

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Hilda's Church of England High School

Croxteth Drive, Sefton Park, Liverpool, L17 3AL

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese

Liverpool

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Liverpool

Name of multi-academy trust / federation

N/A

Dates of inspection

2 and 3 March 2017

Dates of last inspection

22 and 24 May 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Aided 104721

Headteacher

Jo Code

Inspector's name and number

Helen Sage

Quality assurance: name of assessor and inspector number

Jo Fageant 104

School context

St Hilda's Church of England Voluntary Aided High School is an over subscribed, secondary school for pupils Year 7 to 13. The majority of students are of White British heritage with a small proportion from faiths other than Christianity. Since the previous denominational inspection, the school moved into a new building, became co-educational and the religious education (RE) department has gained RE Quality Mark Gold Award. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, a quarter are eligible for pupil premium funding and a small percentage receive special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) support. The headteacher took up post in September 2016 and a new senior leadership team (SLT) has been formed.

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

- The long established Christian ethos is valued by all members of the school community and has a positive impact on behaviour, relationships and attitudes to learning.
- The excellent pastoral and academic support arising from the Christian belief in the worth of every individual means that all are nurtured, supported and managed with compassion and attention.
- The clear Christian vision of the SLT, ably led by the strong insightful headteacher, ensures the Christian character permeates the life of the school, which is fully supported by staff and governors.
- Strong mutually beneficial links with churches and the wider community develop a sense of generous reciprocal service.
- Religious education and collective worship make a significant contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development and play a major role in underpinning the Christian character of the school.

Areas to improve

- Building on their accurate school development plan for ethos, worship and on-going Christian values work, leaders should find ways to express in explicitly Christian terms, the vision which underpins the rich ethos of the school. This should further strengthen and make clear to all members of the community that the inclusive, caring, day to day life of the school is the outworking of Christian teachings.
- Recognising the strengths that exist in RE and collective worship to develop a greater consistency of content and delivery across the school.

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

All stakeholders describe the school as being 'one big family' where everyone cares for and helps one another. One parent commented that the family feel of the school meant that her son felt safe and at home here at St. Hilda's'. The school community recognises how it benefits from the long established Christian ethos of this church school. The school's Christian values and principles with the motto 'Believe, Pray, Work, Excel' underpin every aspect of school life. This is demonstrated through the high quality pastoral care and academic support. Students appreciate how they are treated with respect; 'I'm not a Christian, but here we can be who we are,' 'we are accepted here'. Students and staff alike understand the ethos to be implicitly that of a Christian family, which embraces everyone. Living out the new Christian values of wisdom, hope, community, dignity and equality, combining Christian teachings, underpins the excellent behaviour and relationships within the school. This leads directly to high levels of attendance and few exclusions. Students recognise in teachers a commitment to serve. For many teachers this is a facet of their Christian faith. This prompts them to strive to provide the best and most supportive opportunities for all students. The result is an exemplary school committed to developing students spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Students speak with enormous appreciation of the help and encouragement teachers give them and of the awards and rewards, which recognise their efforts and achievements. Muslim students feel welcomed and accommodated, for example, by being provided with space for prayer on Friday. They say this Christian acceptance makes 'our school so special'. Students' understanding of Christianity as a world faith is supported through the RE curriculum and charity initiatives. RE makes a valuable contribution to SMSC development and helps define the inclusive Christian character of the school. Some, from the perspective of their own faith and/or what they encounter in collective worship, draw connections between the school's ethos and specific Christian teachings. The openness with which many teachers speak about their faith encourages students also to talk and share thoughts about their faith. The variety of extra-curricular activities includes Christian Union meetings through which students explore aspects of the Christian faith. Building on a strong foundation, new values are now being incorporated and displayed throughout the school's paperwork, website and worship themes. Students contributed the value of equality, of obvious importance to them, in the recent review of the school's Christian values. From this work the school now has a more cohesive and explicit approach towards identifying the Christian distinctiveness of the values and their relevance to learning and everyday life. Ensuring the newly developed strategic plan continues to drive this forward is an area identified for development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is a central and important part of school life; its impact on the school community is clearly articulated by all stakeholders. The worship committee, comprising SLT, part time chaplain, teachers and students, efficiently manages the planning, monitoring and evaluation of collective worship. This ensures a good understanding of the diversity of Christian traditions. Student surveys are used to capture the impact and form part of the evaluation process. The part time chaplain and some local clergy are fully involved in the delivery of the worship programme. This offers students the opportunity to experience different expressions of 'church' locally. They have a good, age-appropriate appreciation of the Christian concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Themes for worship are closely linked to the Christian calendar and evaluation acknowledges them to be accessible, relevant, and provide students with opportunities for reflection. In keeping with the Christian character of the school, worship always includes biblical teaching expressed so students can see its relevance to their own lives. The new chapel and newly developed forms of liturgy, have added further opportunities and experiences for times of worship. Worship takes place in different contexts; reflection time at the end of the school day, tutor group and year group worship at the beginning of the day, some of which enable more active participation than others. There are opportunities for students, in the tutor group settings, where everyone knows one another and they are of similar ages, to participate in leading worship. These opportunities are not currently consistently explored. The reflection areas in form rooms, where worship is at its best, support the school ethos and give opportunities for students' further reflection. New staff speak of the positive, affirming and 'very good support' given to them from the head of RE and worship, that enables them to deliver form worship. The role of the music department is also seen by all stakeholders to have a significant contribution to the success of whole school worship. When invited to speak about these services, students do so with enthusiasm, one commenting we help make it happen'. The Eucharist is held in school at significant times of the Christian year. The end of year service and annual carol service in the cathedral, are high points in the school's worship calendar. All stakeholders speak of how they value these services. Staff particularly referenced a recent Epiphany service when one Year 8 student gave the address and the impact of the message given as 'powerful and memorable'. The introduction of the 'thought for the week' programme and use of the school prayer, the grace and other prayers from the Anglican tradition has established a consistency of focus across the different contexts. Prayer is a natural part of the school life. Each day ends with a reflection time. Teachers say that the school is as supportive as any school but the important and valued difference is that staff and pupils are prayed for. Students described how they are inspired by social and charitable initiatives,

