

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Holmer Church of England Academy	
Holmer Road Hereford HR4 9RX	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Hereford
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	1 December 2011
Date of inspection	2 February 2017
Date of last inspection	23 March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 137731
Headteacher	Jayne Maund
Inspector's name and number	Karen Surrall 842

School context

Holmer Academy has increased in size since the last inspection and now comprises of 14 classes serving around 400 pupils. The current headteacher has been in post since April 2015, having served as co - headteacher for 18 months before this. There are good links with Holmer church, whose incumbent has been in post for just over two years. The school has been a stand-alone academy since before the last SIAS inspection. The numbers of disadvantaged pupils or those with special educational needs or disabilities is below the national average. Attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average. There is an independent onsite pre-school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Holmer Academy as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The strong leadership of the headteacher and senior leadership team, who have a clear vision for the school as a church school, ensures that there is a highly and effective distinctive Christian ethos.
- The partnership between the school and the church is particularly strong and contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.
- Collective worship is inspirational so that all stakeholders understand their own spiritual journey and are enabled to use prayer and reflection as part of their daily lives.
- Children who fully understand the Christian foundation of the school's vision and values and reflect these values in their behaviour and commitment to others so that their behaviour is outstanding.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that governors' monitoring is more evaluative so that the impact of their work can be identified more clearly.
- Broaden the children's experiences of other communities so that they are able to make more explicit links between the faiths they encounter and the multi-cultural nature of the society they live in.

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

The recently reviewed prospectus articulates a vision based on 'God the Father, God, the Son and God the Holy Spirit' which clearly outlines the high expectations that the school has for itself and for its pupils. As a result, aspirations for pupils ensure that they achieve well academically and the needs of more vulnerable children are met. Families feel well supported and attribute this directly to the school's distinctive Christian character. Consequently, attendance issues are addressed promptly and there have been no exclusions since the last inspection. There is a close sense of family and community across the school. 'We are a team' explained a year 6 child as she proudly explained the imposing prayer tree which enhances the entrance area. Dedicated staff know the pupils individually and describe the school as a fellowship based on Christian values that support pupil's personal development and wellbeing. As a result, behaviour is outstanding. Where it falls below the expected high standard, children know they will be treated with compassion and justice.

The values of the school are deeply embedded as a 'golden thread' underpinning all aspects of the school's work. They are completely understood by pupils and are readily explained in terms of the Christian faith. Reverence was explained as a 'deep respect for God and for each other'. Religious education (RE) and collective worship contribute very well to the school's Christian values. Other areas of the curriculum are beginning to identify how they too can support pupil's SMSC understanding. RE teaches learners thoroughly about the different world faiths. Their knowledge is considerable so that they understand how faith makes a difference to the way people lead their lives. They can relate this directly to the school's Christian values and to their own lives. The school's lead role in local multi-faith days has helped the children to see the relevance of their academic knowledge to the world they live in. The academy does not have sufficient links with groups of different faiths and cultures for pupils to fully appreciate other communities both nationally and globally.

The school has a well-developed understanding of spirituality so that its distinctive Christian character makes a significant contribution to the SMSC development of all pupils. The much-loved spiritual garden, planned and created by the school council, is seen by all stakeholders to exemplify the partnership between the church and the school. This partnership, which has grown in strength over the last two years, has seen a number of exciting initiatives including a chaplaincy, Open the Book sessions, I SingPop and an after-school Bible class. These provide pupils with regular times when they can ask difficult questions, such as 'how do you pray' to trusted adults, supporting the school's spiritual work. There are regular, planned occasions for children to engage in high quality experiences so that many pupils are beginning to develop their own spiritual journey.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is inspiring and inclusive and is at the heart of the school's mission to its pupils. As such, it filters into every area of school life, firmly underpinning the school's values and Christian character. Careful thought has been put into every aspect of worship times so that a real sense of spirituality infuses this time together. Children are welcomed by beautiful images and music. Lights are dimmed to allow a member of each class to present a candle to the worship table. Having greeted each other with the Peace, children enthusiastically sing the school hymn based on the current value and listen attentively to the worship leader. Children unilaterally agree that they enjoy this time together and see it as a time to think about God and about their day. All stakeholders readily acknowledge the difference that these times make to their lives. 'The time to reflect generally makes us nicer people' explained a child in year 5.

Worship is clearly structured around local Anglican practice and the increasingly strong links with the local church, including the Open the Book team, are readily recognised as supporting pupil's SMSC development. Teaching is biblically based, centred on the person of Jesus and readily supports the school's distinctive Christian character and Christian values. All staff are expected to attend worship, including office staff, and as a result there is a strong fellowship between both staff and pupil's. All teaching staff plan and lead worship times and children too are regularly involved. Children in each class lead their weekly class celebrations to which parents are invited. Older children are gaining in confidence to plan and lead Key Stage worship times and are doing so with increasing frequency, often with minimal input from adults. Ideas discussed in worship frequently lead to charitable actions such as support for local good causes.

Termly monitoring of collective worship is undertaken by the collective worship lead and includes the school council's views. Whilst her work clearly highlights areas for development each term, governors are not yet rigorous in ensuring that they evaluate the impact of changes made. Changes made to worship have ensured there are clear guidelines for what must be included in each act of worship, including greetings, Bible references, teaching about the

current value and a time of prayer and reflection. Consequently, collective worship has a strong focus on God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and learners understand the central position Jesus has in the Christian faith.

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

The strong leadership of the headteacher and senior leadership team has ensured that the school's Christian vision not only underpins every aspect of school life but leads and develops it too. As a result, all stakeholders directly attribute the achievement of learners and the wellbeing of the whole school community to the school's Christian character. Parents see the headteacher as a driving force, approachable and with strong personal values that have brought the school's distinctive Christian character into sharp focus. They see how the school is developing the pupil's spiritual life through the 'Windows, Mirrors, Doors' initiative and how this is having a positive effect on their children's daily lives.

Self-evaluation takes into account the views of all groups and has led to strategic decisions that have improved achievement for pupils. For example, children are not routinely put into intervention groups but gaps in learning are identified immediately and prompt action taken. As a result of the school's Christian values in action, vulnerable children achieve better when compared to similar children nationally, particularly in mathematics.

Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school with but this work is largely led by the senior leadership team. The lack of evaluative monitoring by the governors means it is hard to clearly identify the impact of their work.

Links with the local community are strong and embedded within the life of both the school and the local church to their mutual benefit. The school council is working with the church to further develop a link with a community in Ghana with an ambition to build a school in the village. This is helping the children to provide a practical outworking of their Christian values and furthering their understanding of global communities.

RE and collective worship are well led and both leaders have high aspirations for their respective areas. These are key areas which deepen and support the school's distinctive Christian character, together with pupils' SMSC development. Staff feel very supported in the teaching of RE, with termly training sessions that give them confidence in the teaching of an increasingly ambitious curriculum based on the school's Christian values and in developing leaders for the future. Both RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. The school has met its development points from the last inspection.

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