

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary Magdalene Church of England Academy	
Springwood View Close, Sutton in Ashfield, Nottinghamshire NG17 2HR	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Southwell and Nottingham
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	2015
Name of multi-academy trust	Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham Multi Academy Trust
Date of inspection	20 October 2017
Date of last inspection	10 October 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy 141545
Executive headteacher / Head of School	Jo Redfern/Laura di Martino
Inspector's name and number	David Shannon 617

School context

St Mary Magdalene Primary Academy is a 210 pupil school, serving Sutton-in Ashfield and the surrounding villages. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A lower than average number of pupils take free school meals, and the number of disadvantaged pupils is significant but below average. The school became an academy in 2014, joining the multi-academy trust of the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham. The executive head was appointed in September 2016; the school is in a collaboration of three church primary schools, but is the only academy. The parish is served by a new incumbent, after two years without a priest.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian ethos is clear and unequivocal, sustaining all aspects of school life, and promoting values based on the life of Jesus.
- Relationships at all levels focus on trust, so that all who work at the academy feel valued, supported and affirmed.
- Collective worship is rich and exciting, with a demonstrable impact on each pupil's spiritual development.

Areas to improve

- Embed the Understanding Christianity resource within religious education (RE) so that all pupils deepen their knowledge and can demonstrate the curriculum's impact on their daily lives.
- Ensure all governors are equipped to sustain the impact of the academy's Christian values upon its staff, learners and community, evidenced from documentation and records of governor training programmes.

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

St Mary Magdalene's Academy is committed to the philosophy that every child is unique, as made in the image of God. This core value sustains all the academy's work. Staff are resolute in ensuring Christian values are at the heart of its ethos, so that standards of progress and attainment for all learners, regardless of background, are well above national averages. Relationships at all levels are modelled on the teachings of Jesus, so that all pupils feel valued and of infinite worth. Pupils know they are 'journeying together through faith to be the best they can be', so that this mission statement is a clear focus for all daily life. Most attend very well, behave in an exemplary fashion,

and confirm that St Mary's is bullying free. A prayer table in the main corridor is used by pupils as an inspiration to write prayers, or as a place to go to resolve squabbles by looking at the core values of the academy. Each class helped prepare a display board about friendship, love, hope, fellowship, thankfulness and forgiveness, so that pupils can proudly indicate how their work portrayed the academy's values. Pupils can explain how their values are linked with the Bible, and testify to how they have underpinned their day-to-day working together. They give the example of forgiveness being at the heart of all relationships. The school recognises the importance of pupils learning about people from a range of cultures, backgrounds and beliefs, so that they readily accept that there are global cultures different from their own. RE is wide-ranging, embracing Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist beliefs and their cultural values. St Mary's Academy is instilling in its pupils a clear sense of a Christian heritage, as well as preparing them well for living in a multi-cultural society, with a global context. Older pupils can draw effective contrasts and comparisons between world faiths and Christianity, placing alternative world views alongside the teaching of the Bible. Multi-faith days enable children to explore other faiths, so that they fully appreciate the significance of Ramadan, Diwali and Yom Kippur to other faiths. Thus RE learning has a clear impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, so that it is a pillar of the whole curriculum. St Mary's is much involved with the local community, for example it reaches out through the Maun Valley Citizens' group. These pupils are taking their ideas for community improvement to the local MP. Run by pupils for pupils, the group ensures that the environment, God's creation and each child, made in God's image, are nurtured and protected.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

