

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Chad's CE Academy

Rhodes Avenue, Uppermill, Oldham, OL3 6EE	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Manchester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	2012
Date of inspection	9 March 2017
Date of last inspection	June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary controlled 140589
Executive Headteacher Head of School	Peter Burnley Frankie Marsh
Inspector's name and number	Gillian Rhodes 657

School context

St Chad's is a slightly above average sized school, set in the rural district of Saddleworth. The school has extensive grounds. The area is socially and economically advantaged. The percentage of children from minority ethnic groups is below the national average. A small number of children speak English as an additional language. The proportion of children with special educational needs and disabilities is below the national average. Since the previous SIAS inspection the school has converted to academy status. From Spring 2017 it will lead a multi-academy trust (MAT). The school is led by an executive headteacher and a recently appointed head of school.

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

- The clear expression of the Christian values of respect, hope and love, which underpin all aspects of school life, inspires the ambitious vision and high expectations of school leaders for the development of the school and its pupils.
- Links and partnerships with the local church and community and the school's role as a teaching school are testament to the school's living mission to serve others in the spirit of Christian stewardship and love.
- Inclusive, values-led collective worship inspires spiritual reflection, moral challenge and positive social interaction throughout the school community.
- High quality teaching and learning in religious education (RE) challenge pupils to consider questions of meaning and purpose and make a significant contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.

Areas to improve

- Further the school's Christian mission to embody and share its values of faith, service, hope and love as it takes on the leadership of a MAT.

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

Christian values are at the heart of this inspirational school and underpin all aspects of school life. School leaders, staff and pupils are able to explain the mission to 'innovate, ignite curiosity, learn creatively, love unconditionally and serve others'. Pupils speak enthusiastically of their pride in the school where learning is fun and where friendships are strong. Across the school pupils' progress and attainment are consistently above national expectations. Attendance figures are above national averages and an ethos of Christian support and service to others underpins the school's compassionate response to any isolated issues.

In RE and collective worship children experience and develop spiritual understanding by asking and responding to questions of meaning and purpose. The use of Philosophy for Children across all age groups supports this spiritual development by promoting independent thought and personal response to difficult and complex issues from an early age. In a Key Stage 1 RE lesson, children gathered to see loaves, fish and a net and the question 'What do you think?' Through a variety of activities children raised further questions, such as how a small amount of food could feed 5000 people, and spoke of kindness, love and service.

Exemplary behaviour across the school is rooted in the school's emphasis on positive social interaction and its core Christian values of respect, hope and love. Pupils take responsibility for their own conduct and celebrate each others' achievements. The local team rector highlighted how when she announced the winner of a competition, the other children responded immediately by congratulating the winner and taking delight in her success. Staff explain that relationships are positive and supportive. 'We are like a big family. We support, care and nurture each other.'

Through links with a school in Namibia, including exchange visits by school leaders, children develop excellent awareness of Christianity across the world. They experience local diversity within Christianity through links with different local churches and their representatives. Evidence from children's work in RE and from worship plans and evaluations demonstrates a strong emphasis on making comparisons between a range of world religions. Year 6 children were able to discuss with great maturity how people of different faiths or none might respond to the statement 'The Bible is a sacred text'. Consequently RE plays a significant part in determining the Christian character of the school and it provides challenge and excitement for pupils. A member of the school council explained, 'RE is fun because we have good teachers.' Learning creatively through art, drama, outdoor experiences, visits and visitors in RE and across the whole curriculum ensures pupils' excellent SMSC development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is central to the life of the school. It is inclusive and open for all to participate from their own faith perspective. Prayer and praise engage all pupils and adults. The impact of worship on relationships is outstanding because social interactions across the school are rooted in the Christian values inspired by worship. Biblical material and the teachings of Jesus are related explicitly in worship to the school's core values and the lives of pupils and other people, both inspirational and ordinary.

Worship plans are based on the Church's year, Christian festivals and key times in other world faiths. Plans incorporate issues relevant to the life of the school and to the wider world. As a result, worship themes inspire a high level of spiritual reflection and moral challenge in both pupils and adults. St Chad's supports charitable organisations and events locally, nationally and globally. Pupils speak proudly of their fund-raising for the Booth Centre, the Poppy Appeal, Children in Need and their linked school in Namibia. A member of the school council explained, 'We are doing God's work.'

