



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Shaftesbury School	Salisbury Road Shaftesbury Dorset SP7 8ER
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Good
Date of academy conversion	June 2014
Name of multi-academy trust	Southern Academy Trust
Date of inspection	27 September 2016
Date of last inspection	July 2011
School's unique reference number	140898
Headteacher of School	Mark Blackman
Inspector's name and number	Jo Fageant 104

School context

Shaftesbury is a larger than average 11-18 secondary school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The school includes around 100 boarders who bring ethnic diversity to the community. It became an academy in June 2014 and founded the Southern Academy Trust with two Church of England primary schools in March 2015. Fewer than the national average number of pupils is entitled to free school meals and pupil premium funding. The number with special education needs or disabilities is above average as is pupil mobility. The headteacher was appointed in 2012. Following three years without one, a rector has recently been appointed.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Shaftesbury School as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- Directors, governors and school leaders articulate a commitment to a discernibly Christian ethos. However, the Southern Academy Trust is still relatively new and growing. With its new governance arrangements, developing and establishing a clear Christian vision to inform work at all levels is at an early stage.
- Leaders' understanding of the teachings of Jesus results in a demonstrable commitment to the academic/professional success and wellbeing of all members of the school community.
- A focus, particularly in collective worship, on the biblical 'fruit of the spirit' is helping members of the school community to understand a Christian perspective on the school's long-established ethos.

Areas to improve

- Working with directors of the Southern Academy Trust (SAT), articulate and share an explicitly Christian vision for the school. Ensure it is used to inform all policy and practice so it shapes the learning opportunities of students and characterises the day to day life of the school.
- In partnership with the directors of the SAT, leaders should review arrangements for collective worship so that it enriches the daily life of the school. Enable it to build on the best traditions established in feeder primary schools and create opportunities for the active participation and leadership of students.

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

The academy interprets its Christian foundation in terms of 'aspiration, action, achievement'. These words consistently underpin its drive for the academic achievement, personal development and well-being of all students. This understanding gives rise to what all acknowledge is an ethos of care and ambition. As a consequence, progress is carefully monitored leading to appropriate individualised support and celebration. The focus on 'aspiration, action, achievement' with every individual means the academy has been successful in improving standards so they are comparable with or above national expectations. It has reduced gaps in the achievement of different groups of students. It has also been successful in improving attendance to better than the national average and excluding very few students. The motivating Christian belief that every individual is important and valued is deeply embedded in the life of the school. Although good at living out its mission, aspiration, action and achievement are only understood as Christian in a very general sense. The current drive to link them explicitly with the biblical 'fruit of the spirit' means that all students understand there is a Christian significance to these qualities (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control). However, a well-developed Christian understanding of them is at an early stage of development. The religious education (RE) curriculum does not specifically contribute to building this understanding. Despite this, there is widespread recognition that they have long informed the high-quality pastoral care provided by the school. Staff and students alike spontaneously use a number of these words to describe the character of their school community, the positive relationships and good behaviour within it. Poor behaviour and incidents of bullying have been reduced because a focus on these qualities runs implicitly through the school. The qualities of love, peace, kindness and goodness, in particular, result in new students describing the school as 'welcoming' and 'friendly'. This welcome is extended to boarders from many places around the world who add a rich diversity to the school. Some express their appreciation of this saying it makes their school feel like 'an international school.' This enriches students' understanding of cultural diversity first hand. The contribution these students make is seen especially clearly, for example, in European language week when some students conduct lessons for others in their first language. This develops their self-confidence as well as respect for diversity in their peers. Their academic success is also boosted by enabling them to take GCSE examinations in their first languages. The school's inclusive, Christian ethos enables these students to achieve particularly well. The ethos and organisation of the academy provide positive support for moral and social development. For example, through its democratic arrangements, students are confident their voices are heard and their influence can, and has, changed things. In its efforts to meet the diverse needs of so many students, the academy provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Money from the Shaftesbury School Foundation provides transport to enable any student to access these opportunities. This investment is another way in which the commitment to Christian inclusiveness is demonstrated. Opportunities for spiritual development are present in a variety of contexts, including RE, and some students speak with insight about this. However, evidence for the strategic planning of this provision across the curriculum is limited. Students speak confidently, however, about how they value RE as being much more than an examination subject. It is widely understood to prepare them for life in the wider world by challenging and combatting their stereotypical understandings. In this regard it reflects the Christian ethos of the academy which is informed by a belief in the unique value of every individual.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Themes chosen for collective worship explore ideas, qualities and values which contribute to the academy's Christian ethos. They help to instil the generosity of spirit and social and charitable action which characterise the school. This year's focus is the 'fruit of the spirit' in order to explore the biblical basis of the qualities which are demonstrated throughout the life of the school. Renewed involvement with a team of local church leaders from a number of different denominations ensures that worship is explicitly and overtly Christian in character. This arrangement ensures a variety of worship traditions is experienced. Biblical material, prayer and blessings are regular features as are the importance given to Jesus and the language of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Students have a good understanding of this as a result of their learning in RE. Systematic evaluation, involving students, of the impact of worship has been limited and infrequent. The evidence available reveals responses vary from positive to dismissive though behaviour is respectful. Applause at the end of worship creates a sense of audience appreciation of a presentation rather than a community act of worship. Some students are inspired by

