

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Freeman's Endowed Church of England Junior Academy	
Westfield Road, Wellingborough Northamptonshire NN8 3HD	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Peterborough
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	1 April 2014
Date of inspection	23 May 2017
Date of last inspection	1 June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary academy 139461
Executive Principal	Victoria Wallis-O'Dell
Inspector's name and number	Reverend Morey Gompertz 507

School context

Freeman's Endowed is an average-sized oversubscribed junior school in the outskirts of Wellingborough. It has worked in collaboration with two other church schools in the Cross Keys Academy Trust since 2014. It is largely mono-cultural with the proportion of pupils of minority ethnic heritage and those with English as an additional language well below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is in line with the national figure. Considerable staff and leadership changes have occurred since the last inspection with the principal appointed in September 2016 and a new deputy appointed for September.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Freeman's Endowed Junior Academy as a Church of England school are good.

- The Christian distinctiveness of the school impacts upon the learning, achievement and progress of all the pupils.
- Religious Education (RE) has a high priority and contributes to the school's Christian distinctiveness.
- The school's Christian distinctiveness shapes the relationships between all members of the school community.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the Christian vision and distinctiveness of the school is more memorably expressed on the website, in the prospectus and all school documentation.
- Develop a more systemic cycle of evaluation and monitoring of collective worship to secure continuing development and greater participation by pupils.

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

Freeman's Academy lives out its Christian values so that their impact is clearly evident. It enables the pupils to differentiate between shared human values, those common to other faiths and those which are distinctively Christian. A year 4 boy explained 'that Christian values go deeper than the others but they're all part of our ordinary lives.' In an observed RE lesson pupils were exploring the 'commandments' of Islam. Their enquiry enabled them to see the similarities between those and the commandments in the Bible. All members of the community feel secure in their relationships and speak confidently of the mutual support being 'always available'. Parents and children recognise the nurture, wellbeing and confidence gained through the school's distinctively Christian values. They describe how they impact on behaviour and attitudes at home. The impact of the school's Christian values on academic achievement for all learners demonstrates steady progress especially in reading and maths. The majority of children, including those who are vulnerable, make expected or more than expected levels of progress in reading, writing and maths. Swift to respond to pupil progress assessment, the school is working to challenge all children to achieve greater depth in their learning. Parents appreciate the way the school inspires their children to aim higher. They attribute the way in which children enjoy the success of others to the school's Christian values. Attendance is mostly in line with the national average though there are some instances of persistent absence. The school's response to this issue is both firm and positive and entirely consistent with its Christian character. RE has a priority and contributes immensely both to the Christian values of the school and to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of the children. Children are encouraged to reflect both in collective worship and at other times of the day thus providing opportunity to think about the choices they make and the way in which, as one child said, 'we can learn from our mistakes.' Understanding different cultures forms an integral part of RE and collective worship as well as threading through other curriculum areas. A year 5 boy described his respect for his Muslim friend in the school and how he is aware that this is mutual. Somehow this was made more poignant as the inspection was carried out on the morning after the Manchester bombing. The school is aware of the need to develop further the children's understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world religion.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

Collective worship lies at the heart of each school day enabling all members of the community to recognise its priority and relevance. It focuses on setting the school's Christian values within Bible teaching with particular reference to the teaching and example of Jesus Christ. Consequently all are able to articulate the impact it has upon their life both in and outside school in their relationships, attitudes and choices. The programme is planned each term by the worship group which is composed of staff, governors and children. The celebration of the liturgical seasons and Christian festivals enables children to make their links to events in the life of Jesus. Prayer, praise, learning and reflection are key elements within worship and plans show how these are offered creatively so that the children are engaged and inspired. Children say grace before lunch and pray before going home at the end of the school day. The school is exploring the possibilities of extending the provision of permanent prayer and reflection spaces, perhaps outside. Staff, local clergy and Christian groups lead collective worship giving variety of approach which the children obviously appreciate. Consequently they learn about different traditions and ways of worship within the Christian faith. The school rightly recognises the need to enable the children to take more responsibility in planning, leading and monitoring worship and this is one of the issues in their development plan. Themes of worship empower members of the community to explore and understand major tenets of the Christian faith. These include the importance of the Bible, God as the three persons of the Trinity, prayer and the importance of the life and death of Jesus. This, together with rich learning opportunities provided in RE, enables the children's spiritual maturity to develop. As an example of his faith in personal prayer a boy from year 4 described how he prayed for difficulties within his family while the worship leader led the school in a prayer for school and world issues. He said he was sure that God would listen to both prayer requests. Although year six children contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of worship, this involvement is too limited to have a significant impact on future developments.

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

Despite the many changes in leadership and management of the school, the Christian values of the school have been developed and their impact on the attitudes, aims, behaviour and academic progress has become more evident. The school's self evaluation is realistic, honest and accurately reflects a good understanding of its performance and mission as a church school. Consequently, there is effective and strategic planning. Considerable progress has been made in addressing improvement points raised in the previous inspection. Leaders are aware that the school needs to clarify the Christian vision in a simpler mission statement so that it is memorable and more easily displayed on all school documentation. The wellbeing of all members of the community is a priority and staff and parents give very pertinent examples of ways in which they have been supported by the school in times of difficulty. Christian values inform all areas of the curriculum. The articulate and confident manner in which children discuss deep questions is evidence that RE contributes immensely to the SMSC development of the children. The professional development of all members of staff flows from the school's sensitive performance management practice. The enhancement of the roles and responsibilities of subject leader (particularly in RE) is a priority on the improvement plan. The school is part of the diocesan gold level agreement thus securing the highest level of support. It benefits from courses run by local clusters and networks as well as those by the diocese and national groups. This enriches teaching and learning thus providing wider experiences for both staff and pupils. After some time when there was a shortage of foundation governors this has now been rectified. Governors' meetings begin with prayer and minutes indicate that they hold the school leadership to account especially about the impact of its Christian values. Effective partnership is evident with the local church and feeder school of St Barnabas. RE and collective worship leaders are given good support and resources. The school has demonstrated the priority it gives to each area by separating the leadership roles in September. This will be facilitated by the arrival of the deputy head thus enhancing the strength of the leadership team. The school fully meets the statutory requirements of collective worship and RE provision. After a somewhat unsettled period the school is well on the way to secure continued progress and good success.

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