

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Welton Church of England Academy

Well Lane, Welton, Daventry NN11 2JZ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Diocese	Peterborough
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	1 October 2012
Name of multi-academy trust (MAT)	David Ross Education Trust
Date of inspection	18 September 2017
Date of last inspection	19 November 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary academy 138840
Interim Associate Principal	Mike Colcombe
Inspector's name and number	The Revd Dr Jason Phillips 598

School context

Welton is a popular, smaller than average primary academy of 127 pupils. Most pupils are White British and come from outside of the catchment area. The proportion of the pupils receiving free school meals is low. The academy is part of the David Ross Education Trust. Over the last year, the academy has experienced a period of substantial change with three interim headteachers, a significant renewal of governors, a new chair of governors, new vicar and some changes of staff.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Welton CE Academy as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- The leadership within the MAT and academy have been insufficiently focussed on the church school dimension until recently so the academy has not developed as rapidly as it ought against expected standards.
- Relationships and pupil behaviour are strong due to the development of high pupil self-esteem and the impact of Christian values across the academy especially respect.
- Religious education (RE) makes a positive contribution to pupils' attitudes towards religion and religious ideas, to pupils' respect and empathy and to their multi-cultural awareness.
- Collective worship effectively develops pupils' awareness of the Trinity, Christ and the Bible and their relevance to the academy's Christian community as well as their behaviour choices.

Areas to improve

- As soon as possible, with the support of the diocese, train all staff and governors in using the SIAMS framework to make evaluations and strategic decisions ensuring these are reported upon at each full local governors' meetings.
- As quickly as possible following SIAMS training, ensure the academy and MAT work with the diocese to shape the MAT aims to the local church school context. These aims should be clearly demonstrated in a provision map document showing how these will be developed and applied, including through middle leadership staff development.
- Develop a theologically based understanding of spirituality with representatives from the diocese, academy and MAT working together. This should be explained through policy and provision mapping documents for a range of stakeholders showing how Christian spirituality will be developed across all aspects of academy life.

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

The academy has a long Christian tradition supported by the implicit promotion of Christian values that continues to shape the nature of this school. Although not focussed during the period of instability in the school, this inherent way of being has kept the academy grounded in its Christian purpose. However, since January, the academy's Christian values have been revisited and a new core set of six values introduced (relationship, reverence, responsibility, reflection, resilience, reconciliation) with respect as the overarching focus. The attention to respect is already having a demonstrable impact and so pupils can articulate how and why respect influences their behaviour choices, for example. The academy is not yet good because these new values are not fully embedded. Further, these values are not clearly expressed and considered in relation to the MAT's overarching aims. This limits their impact as staff and pupils are not always clear how the MAT's aims and the Christian values jointly influence academy life. Nevertheless, the Christian character of the academy results in pupils with high self-esteem and who behave extremely well with courtesy and care. Attendance is generally above the national average and where there are issues these are sensitively broached in a caring way. The sense of the academy being a Christian family is clear and this gives the children the emotional security needed to learn well. One child said, 'We're a school family and we all respect each other and look out for each other.' A sense of care and responsibility for others beyond the academy is developed effectively through charitable endeavours, for example, by supporting Comic Relief. The majority of teaching and learning at the academy is good and often better, resulting in attainment by the end of Year 6 that is well above the national average and progress that is good for most pupils. The academy is dedicated to the spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of its pupils. Development is enhanced by the MAT's positive impact in providing wide curricular and extra-curricular activities to promote individual talents and interests alongside the academy's forest school's provision. Spiritual development is clearly evident, for example, in the confidence of the pupils to express their thoughts clearly. However, it occurs due to wide provision and not from a focussed, systematic and clear theological approach. This means that staff do not have a clear framework from which to work and so pupils' spiritual development is ad-hoc. This is a further reason the academy is not yet good. Pupils are given opportunities to lead in different ways, for example, through the pupil council. These opportunities enable pupils to contribute their evaluations and thoughts to the development of the academy and enhance their sense of belonging. RE makes a most positive impact on the character of the academy. It builds upon pupils' confidence to explore and articulate ideas when considering a range of religions. This deepens pupils' respect. The pupils relish exploring difference and similarity within world faiths and cultural diversity. A recent example of this is the enthusiastic comparison of Muslim Aid and Christian Aid charitable work as an expression of Muslim and Christian faith by Year 6. Pupils have a growing awareness of Christianity as a diverse world faith and benefit from a range of denominational representation amongst the staff team. This represents progress since the last inspection and has a clear impact upon the pupils' respect for others.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Children talk about collective worship as an important aspect of what it means for them to be a church school. They explain clearly how Bible stories and learning about God are what make acts of worship a special and distinct time in the school day and why this is important to them. The whole academy understands collective worship is a time for the academy to come together and hear about the Christian message. It is also a time for joy and celebration when children's actions in living out the Christian message are recognised. The vicar works skilfully and closely with the academy in planning collective worship and in linking acts of worship to the academy's core values and biblical example. This gives acts of worship a focus and sense of direction and increases the impact of the experience. One child gave the biblical example of friends taking the paralysed man to Jesus for healing and explained how they saw this as illustrating their responsibility to care for friends and others. The lighting of a candle and special words of welcome to commence acts of worship signals the time as 'coming before God.' This creates an atmosphere of calm to which children respond with an appropriate sense of respect and reverence. Further, the language and form of the welcome and closing words mirror some of local Anglican practice. The vicar and parish reader have a regular presence at the academy and pupils worship in St Martin's Church for the key Christian festivals of Easter, Christmas and Harvest. As a consequence, pupils develop some awareness and appreciation of the Anglican tradition, especially how it is expressed locally. Prayers are an integral part of worship and are related to the main message. Children have a mature understanding of the purpose of prayer and consider that God listens to anybody who prays whether they have a faith or not. Pupils engage well with collective worship, especially when interactive. As a result, both pupils and staff are most positive about collective worship and its impact upon them and their wellbeing. However, pupil opportunities to plan, lead and evaluate collective worship are limited and the key reason the impact of collective worship is not yet outstanding. Children have a growing understanding of the Trinity. They speak readily of God as Trinity as well as articulating some awareness of 'The Fruits of the Spirit' demonstrating a willingness to grapple with mystery. Further, pupils can discuss their views on the nature of God, Jesus and the Bible. One pupil wrote in evaluation, 'I may not believe in God but I believe in the morals and goodness behind Bible stories.' Acts of worship provide increasing opportunities for children to be still and

