

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Manshead Church of England Voluntary Aided Secondary School	
Dunstable Road, Caddington, Luton LU1 4BB	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Diocese	St Albans
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority / Date of academy conversion	Central Bedfordshire (Academy conversion April 2017)
Name of multi-academy trust	(Diocese of St Albans MAT)
Date of inspection	25-26 January 2017
Date of last inspection	2-3 November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Secondary 109705
Headteacher	Jim Parker
Inspector's name and number	Lilian Weatherley 42

School context

Manshead Church of England Secondary School is a larger than average 11-18 school with 1166 students on roll. The most recent Ofsted report (November 2015) placed the school in special measures. The school changed its status to secondary in 2014 and admitted Year 7 students. The majority of the students are White British, with a small proportion coming from ethnic minority backgrounds. Very few students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disadvantaged students, those with special educational needs, disabled students, those for whom the school receives a pupil premium or those eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The current headteacher has been in post since 2006. In April the school is set to become a diocesan academy and the only secondary school in the multi-academy trust.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Manshead Church of England Secondary School are satisfactory

- Following the Ofsted judgement of special measures and the resulting pressure on the school and governors, the school's distinctive Christian character has not been the key focus.
- Manshead is a warm and welcoming school underpinned by four key Christian values. These shared values help all members of the school community to work together with a common purpose.
- The improvements made since the SIAS inspection in 2011 are too superficial and not underpinned by a clear strategic plan to continue moving forward with the development of the school's distinctive Christian character.
- Religious education (ethics) is a strength of the school and a key area supporting the school's distinctive Christian character.

Areas to improve

- Ensure all leaders, including members of the ethos committee, receive training to help inform policy and practice to develop the school's distinctive Christian character and enable this to be fully embedded.
- Improve the provision and monitoring of collective worship to ensure that all pupils receive their statutory entitlement.
- Develop further opportunities for prayer and worship to support pupils' spiritual development and increase their understanding of liturgy.
- Allow the students to use their creative ideas to support the worship leader, enhance the worship and make it more meaningful to their daily lives.

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

Since the last SIAS inspection, work has been done to show that Manshead is clearly a Church of England school. The large foyer has an air of calm; it is warm and welcoming and the school's four key Christian values of 'respect, responsibility, faith and compassion' are clearly visible on the doors. The school no longer reflects a school in special measures. Standards in English, maths and science have continued to rise but there is still a significant number of students who are achieving below the national average in these core subjects. There is, however, little evidence that any of this improvement is based on a clear Christian vision because the leadership has not fully considered the role of the school's distinctive Christian character in improving pupil achievement.

Students are proud that Manshead is a church school; they understand the theological background to the school's values and say how important these core values are to them in their daily lives. 'There is a link between Christianity and our values, constantly reminding us how to take care of and love each other.' Most students enjoy school and say how happy they are. Underpinned by the schools' Christian values, the new behaviour policy and code of conduct are having a significant impact and students' behaviour is improving. Attendance is rising and students say they feel safe and that incidents of bullying are rare. Relationships and pastoral care are good and students know that if they have problems there is always someone to talk to or they can visit the staff in the school's 'hub'.

Opportunities for students' moral, social, cultural development and an understanding of British values are generally good across the school but opportunities for students' spiritual development are still developing. There is no clear understanding among the school leaders of what constitutes spiritual development, resulting in too few opportunities for prayer or spiritual reflection across the curriculum. Student voice is weak. Students feel unable to express their opinions and there are few opportunities for students to take control of their learning. The students interviewed expressed their concern and frustration that the school council should be more active as it has not met for several months. They also said how much they would like to help organise the collective worship and make it more relevant to their daily lives.

RE (Ethics) has a high profile in the school and the subject makes a significant contribution to the development of the school's distinctive Christian character and students' understanding of and respect for diverse communities.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Following the previous SIAS inspection the school implemented new strategies to improve the quality of collective worship. There is now a member of staff responsible for worship, a school prayer, which the students all know, and a worship policy. Worship is planned and is linked into the school's four core Christian values and biblical texts to give a basic structure. Key times such as Holocaust Memorial Day and the major Christian festivals are celebrated and students appreciate how important it is to mark these events.

Students understand the importance of prayer and worship in their daily lives but as they only meet for collective worship once a week, in year groups, the overall impact of school worship on the students and the school community is negligible. Although the thought for the week and school prayer should be used in every 'learning guide' session, students say that only some staff lead prayers. 'Sometimes in 'learning guide' we discuss the meaning of the prayers and think about how it affects us'. This appears to be very ad hoc and there is limited evidence of detailed monitoring to ensure this is taking place. As a result, the students' statutory entitlement is not being met.

