

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Cleadon Church of England Academy

Boldon Lane, Cleadon, Sunderland SR6 7RP	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Durham
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	July 2014
Name of multi-academy trust	Cleadon Church of England Academy
Date of inspection	9 February 2017
Date of last inspection	26 January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	140924
Principal	Jayn Gray
Inspector's name and number	Mary Cook NS 811

School context

Cleadon Church of England Academy is a larger than average primary school with 422 pupils on roll. The vast majority of children are of white British heritage. Disadvantaged and SEND pupils are few in number. There have been significant changes in recent years; in 2014 the school converted to a Multi Academy Trust and is now at the point of expansion. In April 2015 the principal died; the school promoted from within and the current principal was confirmed in post in July 2015. The vice principal was appointed in September 2016. The school is supported by All Saint's Church.

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

- The dedication and determination of the principal is driving the school forward by securing high quality education and in strengthening the distinctly Christian ethos.
- A well-established relationship between the church, community and the school contributes significantly to the values and practice within the school.
- The ambitious use of prayer spaces contributes to the spiritual development of all involved including parents and the extended family.

Areas to improve

- Strengthen the RE curriculum so that the children learn about religions which are pertinent to their locality, such as Islam, so that they have deeper understanding of other faith communities.
- Encourage the shadow RE subject leader to take full responsibility for the subject so that she realises her full leadership potential and the principal may focus on strategic leadership as the trust grows.
- Arrange specific leadership training for the vice principal on leading a church school, to ensure he is well prepared for future headship.

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

Cleadon Church of England Academy's strong commitment to Christian values, particularly perseverance and service, are clearly seen in the life of the school, notably through collective worship and RE. The headteacher models the mission statement 'Believe, Inspire, Excel' in terms of encouraging all who are involved with the school to develop their own spirituality and become the person God intends them to be. Attainment of the pupils is above the national average at the end of Foundation Stage, and at the end of Key Stage Two with most pupils making at least good and in some cases outstanding progress. However, results at the end of Year Two have dipped below national averages; this is being addressed with specific catch up and intervention programmes for pupils in the current Year 3 cohort. Overall some vulnerable groups such as pupils with special needs make outstanding progress. The staff actively encourage the children to be determined drawing on their inner strength and core skills to try new tasks and learning. There are some excellent relationships within school and behaviour is exemplary. There are few instances of bullying and the pupils are confident that if they report an issue it will be dealt with appropriately and in a timely manner. The high quality discussions between staff and pupils, shape, strengthen and express the values that are core to the school. Attendance is higher than the national average and this demonstrates high levels of pupil enjoyment and engagement with their learning. The parish priest and local congregation work together to celebrate major festivals in church with interactive activities that engage the children and encourage them to think more deeply about the Christian story. Children and parents alike talked animatedly about the recent Christmas Journey, a special event bringing the characters of The Nativity alive for the children. Parents are very supportive of the school illustrated by the zeal in fundraising for new projects to enhance the children's experience and create a lasting impression such as the Memorial Garden. Pupils feel safe and find all staff approachable and fair in their responses, whatever the context. There are a variety of prayer spaces which are well used by the children, in class and around the school. The children are invited to use the tools provided to aid them with their personal reflections. Pupil voice is highly valued at Cleadon, as a means to seek feedback, but also to develop values such as responsibility, respect, and integrity. The Christian value of service is manifested in confident, articulate children who show a love of learning, a love of each other and genuine compassion for those who are less fortunate. The teaching of RE makes a positive contribution to the overall ethos of the school by exploring Christianity as a multi-cultural global religion.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship has a significant impact on the life of the school as wholesome relationships are established between the children and staff. The individual achievements of children who persevere with the tasks they find difficult are praised and celebrated. There is a clear connection with the stories in the Bible as the actions of Jesus and his followers are openly discussed and the children readily give their thoughts and opinions. The pupils show respect during worship, through good behaviour, readily contributing their own prayers when invited to and are keen to take on additional responsibilities, as recommended in the last inspection.

Worship is of a Christian nature, based on the church year led by all staff using the whole school plan developed by the worship leader. Much of the work is based on Jesus, exploring his teachings, character and deeds. The parish priest regularly leads worship and models the use of Anglican greetings and prayers. This helps the children to feel more comfortable when they participate in the church services for Harvest, Advent and the like as they are familiar with the language and are ready to join in with responses. Staff denote worship with a musical introduction and use a candle as a focus to represent Jesus the light of the world.

There are numerous ways in which the whole school community comes together in reflection and prayer the most accessible of which are the prayer spaces. These, set up in all areas of the building and environs, are well maintained and well used. The parents and children alike speak with enthusiasm about this development and the buzz that arises from the whole school endeavour, particularly the prayer space launch week. The support assistant responsible for leading the project is also energised by the experience as it is clear that individuals are exhibiting a profound personal response to the stimulus provided, resulting in a deepening of their own spirituality.

