

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bishop Rawstone Church of England Academy

Highfield Road, Croston, Leyland, PR26 9HH	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Blackburn
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	September 2011
Date of inspection	13 December 2017
Date of last inspection	28 February & 1 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Secondary Academy - 137296
Headteacher	Paul Cowley
Inspector's name and number	Allyson Taylor 768

School context

Bishop Rawstone Academy is an average size secondary school which admits students aged 11-16 from a rural area. There are 927 students on roll and the school is oversubscribed. The proportion of students with additional learning or personal needs and those eligible for funding for disadvantaged pupils is generally below that seen nationally. The academy has historic links to five parishes. A number of staff changes have taken place since the previous denominational inspection. The headteacher is a National Leader of Education and the academy is a designated Teaching School. This year the community has been affected by the death of two former students.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bishop Rawstone as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Each member of the academy community, adult and student, is valued and enabled to flourish as a child of God.
- Pastoral care is exemplary and demonstrates how the academy lives out its deeply held Christian values. Leaders and all staff provide excellent role models of hope and compassion; they genuinely care for each individual student and their families.
- Students are supported to believe in themselves, each other and their teachers, so that they have a secure sense of self-worth and develop skills for their future life and learning.
- Religious education (RE) is key to the success of the academy and gives students a growing sense of their place in our multi-cultural world.
- Spiritual development is enhanced by the richly creative curriculum and extra-curricular provision.
- Through worship and links with local clergy, students and staff are taken to the threshold of faith and enabled to reflect positively on their own views and beliefs.

Areas to improve

- Extend students' role, along with that of the worship council, in independently planning and leading acts of worship on a more regular basis so that student engagement and appreciation of worship increases.
- All teachers to support students to lead tutor group worship so that the experience of worship is more consistent.
- Ensure that governors and senior leaders engage more fully with national Church of England policy and guidance in order to inform policies and the academy's strategic direction as a successful and dynamic Christian-based learning community.

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

Christian values, like peace and fellowship, create firm roots from which students flourish. Students are well-known and valued and so enabled to grow and learn together in a community which is a place of safety, security and love. Individual talents and interests are nurtured and this exemplifies the approach to valuing all God's children. As a result of the aspirational Christian character, most students achieve consistently strong results in GCSEs. This is particularly impressive in the context of the recent changes to examination assessments.

There is an uncompromising stance on attendance which reflects the aim that all achieve. Students' welfare, including their mental health, is of paramount importance. Pastoral support and care are outstanding. In keeping with Christian teaching, members of staff are true 'extra milers' who are deeply concerned that each young person is supported and also challenged to be the best that they can be. At times, 'tough love' is needed and this is seen in the behaviour policy and practice. Staff work tirelessly with parents to help them to support their children. A small number of students are welcomed from other schools where they have been excluded. The fact that these are embraced, welcomed and enabled to learn is testament to the academy's deeply Christian character. This academy is a Christian community in action, not just in intention. Additional support sessions after the school day are sought by students and willingly provided by teachers. This is indicative of the strong sense of community and mutual cooperation which underpins the daily life of the academy.

Students trust their teachers. They appreciate that adults will help them and want them to be happy in themselves and so achieve. Care for those who may be more vulnerable is given sensitively and generously. One student said that moving to Bishop Rawstorne was 'the best thing that had happened to him.' They are proud to belong to a Christian school and are its best ambassadors.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is actively promoted through the rich curriculum and extra-curricular activities offered. Lesson plans refer to these aspects. However, the understanding and definition of what spirituality means at Bishop Rawstorne is not consistent. This limits planning for spiritual development across the curriculum.

RE makes an important contribution to the Christian character of the academy. Within the RE syllabus, students are made aware that Christianity is itself a multi-cultural world faith.

Students know that many of their peers who attend other schools, do not have the same emphasis on Christian values as at their academy. As one said, 'we are kind here, we treat each other well and we are responsible for our own actions.' This is evidence that the academy enables most of its students to grow into thoughtful, reflective and mature young adults, ready to face the challenges of the next phase of their life and learning.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is the thread which weaves the year groups, staff and clergy into a community based on the chosen Christian values, most importantly the value of fellowship. The deputy headteacher, curriculum lead for RE and worship and local clergy support staff to plan worship relevant to students. For example, providing opportunities to reflect on the meaning of Advent. Worship demonstrates how central the person and teaching of Jesus is to Christians. Weekly year group worship and tutor group worship is supplemented by services in the parish church. These mark significant events in the church's and school's year. Services of welcome and leaving 'book-end' the students' time at school from Year 7 to Year 11. Worship is well-supported by clergy and members of the local churches. As a result, students have a good understanding of aspects of Anglican liturgy, but are less familiar with the traditions of other denominations within Christianity. The loss of the youth worker to a diocesan post is keenly felt; he was instrumental in establishing the student worship council in 2016. Some tutor group worship is planned and led by students, but this is not consistent across all tutor groups. In some classes, staff continue to lead all worship. Consequently, students do not have the same opportunities to develop their voice and spiritual life through planning and delivering worship.

