



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Ryhall C of E Academy	Church Street, Ryhall, Stamford, Lincs. PE9 4HR
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese/Methodist District	Peterborough
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Satisfactory
Date of academy conversion	1 October 2014
Name of multi-academy trust	Peterborough Diocese Education Trust (PDET)
Date/s of inspection	3 November 2016
Date of last inspection	26 November 2010
School's unique reference number	120182
Headteacher	Katy Walker
Inspector's name and number	Jane Lewis (27)

School context

Ryhall Church of England Academy is a smaller than average primary school serving a rural village in Rutland. There are currently 161 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion with special educational needs is around the national average. The school converted to academy status on 1st October 2014 and is part of the Peterborough Diocese Education Trust (PDET). Since becoming an academy the school has appointed a substantive headteacher who was previously acting headteacher for 1 month prior to academy conversion.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ryhall C of E Academy as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The clear Christian vision of the headteacher has brought about rapid improvement of Ryhall as a church school.
- Christian values are fully embedded so that all members of the school community talk about them in everyday conversations and clearly link their behaviour and actions to these values.
- The contribution of clergy and foundation governors ensures the school's Christian character is secure and sustainable for the future.

Areas to improve

- To embed a more strategic approach to aspects of diversity and difference to ensure that pupils are more able to understand and express what it means to live in a diverse world.
- In order to further enhance the distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ryhall school its outstanding practice should be shared so as to contribute to the development of other church schools.

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

Parents are clear that this is a church school. They regard the Christian ethos of welcome and acceptance as its most distinctive feature. It is the key to how the school successfully integrates pupils of all abilities and their families. Everyone is recognised as a unique human being made in the image of God. The potential in every pupil is acknowledged and teachers are continually developing their systems for tracking pupils' progress so that each one can fulfil the school's aim to 'Look back with pride and move forward with confidence'. The achievement of pupils overall has been on an upward trend with disadvantaged pupils making progress at least as rapidly as their peers. The last 2 years' data shows that they have made greater progress than their peers. This is because staff set aspirational targets for all pupils and they are supported on their journey to achieve them with the Christian values of endurance and perseverance as central. The wellbeing of pupils is a priority. Values of compassion and friendship are expressed through the work of the 'Jigsaw Club' run by a teaching assistant. The club supports pupils with a range of needs. The local Methodist Outreach Worker provides a range of activities for pupils one lunchtime per week. He is involved in transition work with Year 6 pupils providing a link to the local secondary school where he also works. Year 6 pupils therefore talk with confidence about when they move up to secondary school because he will be there to support them. He helps them to remember that they take God with them when they leave Ryhall. Pupils enjoy school and there are few attendance issues. This is because they are supported in their learning by dedicated staff who provide care and support, reflecting the Christian values in all they do. Pupils speak positively about being in 'a house' where they can take on responsibility of organising events, acts of worship and share together in whole school themed days. These houses are named after the 4 gospel writers and pupils have spent time finding out about their saint. As a result of this, pupils are confident about helping one another and working together reminding themselves that they should try to live out life together following the example of their house saint. An attractive display in the school entrance has the title 'Living the Fruits of the Spirit' and this, along with a range of other displays, clearly marks out this school as a church school. This living out of faith, however, is not just limited to displays. It is truly lived out by everyone. Pupils are keen and confident to explain the importance of the school's core values, particularly compassion and trust. They have a secure knowledge of Bible stories and do not hesitate to talk about why the values are distinctively Christian explaining that 'if we trust in God then he will guide us in the right way'. The behaviour of all pupils is exemplary. They apply Christian values to the way they conduct themselves and visitors to the school comment on their courteous and compassionate attitudes to others. Religious education (RE) makes a strong contribution to the school's Christian character. Lessons challenge pupils in how they think of the person of Jesus and his teaching and about how we judge others. They refer to specific Bible stories to explain why any kind of bullying and prejudice is wrong and this plays a key part in the harmonious relationships that are everywhere around the school. Consequently, there are no recorded incidents of bullying, since any friendship issues are addressed and supported before they develop. Opportunities are provided to explore big questions of faith and belief, diversity and difference. This means that pupils are articulate and able to provide reasoned points of view influenced by the work they have done in RE. The school takes seriously its commitment to ensure that all pupils have opportunity to explore and develop respect for diverse and different communities. Visits to places of worship alongside visitors from different cultures have been beneficial but as yet the provision is not sufficiently embedded to have a significant impact. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social (SMS) development is excellent. Teachers and school leaders recognise it as 'the core of what the school is about'. All areas of SMS are underpinned by Christian values. Approaches to encouraging moral behaviour, for example, are explicitly focussed on the teachings of Jesus. Pupils understand that living life in this way helps to make the world 'the sort of place God wants it to be'. Lesson planning identifies which Christian values are being encouraged in the pupils learning. All extra-curricular school activities hold the values as core to their purpose too. Involvement in fund raising activities is proving transformational in pupils' lives. Support for a local fundraising charity 'Hope Against Cancer' has helped pupils to respect their own bodies and to thank God that they are healthy.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