the messages shared saying they are thought provoking and give them moral and spiritual challenges to take beyond the occasions themselves. Students do not have opportunities to contribute to planning and leading worship. They meet for worship with church leaders in house groups once a fortnight. The headteacher also leads worship with groups. The engagement of students and staff is largely passive on these occasions. Some students in Key Stage 3 comment on how this compares unfavourably with the more interactive styles of worship they experienced in their primary schools. Coming together in house groups creates a positive sense of family and belonging. However, this arrangement makes it difficult to build upon the best primary school worship experiences as students arrive and pass through the academy.

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

Since the establishment of the SAT its directors acknowledge that they hold the responsibility for establishing a Christian vision for education that informs policy and practice across all the schools involved. Their sense of commitment to this is clear but work is still at an early stage of development. In the meantime, the school's Christian foundation is made clear in documentation and the website although several features of the latter are out of date and do not reflect the academy's current policies and practices. When the headteacher took up his post the mission statement was reviewed. Three drivers (aspiration, action, achievement) capture its essence. They are being linked with Christian qualities known as the 'fruit of the spirit' outlined in St Paul's letter to the Galatian Christians. Leaders are clear that these qualities together add up to an ethos which is their aspiration for the academy community. They have long informed the pastoral care within the academy and are reflected in relationships and behaviour. Strategic planning for their impact on the curriculum, teaching and learning is less well established. Local church leaders are helping to strengthen a specifically Christian understanding of these qualities in their contributions to collective worship. This partly addresses a challenge set out in the last inspection report which suggested clearer links should be drawn between Christianity and the school's ethos. Leaders have been less successful in addressing that report's challenge about collective worship. Current arrangements still do not offer the daily worship opportunities which the school's website recognises are the entitlement of all members of the school community. At the time of the last inspection worship related activities took place in tutor group contexts. Students report that no such arrangements are currently in place. In contrast, leaders' commitment to the importance and value of religious studies is clear because all students follow a full GCSE course. Almost all sit the examination even though this means the percentage of students gaining the top grades looks less positive than when fewer were entered. Leaders have helpfully re-allocated responsibilities so the head of religious studies has more time to concentrate on this subject. They have also supported new arrangements which enable the other teachers of RE to meet with her so the department can run effectively.

Members of the local governing board are actively involved in the monitoring of teaching and learning thereby gaining a good understanding of the school's performance. What they have learned from self-evaluation strategies has enabled leaders to develop excellent, well targeted, professional development opportunities for staff. The headteacher and some governors have benefitted from diocesan training focused on promoting and evaluating the school's Christian distinctiveness. A rich understanding of this is not discernible throughout the academy community though Christian values are implicitly influential. These can be seen in ways in which the school engages with the local community, for example, helping the Lent lunches. This initiative benefits students as well as local people attending the lunches. Although the numbers attending regular parent and staff prayer meetings are few they receive prayer requests from other people who obviously value what this offers. Led by the rector, renewed good relations with local clergy from a variety of denominations enrich the Christian ethos of the academy. However, they are not at present substantially involved in anything other than in the regular leading of collective worship. There is evidence that the Christian ethos has a positive impact on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development but formalised evaluation of this is limited. Improved standards and a growing perception of the implicit Christian ethos have increased the academy's popularity in the local community.