The academy has recognised that the student worship council is under-utilised and it is keen to take on further responsibility. Plans are at an early stage to allow these committed and articulate young adults to develop further in their role of monitoring worship. This includes a keenness to repeat the use of the outdoors for worship, after an act held in remembrance of a former pupil who died. A quiet room is designated for students to take time for reflection but this is rarely used. At this time, students have limited opportunities to write or offer their own thoughts in prayer in tutor group or weekly year group worship. This, combined with inconsistencies in students' experience of tutor group worship, prevents the grade from being higher.

Much of worship is based on themes linked to the Christian calendar. However, worship is also responsive to current events. As a result, students are regularly encouraged to take action in the service of others. Notable is the fundraising for a local charity for the homeless, the Brick Project. This has a significant impact on students' understanding of how people may become homeless, often through no fault of their own. Support for Oxfam, which was initiated by the head boy, demonstrates how worship and the wider Christian ethos of the academy helps students understand their place in our diverse world.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Standards in GCSE results for RE are excellent, with a significant number of students attaining the higher marks. Results are significantly above those achieved nationally. RE in both key stages has a very high profile and so strongly affirms the Christian character of the academy. As almost all students sit GCSE RE, the subject is central to developing students' understanding of and respect for those of different faiths and cultures. The focus on Islam and Christianity is challenging students to consider how there are differences but also factors common to both faiths. Students in Key Stage 3 receive a good overview of six major world faiths. This means they are well-prepared for the academic rigour of the GCSE course across Key Stage 4.

Students generally express positive views of RE. They state that the subject 'broadens horizons; it opens our eyes' and gives insights into the wider world. The vast majority of students recognise the academic and personal importance of RE. Most enjoy the practical aspects and find topics which link RE with other subjects, for example the Holocaust, stimulating and of great interest. Feedback on tasks is comprehensive and enables students to know what they are doing well and how to improve the standard of their work. It is impressive that students are regularly given an opportunity to extend their thinking and to redraft work. Work demonstrates that students apply higher order thinking skills. They are confident to ask questions, share their thoughts and to listen to the views of others. RE, therefore, supports learning across the curriculum as students learn to analyse, explore, summarise, reflect and respond to topics studied.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good, and indeed growing, with the demands of the new syllabus. The subject leadership structure, with new staff in post from September, is already bearing fruit. The curriculum leader and lead teacher are skilfully modelling and developing other teachers' confidence when teaching unfamiliar material in RE. Their mentoring support and expertise is already having a positive effect on the standards of teaching and so learning. Including core Christian values into planning means students have a coherent sense of the main elements of the Christian narrative, as told in the Bible. This is an important development since new staff took up their posts at the start of term. Action plans for RE are sharply focused on ensuring students achieve and make progress in line with English. This demonstrates the high status of the subject.

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

Leaders at all levels are excellent role models for staff, parents and students. They articulate a powerful vision, based on John 10:10 (I come to bring you life, life in all its fullness). This is lived out through the chosen values to create a culture of 'Aspire, Believe, Achieve'. High academic standards, good overall progress and positive relationships characterise the academy. Leaders are relentless in their passionate commitment that every pupil will succeed. They regard this as their Christian mission.

As leaders model the vision and values so well, staff buy into that vision. Teachers expect much of themselves and of their students. There is a strong team spirit where support and camaraderie enable staff to work together to nurture each student. Staff welfare and wellbeing are given a high priority.

A common theme shared by leaders is that they are following the example of Christ in serving each other. The foundations of the academy, soon to celebrate its 60th Anniversary, are unashamedly and proudly Christian in origin. The academy serves families from its founding parishes but is inclusive and welcoming to those who wish to have the 'Bishop Rawstorne experience'. It is clear that the academy is held in high regard by the local community and beyond. Its spirit of service extends to others schools through admirable work as a Teaching school. This manifests itself in the number of former students who return to work or pursue their careers under the auspices of Bishop Rawstorne. Leaders are conscious of the need to develop future leaders of church schools.

Partnerships with the local churches and community are mutually beneficial. Students themselves, express the view that attending church is important to them. The school is fortunate to have recruited teachers of such calibre to lead RE and worship. This proves how leaders give priority to these aspects of the school as a church school. Statutory requirements as a church school are met.

Governors and senior leaders know the academy very well. They provide strategic direction as a church school and continuously seek to improve provision. While governors are familiar with some Church of England guidance, academy policies do not consistently reflect this. As a result, some documents require updating to show leaders' engaging with national guidance. The headteacher is ably supported by his deputy and senior team. Their enthusiasm and commitment is palpable and attributed to the extended family feel created by the Christian character. The headteacher embodies the aspirational ethos of the school. Under his forthright and determined leadership, the roots of the school as a church school are strong and give students the secure foundations for now and for their future. As one parent stated 'this is how life can be.'