There have been significant changes to worship over recent years that have been monitored and evaluated by leaders so that they understand the impact worship is having. They can therefore plan worship that is inspiring, challenging and transformational. Pupils appreciate school worship and enjoy the time of coming together 'as family'. They are given opportunities to take on leadership of worship which means that they are confident about leading prayers or sharing in liturgy. Pupils know the central features of Anglican worship and that worship is about a response to God. One member of staff described collective worship as 'sewing together everything about the school'. It is planned so that the school's Christian values are explored and developed through the use of Bible stories. These stories are well chosen to make clear the significance of the person of Jesus and other key Christian

concepts such as Trinity. Pupils talk about the way in which stories and teaching they receive in worship help them to think through the everyday issues they face. They understand that the teachings from the Bible are there to help them make choices and to live 'as God wants us to live'. Pupil evaluation of an act of worship recorded that 'St Matthew showed trust in Jesus to leave his job to be with him as a disciple and showed us that Jesus is better than money'. Prayer is a key part of worship but is also a natural part of the school day. Each class has reflection and prayer areas where pupils take time to pause and write or say a prayer. They know that prayer is a way of talking with God and sharing anything that troubles them. A Year 6 boy had placed a concern on the prayer wall so that he and others could pray about it. Pupils have learnt that they can frame their prayers by using key words represented by a finger on the hand. Consequently, they speak with clarity about different needs they can bring to God. A reflection room which was designed by the pupils and the Methodist Outreach Worker provides a place where pupils and staff can go when they need to pray. The room has been designed for multi-faith use and can therefore be used by all children across the school. Resources available in the room provide everyone with a calm, quiet space that means 'we can talk and listen to God when we need to'. Worship is led by a range of leaders including the incumbent and the Methodist minister whose different approaches enable the school community to experience a breadth of worship styles. This supports their spiritual development and deepens the relationship between the churches and the school. The celebration of festivals takes place in the parish church and these times of worship are well supported by parents and members of the church giving pupils a strong sense of belonging to a faith community. Staff speak of the way in which worship in school has been transformational in their own spiritual journey, providing them with opportunities to explore Christian faith and belief.

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

The distinctive Christian character of the school is now well established. Since her appointment the headteacher has brought vision and a fresh perspective to the school as an excellent place of learning. The vision that the school should be 'enveloped in God's love' is promoted across the school community. She has given this distinctively Christian vision a new energy and urgency to ensure that even the most vulnerable of pupils are given the best chance of success. She is ably supported in this by committed foundation governors who visit the school regularly. They see the school in action and talk to pupils, staff and parents. These discussions no longer take a piecemeal approach but are used to rigorously evaluate individual aspects of the school's Christian character so that clear links are made between its character and decisions made by governors. Governors are therefore clear about the next steps forward for the school. School leaders engage actively with PDET. The Trust speaks highly of the school and the approach leaders have taken to develop its distinctiveness in partnership with them. This means that the strength of the partnership has become a model for other schools considering joining PDET. The potential for Ryhall to share its outstanding practice is considerable as PDET continues to develop. Partnerships with the local churches are beneficial to all. The incumbent is described as a 'constant presence' in school and he is committed to the school being represented at meetings and services in the church. A welcome service for the headteacher was held there and she has presented to the PCC about the work of the school. Pupils speak of the relationship as a friendship saying, 'it is good to know the people at the church are our friends'. The Methodist church holds a monthly service in the school which is well attended by pupils and their families. This has arisen from the developing partnership between the Minister and the school. The service has opened up Christian worship to families in an accessible way and parents cite this as an example of the way in which the school takes its partnerships with the local community seriously. Parents are enthusiastic in their support for the school and its Christian distinctiveness. This is because they know that the school is concerned about them as well as their children. They say that the school does not 'push Christianity' on anyone but makes it relevant and part of everyday life. One mother spoke of the way in which the school had transformed her child from being withdrawn and introverted into a confident and happy child who loves attending school. She is confident that this is a result of the ethos that pervades everything they do and are. The RE subject leader receives outstanding support from school leaders. Link governors and the Headteacher work with her to observe RE lessons and set targets for development of the subject. As a result, RE teaching is of a high standard and pupils speak of how their RE lessons support them in their understanding of the wider world. The school meets statutory requirements for RE and collective worship. The church school standards group, whose role is to monitor the work of the school as a church school, has had a significant impact on the rapid progress the school has made. They have ensured that the development points from the previous inspection have been fully met and their impact monitored. The school is well placed for sharing good practice with other church schools and moving forward confidently into the future.