Worship is formal, and lacks creativity and atmosphere. Students behave well in worship but they are passive observers rather than taking an active role. Students say how much they would like more involvement. 'It can be a bit boring listening to one person talk.'

Those students interviewed have many creative ideas and suggestions on how to improve the prayer and worship in the school but there is currently little opportunity for student participation. For example, following the previous SIAS inspection a prayer board was placed in the foyer but those students interviewed felt it was in the wrong place. 'A prayer board in the foyer can be intimidating to some.' 'There should be a more intimate and more private place for our prayer requests; a prayer box in every room.'

Most students have a good knowledge of Christianity, the Trinity and the theological elements of worship from the ethics course but their knowledge and understanding of Anglican practice from worship are much less developed. There is no Eucharistic worship and support for school worship from the local team ministry is limited. The Associate Minister from the local evangelical church is, however, a regular visitor to the school and students benefit from his input. He regularly leads whole school and group worship on the school's Christian values, holds an active and popular weekly Christian union in the school and is in two days a week working with staff and students.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards and progress in religious education (RE) are outstanding in Years 9-13. All students are entered for GCSE RS and results are high and above the national average. Many students continue their studies to A level where the results are excellent. Standards and progress in Years 7 and 8 are good but not all staff have made the transition from teaching in an upper school to a secondary school. Tasks set in Years 7 and 8 do not always offer sufficient rigour and challenge to prepare the students to begin GCSE in Year 9. Following the subject leaders' recent training on 'Understanding Christianity', training for all ethics staff is planned in order to support those teaching Years 7 and 8.

Students have a sound knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the other faiths studied. They show positive attitudes and enjoy ethics. 'I like the opportunities for deeper questioning and thinking.'

The department has an experienced and well qualified subject leader and three enthusiastic specialist teachers. The majority of teaching is good or better and staff inspire and engage the students in their learning. Lessons are well planned and effective use is made of monitoring and evaluation to assess teaching and learning. Weekly meetings enable staff to reflect regularly on practice. Assessment procedures are in place but with the demise of levels the school is still in the process of trialling new methods of assessment for Years 7 and 8.

RE, or ethics as the school calls it, makes a significant contribution to school's Christian values and students' spiritual development. Ethics also strongly supports pupils' moral, social and cultural development. All students interviewed have a key understanding of and respect for diverse communities, British values and those of other faith communities. The school does offer trips to Sachsenhausen concentration camp Berlin and Holland, which enable students to build on their understanding of Judaism and the Holocaust, but these are organised through the history department. Opportunities for visits and visitors in ethics are less evident.

The school provides a good range of resources, which effectively support the non-specialist staff and students' learning.

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

Following the Ofsted report in 2015, which placed the school in special measures, the school has worked to address the issues from the report. The latest HMI monitoring report (May 2016) praised the leaders of the school for acting swiftly to address these issues. This has meant that due to pressure the leadership and management have not focused on the school's distinctive Christian character. The links between student attainment and the school's distinctive Christian character are not fully understood. Following the last SIAS report (November 2011) several measures were put in place. There is a clear Christian vision based on the four key Christian values. These values are written into all policy documents and known; their biblical foundation is understood by all members of the school community. It is now clear from the signs and symbols on the door to the foyer that the school is a Church of England school and staff who attend interviews are questioned about how they too might contribute to the school's Christian vision. With the appointment of the deputy head as worship leader much has been put in place to improve the provision and quality of prayer and worship across the school. The school's self-evaluation, however, acknowledges that there is work still to do and that not all of the issues from the previous report have been met in full. The school had a diocesan health check in May 2016 which clearly outlined each area for improvement, but the ethos committee (which is now the largest committee of the governing body and includes 6th form students) admits that this has not yet had a high profile. For example, the school is still aware that it is not meeting statutory requirements for collective worship.

Leaders are strongly committed to the importance of ethics. This is demonstrated in the generous budget allocation and their decision to require all students to study the GCSE course. The subject has a high profile with staff and students and is viewed as part of the core curriculum. The chair of governors is the ethics governor and the senior leaders are proud of the school's strong department and the ways in which ethics contributes to the school's distinctive Christian character.

The school's website clearly states that the school is a church school but there is little evidence or images to support this. Consequently, it does not fully reflect a school with a strong distinctive Christian character. For example, at the time of this inspection there was nothing to reflect the school's strong RE department.

The rector is on the governing body and on the ethos committee but most of the support given to the school comes from Christ Church Dunstable rather than the local Church of England team ministry. As the governing body has not attended any recent training on the distinctive Christian character of a church school, governors are hampered in their understanding of what it truly means to be a church school today. Much is traditional, implicit and assumed rather than explicit with a clear strategic plan for improvement.

Links with stakeholders are generally good. There are positive links with parents, the local authority and staff from the Diocese of St Albans who are supporting the school in its transition to academy status.