Although the school has been affected by bereavement, including the death of the previous principal, drawing on the Christian value of hope, the community is working together to ensure a fitting memorial for all the families affected by death in the form of planting bulbs to blossom in the future. A garden reflecting the themes of nature and stewardship, designed by the children, not only celebrates the life of the principal, but is completely in tune with the distinctive ethos. The children have a basic understanding of Trinity God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the activities that take place in church to celebrate Pentecost support this. The provision of the Eucharist service has been discussed to further the children's experience of Christian worship, however the Parochial Church Council do not feel it is appropriate to extend Holy Communion to the school at this time.

Pupils enjoy singing and learning a range of hymns; these are used as a vehicle to convey the core values of the school in a varied way. The pupils are routinely asked to provide feedback on worship, but they often struggle to provide any improvement points, as they strongly believe that they find the activity to be enriching and inclusive.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE has core subject status in the school and as such makes an outstanding contribution to the distinctive ethos as the children have an excellent understanding of Christianity through studying Bible stories, Christian traditions, artefacts and lifestyle. The school has in recent years insisted that class teachers deliver RE rather than cover supervisors, this means lesson themes are revisited throughout the week. Training and guidance from the RE subject leader has ensured the subject remains an area of strength. Teachers work collaboratively in year group teams to discuss planning and good practice based on the Durham Diocesan Syllabus. This results in increased teacher confidence which is shown in lessons and pupil achievement. Pupils progress well in their learning and achieve high standards by the end of Key Stage 2. The emphasis given to the teaching of Christianity is strengthened by visits to the local church, and the involvement of the parish priest in learning activities. The quality of teaching is outstanding. Pupils value and enjoy RE lessons and in the best lessons they are challenged by precision questioning to think more deeply, make connections and to articulate their thoughts clearly. Lessons are very varied from the inclusion of drama and art to the use of investigation and mystery to engage the children. They are invited to respond in a creative manner that they find stimulating and enjoyable. This helps their understanding and recall of their learning about Christianity which is outstanding. Year 6 pupils can explain difficult concepts such as why Jesus' death can be seen as a victory by Christians drawing from the New Testament, literature and artwork. The children would welcome targets in RE in line with other core subjects.

The curriculum covers the practices and beliefs of Judaism, the teaching of which includes a visit to a synagogue in Year 6. Individual children and parents have presented information about their own faith for example talking about Sikhism or sharing what happens at Eid, but this is an ad hoc arrangement. Although some links are made with Islam, the children have limited knowledge about the faith and associated culture. They are disadvantaged in terms of understanding of the faith of Muslims living in the area. The school intend to develop a discrete unit on Islam to address this.

Assessment procedures are firmly embedded and the teaching staff provide regular updates on pupil outcomes for the subject leader. In addition, the staff explore any barriers to learning and devise strategies to help the children in their studies including the targeted use of teaching assistant time. The subject leader uses book scrutinies and lesson observations as a basis for her judgements when reporting to the directors on a termly basis about developments and standards in the subject. This level of accountability helps to drive and maintain the high standards of achievement.

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

The principal, staff and directors place Christian values and ethos at the heart of this school and encourage the whole school community to support them in this endeavour. The parents and wider school family are appreciative of the opportunity to be involved in consultations such as the re-writing of the Values Statement and the formal feedback on ethos and the impact of worship. The directors are forward thinking in terms of strategic planning and have clear plans that Cleadon will only accept other schools into the multi academy trust if they uphold similar Christian values and aspirations. The governing board respond well in times of crisis, for example securing a seamless transition in leadership when the former principal died. The new principal is inspirational in terms of expressing a desire for all to flourish and has an inner strength attributed to personal resilience and creativity, both of which can be viewed as Christian characteristics. The principal is building on the legacy and traditions developed over time by the previous principal such as maintaining high standards, a broad ranging curriculum and excellent relationships with the local church. However, she shows a good understanding of the current needs of the school and has implemented plans to bring about an improvement in standards particularly in the Year 3 cohort. There is a clear understanding of the need to develop future church school leaders. The principal is proactive in supporting staff in leadership training, for example continuing to lead RE whilst preparing another member of staff for the role. Members of staff have been enlisted to lead areas such as prayer space development providing development opportunities and the chance to take risks and introduce something new. This reflects the desire of the principal and directors to embrace new concepts and working practices so that staff are refreshed by the new challenges. The vice principal is a recent appointment and is yet to receive any training on church school distinctiveness, but is rising to the challenge of working in an outstanding school, and taking his lead from the principal.

Cleadon has close links with the secondary school that the majority of children transfer to. This helps the transition process as vulnerable pupils are well supported through good communication and advance planning for their needs. As a key player in the Prince Bishop's Teaching Alliance, the staff support trainee teachers at the beginning of their career, which is in keeping with the school's mission of service. There are also excellent relationships established with the local church, deanery and diocese.

Self-evaluation of the school as a church school is fully embedded with the use of the SIAMS framework to provide incisive feedback highlighting specific areas for improvement. The school meets the statutory requirements for both collective worship and RE. The school creates many opportunities to explore moral and social issues in worship and pastoral lessons, and promotes British values such as democracy and freedom of speech, evident in the emphasis on pupil voice. Parents are supportive of and involved in school life. They speak very positively of the care and support given to their children and value the Christian aspects of the school.