GCSE in line with national expectations. Some of the most and least able pupils achieved less well last year in GCSE examinations. To a significant degree this is justifiably attributed to unavoidable staff absence which disrupted pupils' learning. Revised staffing arrangements are mitigating the ongoing challenge.

Members of the RE department work as a team to drive development. For example, they have developed effective assessment procedures which enable teachers and pupils to understand the progress being made. These highlight under-performance thereby enabling appropriate intervention and support. This way of recording assessment has proved popular with other departments which have adapted and adopted the format. Teachers have thoroughly revised planning to meet the requirements of the new GCSE and A level specifications. Centrally stored, these provide an excellent and flexible resource to support the teaching of both courses. Prioritising this work has meant that planning for Key Stage 3 has received less attention. Although PowerPoint resources provide direction for individual lessons, the overarching enquiry addressed by some units of work is not clear.

Pupils engage well with RE and acknowledge its value for their own personal and SMSC development and their understanding of the impact of religion on the world around them. A 'meet the faiths' event is particularly valued. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils develop a good understanding of concepts and beliefs central to Christianity, Buddhism and other religions studied.

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

Leadership is characterised by integrity, enthusiasm, energy and an unswerving commitment to the school's vision and values. Staff, pupils and governors readily give examples of how senior leaders demonstrate their belief that God values and intends fullness of life for each individual. They accept it as a responsibility they have to promote and live. It is seen in the ways in which new staff are supported as they settle into their roles. Colleagues who have experienced personal or professional difficulties are moved by the genuine and personal care they receive from leaders and the chaplain. The low turnover of staff, strong sense of community and gold 'Investors in People' award testify to the consistent application of leaders' vision and the impact of deeply embedded core values.

The statement of purpose, 'striving for high quality education with a strong Christian ethos' is not empty words. Partnership working with local clergy and the all-pervasive influence of the chaplain exemplify the school's rich Christian ethos. Supported by leaders, including governors, they ensure the relevance and inclusive nature of worship and enrich the spiritual life of the school. The chaplain's role within the pastoral care system is highly valued by everyone. Inspired and energised by their vision and purpose, leaders exhibit a relentless drive for continual improvement. Rigorous analysis of why aspirations have not been achieved gives rise to the ongoing development of new, more precisely targeted ways of supporting staff as well as pupils. Leaders work with the Woodard Corporation and Brooke Weston Teaching Alliance, both accessing and contributing to training programmes. In this way the school benefits from improved skills in a variety of areas and lives out a commitment to serve others. The sharing of skills and ideas within the school develops leadership capacity at all levels including amongst pupils. All developments and partnerships are informed by the biblically inspired vision, purpose and values that together define the character of this school. This includes increasingly close, mutually beneficial, relationships with local faith leaders as the ethnic and religious profile of the school broadens. The contributions of parents through the 'parents' forum' and those who are members of the 'praying parents' group are highly valued.

Governors know the school well, challenge leaders appropriately and take a keen interest in the particular aspects for which they accept responsibility. The governor linked with RE, for example, has a good understanding of the current strengths of the department and the challenges that have resulted significantly from unavoidable inconsistencies in staffing. With the school's leaders they ensure that RE and collective worship have a high status, sustaining a commitment to GCSE RE for all, and are appropriately resourced. Statutory requirements for both are met in Key Stages 3 and 4. Daily worship and engagement with context appropriate RE in the Sixth Form is not guaranteed. Governors sustain a focus on how decisions reflect the aspiration of enabling everyone to fulfil their potential. Where necessary, they put the most appropriate provision for students above the impact it may have on the school's published data. The consistent focus on provision for both the wellbeing and achievement of staff and pupils contributes significantly to positive attitudes, good relationships and SMSC development.