such as the Lent food collections. They have a positive impact on all members of the school community. These initiatives have a specific link to SMSC development of pupils and are linked to the Christian year. Students commented on how they valued these and the weekly Christian Union meetings.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education has a high profile in the school and is funded in line with other subject areas. The school has addressed the issues raised at the last denominational inspection. The RE department has three specialist RE teachers and one non specialist who together form an enthusiastic and committed team. An increase of curriculum time is planned to benefit Year 9 students in the next academic year. RE enables students to develop a good understanding of their own religions, the diversity of belief and practice within them, and a respect for other faiths and non-religious traditions. Members of the RE team access current and continuing professional development via the diocesan and national RE networks. The training that has been accessed becomes the centre for curriculum development. Students speak about how they value RE and the way it applies to and prepares them for real life situations beyond school. Assessment is focused and encourages learners to improve and make progress. Standards are high and learners' progress is very good, as evidenced by the examination success at both GCSE and A level. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is delivered in line with the diocesan agreed framework for RE. The use of the new data analysis systems enables teachers to respond to the needs of all learners. Lessons at their best are outstanding and the curriculum is rich and varied. The teaching is also interactive and offers opportunities for peer led learning. Teachers draw even the most reluctant students into discussions and they listen to and answer one another respectfully. Organised trips to Auschwitz support learning and enable students to reflect deeply on cross curricular themes. Students appreciate that this visit develops their understanding of how religious belief impacts on people's lives. Students comment that RE 'helps me to understand how people make important decisions and helps me think about what I find important and accept'. The high quality of display in the department, at its best, aids learning. Teachers of RE have high expectations of themselves; they are reflective practitioners always seeking ways to improve. Much of the teaching in the department is outstanding and never less than good. Students recognise the expertise and commitment of teachers saying 'they listen to our discussions but don't judge us' and 'they just want us to be the best we can be and if we don't get it they find different ways of explaining it'.

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

The school is rightly proud of its welcoming, inclusive Christian foundation. As a Christian values based system, governors see the induction programme as key for new teachers and staff. This, combined with parent and pupil induction, ensures that the foundation of the school is recognised as one that is '*Christian in nature*'. Biblical teaching also drives forward the school's Christian service. Since the previous denominational inspection, the mission statement and core values have been refreshed and revised. The decisions and actions of the SLT and governors in support of learners' academic progress and personal development are driven by and rooted in Christian values. The new headteacher's strong insightful and motivational leadership, well supported by senior colleagues, provides a strategic vision for continued self evaluation, improvement and development. Governors are confident that their vision of an inclusive school 'family', arising from Christian principles, beliefs and values, is lived out in all their decisions, policies and actions. However, the understanding of the Christian root to which the vision is attributed is assumed rather than made explicit in a way that ensures universal awareness. The school's recent review of data analysis, regular monitoring and evaluation has led to accurate development planning. This impacts positively on supporting the needs of all; consequently learners flourish. Parents are well informed of students' progress. They are effusive in their praise for the school, seeing its Christian foundation as pivotal to this, '*loving them as Christ loves them*'. Areas for improvement since the last denominational inspection have been well addressed and evidence of this impact is seen in the data and monitoring through the RE reviews. Links with local Christian communities and the wider community are mutually beneficial through a variety of initiatives, which include open day events and charitable giving. All stakeholders spoke about the Christmas hampers which they saw as being mutually beneficial for people in the local community and students' learning. A student commented on this as an important part of 'what it means to be at St. Hilda's'. The part time chaplain provides valuable pastoral support for all stakeholders and has designated time in school, described as 'just being there'. The chaplain's presence and her regular meetings with the headteacher contribute to the Anglican vision for the school's development plan and links to the wider community. RE and worship meet statutory requirements and leaders are committed to maintaining a strong RE department which achieves above average examination results. In the words of one Year 11 student 'RE helps you understand the people and the world better.' The RE department, whose leaders are aware of local and national initiatives, is recognised as influential and has recently been awarded the gold RE Quality Mark. The physical environment of the new building supports the Christian foundation with a reflective area in school reception and a purpose built Chapel. Following the move, the visible marks of identity are not yet complete.

SIAMS report March 2017, St Hilda's Church of England High School, Croxteth Drive, Sefton Park, Liverpool, L17 3AL