to reflect, contributing to their spiritual growth. Governors have carried out some insightful monitoring of the quality of acts of worship and have identified developments. These have been fed back to the local governing body and some improvements made. However, a minimal understanding of the SIAMS framework limits the focus and rigour of development.

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

During the period of instability, the focus on the church school dimension has not been as strong as should be. Until recently the MAT has not had capacity to support this church school in developing their Christian ethos or to nuance the training of staff as leaders of church schools. An example of this is that the MAT has not supported Welton in its delegated responsibility to shape overall MAT aims to the local church school context. Further, the academy has not had much connection with the diocese. This has meant that leadership has not been up to date with expectations for church schools, for example, in the use of the SIAMS school inspection framework as a development tool. However, key staff and governors have remained committed to the vision of Welton as a church school. To some extent through their commitment, they have carried the academy during the period of instability especially in ensuring RE and collective worship have impact. Further, the academy has continued to benefit from its historical implicit Christian approach. Since the appointment of the very experienced chair and highly effective vicar there has been a much more concerted approach to develop Welton's church school dimension. An example of this is the renewal and promotion of six core Christian values across the work of the school. A further example is the priority for the professional development of staff as middle leaders of church schools identified on this year's academy development plan. Appropriate progress against the action points from the last inspection had been made. However, with the appointment of new staff and governors a revision of these is now necessary. The leader for RE and collective worship continues to lead with skill and commitment, despite limited support during the instability. She ensures that RE and collectively worship not only meet statutory requirements but have a good impact upon the academy. There has been regular monitoring by governors and the worship leader that has brought about some improvements, for example, in planning for collective worship. However, a limited understanding of the SIAMS framework has meant these evaluations are not always as focussed as they might be. There has been a clear raising of the bar since the appointment of the new chair of governors in holding the MAT and academy to account. An outcome of this, for example, is in the most recent process of recruiting a principal where a clear expectation that an ability to prosper the church school dimension is central to the selection process. The academy has effective and productive links with parents and the wider community including St Martin's Church. Despite the instability of the last year, they remain very committed to this church school because of its positive engagement with them and the contribution it makes to the locality. All stakeholders rightly recognise that the Christian ethos of this academy enables a learning environment that results in a strong sense of care for every member of the academy. Consequently, every child feels valued. This in turn gives rise to high academic standards where attainment is consistently above the national average and progress is generally good. However, the period of unstable leadership has resulted in progress not being as strong as it ought for some higher attaining pupils. Responding to this need, the leadership with the support of MAT improvement officers have put in place robust plans and strategies, although it is too early in the term for them to be showing impact. The MAT supports the academy well in enabling wider provision, for example, sporting and musical opportunities. This contributes to the all-round development of the pupils especially spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. The pupils leave this academy well prepared for future educational opportunities with Christian values and concepts to support and guide them.

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