

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Magnus Church of England Academy	
Earp Avenue, Newark, NG24 4AB	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Southwell and Nottingham
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Date of academy conversion	1 February 2014
Name of multi-academy trust	Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham Multi Academy Trust
Dates of inspection	7 and 8 February 2018 (two half days)
Date of last inspection	27 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Secondary Academy 140549
Principal	Anna Martin
Inspector's name and number	Jo Fageant 104

School context

A smaller than average sized non-selective 11 – 19 academy with 639 students on roll, Magnus is based in Newark, in an area of significant deprivation. The proportion of students for whom the academy receives additional funding is much higher than the national average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. The majority of students are of White British heritage. A new principal took up post in September 2016. Since then there has been staff restructuring to include a newly formed extended senior leadership team (ESLT). The non-teaching chaplain is included in the ESLT.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Magnus Academy as a Church of England school are good

- The principal's faith-inspired leadership has put at the heart of the academy a belief in the value and God given potential of every individual which underpins a relentless endeavour to meet the holistic needs of all learners.
- A vision and values emerging explicitly from biblical teaching, developed since the arrival of the current principal, influence all aspects of daily life in the academy and are discernible in improved behaviour, relationships, attitudes to learning and rising standards.
- The vision to develop young people of good character who achieve excellence and make a positive contribution to their communities has given rise to many initiatives. They are so new that their impact has yet to be evaluated, the focus of monitoring to date having been on the consistency of provision and practice.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that, as initiatives become established, monitoring and evaluation more consistently focus on impact so that leaders have a secure understanding of the extent to which intentions are achieved.
- Consider how governors can, more consistently and explicitly, use the academy's vision and values to inform their work and how these can be more fully reflected in policies.
- In order to build on leaders' aspirations for collective worship:
 - review the policy so that it sets out a clear, shared understanding of the nature and purpose of inclusive worship which can be used to inform planning
 - enable students to use this understanding so they can take a greater role in planning and leading worship
 - evaluate the impact of worship with all members of the academy community to help guide future developments.

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

This academy is energised by a biblically inspired belief in, and unerring commitment to, the value and potential of every individual. The principal, and others with leadership roles, speak with infectious passion about creating an environment in which every individual is loved. This is the tough love that means the academy will not give up on anyone. This commitment, together with the values of determination and ambition, expresses the aspiration for everyone to be the best they can be and live life to the full. To this end, many recent initiatives have focused on developing self-esteem in an effort to help students understand they can achieve well if they try hard. The important part played by spiritual development and wellbeing in this is eloquently expressed by one member of staff: 'we are encouraged to live and thrive in an environment which is spiritually motivated.' Strategies carefully planned to improve teaching and establish good learning habits are already giving rise to higher standards. Students who need additional support in the lower years are very well served by the foundation learning programme run by a primary school specialist. Work with the outreach team from Nottingham Trent University and attendance at academic lectures and master classes elsewhere are raising the aspirations of Sixth Form students. The very recently introduced Magnus mentors scheme links each of these senior students with a mentor from the business community. This is in order to broaden their horizons and develop for them helpful networks.

The provision of a wide range of enrichment activities demonstrates the academy's commitment to all aspects of students' development. The importance accorded to this is seen in the very recent change to the timings of the school day. The new period six engages all students with activities as diverse as music, sport, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and a Christian Alpha course. Year 7 students speak positively about the weekly 'family dining' experience. Their sense of community is enhanced by the table groupings, discussion of values-related issues and the invitation to express their appreciation of someone who has helped them. As with many other initiatives which demonstrate the academy's continual striving for the very best outcomes, they are too new for their impact to have been properly evaluated. However, some which have been established for longer, for example, the 'Young Leaders' course, have improved self-confidence and enabled a sense of achievement. They are all making a significant contribution to learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.

Five core values (determination, integrity, ambition, humility and compassion), explicitly rooted in biblical teachings, have been rapidly and effectively established. Expressed as 'I will' statements in a student-developed charter they have a very positive impact on behaviour and relationships. A system of rewards and sanctions emphasises and marks positive features and successes wherever possible. Good attendance and the demonstration of the core values are rewarded with the possibility of significant and attractive prizes.

Forgiveness and compassion are at the heart of the restorative justice approach to behaviour management. The five core values are a helpful basis for students who need to reflect on occasions when they have behaved badly. Bullying of any sort is rare and students are confident any instances are dealt with promptly using the core values. Respect for difference of all kinds is developed through religious education (RE) as well as the values. Whilst in a time of transition when few are working towards a GCSE or A level in RE, students engage respectfully with issues of diversity and difference, Christian and other religious beliefs, and ethical challenges in the 'life' course. Not all appreciate the important contribution these themes make to their education. The best RE lessons challenge students' understanding of their own beliefs and those of others. In combination with the explicit Christian character of the academy, RE creates an environment in which issues of faith and belief are discussed with ease.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Conversations with staff and students indicate that they understand worship times are important in the life of the academy. Whilst the impact of worship in its various contexts can be discerned from several sources, the academy does not systematically evaluate it. In the cycle of monitoring tutor time, for example, the scheduled focus is on whether the required provision is made rather than on the impact it has.