There is a rich and exciting programme of collective worship, which effectively promotes the Christian values of the academy. Pupils respond actively by answering questions and posing 'hard questions' of their own. Pupils enthusiastically gather for the various acts of worship, each class being led in by a pupil carrying the class cross. A candle is lit at the start of all worship, and this candle is re-formed each year from the remnants of its predecessor, reminding pupils of responsibilities they inherit. A worship team of pupils plans, prepares, leads, and evaluates the worship programme, so that participants have ownership of worship. The head of school is committed to a lively and varied programme, which involves all staff, every pupil and key representatives from the local worshipping communities. Worship is predominantly Christian, but inclusive, both nourishing those of faith and challenging those of none. Christian values form the headings for worship, reinforcing the academy's focus on friendship, forgiveness and love. Festivals such as Harvest, Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Pentecost are celebrated, and pupils can explain the significance of each for themselves. Pupils adore singing, can list and perform their favourite songs, and the worship songs from each day echo around the school as pupils spontaneously recall them later in the day. Drama is used to engage pupils in Bible stories, so that each pupil knows stories both from the Old and New Testament. Pupils use liturgy at the start and end of each worship session, so that they are familiar with Anglican greetings and responses. Each worship session ends with the pledge that we are 'learning together to be the best we can be'. Worship augments the RE syllabus, bringing colour and texture to themes such as creation, the Trinity, Christ's divinity and his use of prayer. Prayer is a key aspect of academy life, stimulated by a prayer area in each class, and the prayer box in the main corridor. Pupils understand and employ the four strands of prayer, using thank you, sorry, praise and please prayers according to context. For example each month children lead prayers for the needs of the local community, informed by the Maun Valley Citizens. The prayer garden is a special place outdoors, where pupils may think and reflect during playtimes and lunchtimes. Academy worship in the adjacent parish church has become more frequent, helping pupils to build on close ties with the local Anglican community of worshippers.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE is cross-curricular, taught with enthusiasm, with excellent resources to stimulate higher level thinking. The Agreed Syllabus is being augmented by the introduction of the Understanding Christianity resource. With training from the diocese, class teachers are increasingly confident at approaching topics. RE is conscientiously delivered by all staff with an infectious enthusiasm, which thus stimulates the learners. The head of school has taken responsibility for the subject, and brought to it both clarity of planning and a new vision for its content. The assistant headteacher has organised the tracking of progress, so that RE is enjoyed by all pupils, irrespective of ability or background. All pupils reach age related expectations by the end of each key stage. Higher level skills and deeper understanding are fostered by the use of hard questions, which are answered honestly and carefully by class teachers, with age appropriate responses. Pupils show good knowledge of Bible stories both in the Old and New Testament, and can explain how their studies have improved their own attitudes and behaviour. For example they readily accept differing views to their own. They understood key parables of Jesus, and can detect the moral purpose behind them. They refer to miracles as evidence of Christ's divinity, and can illustrate from his life actions they should take to follow his example. Pupils are familiar with the lives of major saints, and the different roles saints play within various Christian denominations, for example within Roman Catholicism. A display board in the academy's entrance hall offers a 'pen portrait' of St Mary Magdalene, their patron saint. Pupils recall, from visits to

St Mary's church, the significance of key features in the church, and can thus relate them to their own Christian journey. Most can articulate the role of the font in baptism, explaining its significance at the start of their Christian pilgrimage. All enjoyed the opportunity afforded by Eucharist services, which were resuming after two years without a parish priest. The new incumbent is taking an increasing role in the academy, and his impact has already encouraged pupils to take their parents and families to feast day celebrations in the church.

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

Outstanding Christian leadership, emanating from the strong personal commitment of the school leaders, empowers every area of academy life. All the leadership team strive for excellence as an outworking of their Christian service, so that the academy's ethos is explicit in all they do. Pupils are also leaders in school improvement, not only influencing classroom activity, but also the worship programme and community involvement. The senior leadership team is cohesive and mutually supportive, viewing every obstacle as a challenge, and hence all learners succeed and none is left behind. Gospel values pervade all relationships, so that the most uncomfortable conversation is underpinned by mutual respect and boundless love. All staff show unswerving commitment to Christian values, so that the mission of the academy is reinforced by all. All staff have opportunities to develop skills useful for church school leadership, such as the teaching assistant who works effectively with the worship group. The action points from the last inspection have been completed; worship is now a core strength of St Mary's. The academy is training new governors, after a time when long-serving governors have retired, so that experienced Christian governors have been recruited from the collaboration. The chair and vice-chair of governors are developing their roles as monitors of the academy's direction. There is a clear induction programme to assist new recruits to participate fully in the Christian distinctiveness which this academy offers. The governors ensure that RE and worship are fully compliant with statutory obligations. Leaders have benefitted greatly from input from the diocese on data-handling, the new Understanding Christianity resource in RE, and the key indicators of outstanding Christian distinctiveness. Parents and community representatives endorse the aims of the academy and are active in supporting class literacy activities and extra-curricular events. The local community is proud of their church academy, and a recent survey shows over-whelming endorsement of all for which it stands. This outstanding academy is a shining example of Christian service to its pupils, and to their community.

SIAMS report October 2017 St Mary Magdalene CE Academy, Sutton-in-Ashfield Nottinghamshire, NG17 2HR