Prayer punctuates the school day and children welcome the opportunity to write prayers for worship and reflection areas in classrooms. The pupil prayer group is very confident in planning and leading both school worship and parish worship in the nearby St Chad's church. The impact of this on the spiritual life of the community is recognised by all groups. Governors speak of the 'authenticity and creativity' of pupil-led worship. This has led to reciprocal leading of worship in school by members of the church council. These links inspire spiritual unity and a sense of belonging.

As part of their understanding that prayer is a conversation with God, pupils are able to describe God as 'three in one'. They explain that their prayers and hymns may be directed to God as Father, Son or Holy Spirit. The colourful imagery of the three stranded, three coloured plait woven together as part of the worship focus in the school hall is effective in supporting pupils' understanding.

Collective worship is led in school by senior leaders and staff and regularly by representatives of the local Anglican and Methodist churches. Coupled with the variety of settings in the school and local churches, this provides a rich experience of worship for pupils. The use of the extensive school grounds for worship and for outdoor learning contributes to pupils' spiritual experiences and understanding of the world and their stewardship of God's creation.

Monitoring and evaluation of worship is carried out by all groups in the school. Pupil, staff and parent voice surveys led to the inclusion of more Bible stories and a wider range of songs in worship. As a result, spiritual awareness has deepened.

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

Leaders at St Chad's confidently articulate, model and promote a vision for the school and a whole school ethos rooted in values which have a distinctly Christian foundation. Leadership is spread across all groups in the school community and includes pupils. All speak with one voice of the impact of respect, service, trust and love. 'There is a sense of belonging and a willingness to be involved,' explained a governor. Monitoring and evaluation of performance is rigorous but the open, honest and supportive approach is valued by staff. 'I feel trusted to have the freedom to do a good job,' said a teacher.

The school curriculum is rooted in a rationale which highlights a collective moral purpose. Teaching and learning in all curriculum areas and in wider school life promote pupils' SMSC development. In all aspects of provision and practice at St Chad's the focus is on 'leading a life of selfless service for the good of humanity and the planet and finding a sense of purpose and personal meaning for your existence'. This inclusive principle, rooted in Christian values, ensures outstanding conduct, attitudes and relationships among all members of the school community.

Parents speak warmly of the welcome they receive in school and of the 'acts of kindness and tolerance' they witness. They appreciate the styling of homework as 'challenges' and the interest it sparks in their children. They value the school's ability to broaden the horizons of pupils. For example, pupils took the lead in seeking raffle prizes for a school family social event by speaking and writing to local business people. Subsequent feedback praised the courtesy and confidence of the pupils.

Links between the school and the local church and wider community are strong and benefit all those involved. Participation in the Whit Walk and in the Uppermill Christmas lights switch-on effectively develops pupils' understanding of their local community. Conversation across the generations through visits to local care homes develops pupils' social and cultural awareness. The visits inspire compassion in the pupils and joy in the residents. Close links between the school and local clergy are highly valued by both partners. The team rector is recently appointed but is already a visible presence and a pastoral support in school. She in turn recognises the significant contribution made by pupils and staff to the life of the church. School services attended by all pupils take place in church. Members of the prayer group lead worship on these occasions and regularly at parish services. As a result worship is a shared experience valued by the school and church community.

Leadership of RE and collective worship is currently the responsibility of the head of school and has a very high profile. This skilful, enthusiastic and knowledgeable leadership ensures that both aspects are very well resourced and managed. Links and partnerships are an essential aspect of the character of St Chad's. The emphasis on service and shared learning is demonstrated effectively through the school's role as a teaching school and its plans to lead a MAT from Spring 2017. As a teaching school, St Chad's places great emphasis on professional development for teachers at all stages in their careers. This provides particularly effective opportunities for the school's own staff who lead learning in the teaching school and already work successfully in partnership with staff from schools joining the MAT. The motto *Sola Fide* (By Faith Alone) has been chosen for the MAT as a clear indication of the ethos and character which underpin outstanding present practice and future aspiration.

SIAMS report March 2017, St Chad's CE Academy, Uppermill, Oldham, OL3 6EE