Students' clear understanding of the five core values and their roots in Christian teaching is attributed in no small part to the way they are explored in worship. Their impact is evident in behaviour and relationships. Well-planned themes reflect the academy's vision, exploring issues of character development, aspiration and personal responsibility. They significantly enhance SMSC development. Their impact can be seen in attitudes to learning and enthusiastic charitable and social action. Students understand the continuing relevance of biblical teaching because it is consistently linked with themes and values. The current focus, which is stimulating particular interest in some staff and students, is developing an improved understanding of the Christian story and key festivals. Prayer is always included in worship and the high quality resources developed by the chaplain to support reflection time in tutor groups. Students' understanding of the purposes of prayer was enhanced through engagement with a 'prayer spaces' experience in 2017. Some write prayers for inclusion in worship and reflection times. There are, however, few opportunities for many to contribute to the development, planning and leading of worship. This is because leaders have decided that whole school and year group worship is led in the current period of development only by

volunteers who are confident in the role and can model inclusive Christian worship. This team as a whole provides a variety of styles and evidence indicates that worship led by both the principal and chaplain is often very memorable and through-provoking. The experience and impact of reflection time in the context of tutor time is inconsistent. Although the importance of Jesus and other key Christian beliefs are included in worship themes, how well they are understood by staff and students is not currently evaluated.

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

Supported and appreciated by governors, the directors of the diocesan trust and staff, the principal has introduced an energy of spirit and strategies for change that are improving all aspects of Magnus Academy. She has a sense of vocation to live out her Christian faith in the service of this school and is unequivocal in her articulation of this. From the time of her arrival she was clear that a vision and values grounded in biblical teaching were needed to guide the school on its journey of improvement. Consultation with staff, governors and students, using biblical quotations and their aspirations, resulted in a vision statement that focuses on the development of character, excellence and community. These three guiding principles, along with the five core values that arose from the consultation, are at the heart of improvements in behaviour, attitudes to learning and rising standards. They are used explicitly and consistently by leaders, sometimes more implicitly by governors but are not yet fully reflected in all policies.

The spiritual life of the academy is given high priority. Staff training days include time for reflection on Christian teachings linked with the academy's vision and values. Prayer in governor and leadership meetings and staff briefings helps to sustain a focus on the academy's core purpose, vision and values and, for some, the guidance of God.

Leaders' relentless commitment to the value and potential of every individual and the rapid improvement of the school has given rise to many new initiatives. At the time of this inspection, much of the evaluation undertaken by leaders has focused on how well new arrangements and expectations are being embedded rather than the impact they are having. However, these new developments are the result of a thorough analysis and evaluation of the academic progress and wellbeing of students and the professional development of staff. Leaders have a good understanding of what improvements need to be made. Recent initiatives such as a reading competition and the use of knowledge organisers are providing early indications of positive impact. A relaunched Sixth Form with revised provision is encouraging more students to stay at the school after the age of 16. Analysis of training needs, coaching programmes and opportunities to learn from the best practice of colleagues have improved the overall quality of teaching. The professional development of staff is strategically planned to broaden skills and develop leadership potential and capacity. This has enabled the establishment of an extended leadership team through which responsibilities can be shared. The inclusion of the chaplain in this team and on the governing board demonstrates the importance accorded to the ongoing development of the academy's distinctive Christian character. Although more improvement is needed, the widespread confidence in the clear and decisive leadership of the principal has enabled the diocesan trust to grant the academy considerable autonomy.

Leaders' vision sets aspirational expectations. As a consequence, the impression created by smart appearance, respectful behaviour, harmonious relationships and rising standards is improving the reputation of the academy and its students. Numbers applying to attend are increasing. Numerous links forged between the academy and the wider community are of mutual and substantial benefit. Through activities such as music and drama in primary schools, at community events and for a local care home, students demonstrate their enthusiasm to contribute positively to their communities.

RE and collective worship are both in a time of transition and development. The importance given to RE is evident in the appointment of an experienced RE lead teacher and a stage by stage plan to establish a GCSE course for all Key Stage 4 pupils. Currently the statutory requirements for RE are met but provision does not fully reflect the expectations set out in the Church of England's statement of entitlement for RE. Through the work of the chaplain leaders ensure a coherent programme of inclusive Christian worship. However, the statutory requirement for daily worship is not met and the policy statement focuses more on the organisation of worship than its nature and purpose.