



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Mark's CE Academy

Acacia Road, Mitcham,
Surrey, CR4 1SF

Previous SIAS grade: Good

Current SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Southwark

Local authority: n/a

Date of inspection: 19 and 20 January 2016

Date of last inspection: January 2011

School's unique reference number: 134003

Headteacher: Lisa Peterkin

Inspector's name and number: Pamela Draycott 161

School context

St Mark's is an 11-18 academy serving areas of high social deprivation. In its ethnically diverse community most students are of White British, Black African or Black Caribbean heritages. The proportion with some sort of special educational need, who speak English as an additional language, or for whom the school receives extra funding, due to social disadvantage, are all well above the national average. Most students come from various Christian backgrounds with the next largest religious group being Muslim. Since the previous denominational inspection there is a new principal and senior leadership team structure in place.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mark's academy as a Church of England school are good

- The strong leadership of the principal and her senior team, ably supported by governors, is based on a clear and focused understanding of Christian service.
- The academy shows real care and concern, based on its Christian values of love, hope and trust, to ensure the well-being and progress of students, both personally and academically.
- Based on its Christian and inclusive values there are strong and mutually respectful relationships and very good behaviour evident across the academy.

Areas to improve

- To fill the vacancy for a new chaplain to support the academy in sustaining and driving forward the school's Christian identity and service to its community.
- To raise standards in Religious Education (RE), particularly at GCSE level, by ensuring that the strong teaching results in improved academic outcomes for students.
- To refine the RE element of the school's provision as part of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme for sixth form students so that it is clearly identifiable and progress is recognised and assessed appropriately.

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

St Mark's mission and ethos is firmly rooted in its Christian values of love, hope and trust. These are biblically linked and clearly lived out as part of the academy's Christian service. They are inclusive of those of different faith traditions and of none. As a result, relationships across the academy are very positive and the behaviour of students is overall extremely good. This means that there is a positive and calm climate for learning. Where students fall short of the high standards expected they are very well supported to improve behaviour. This means that external exclusions are below the national average for similar types of school. Students of all abilities and backgrounds feel valued and safe. They speak confidently and appreciatively of the 'St Mark's community'. However, attendance is below the national average. It has been, and remains, a key priority. There is evidence that the Christian, compassionate and encouraging interventions have impacted positively (93.4% to 95.04% over a one year period) on improving attendance. Students enter the academy with attainment which is average or below. Following disappointing GCSE results in 2015 the academy now has a rapid improvement plan which is already supporting student progress very well. Current attainment data indicates good progress being made across Key Stages 3 and 4. Very good progress is indicated in the sixth form and in the individual learning unit. The latter, is a group set up to support Year 11 students who arrive in the borough with little or no English. Providing this unit for this very vulnerable group of young people is explicitly linked with the academy's Christian and caring values. Relationships between staff and students and between students themselves are of a very high quality. Students are polite and kind. RE, PSHE, work surrounding 'British Values' and the worship programme are key elements by which the academy promotes effectively the very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. This is extended through other experiences within the wider curriculum and extra-curricular activities. RE makes a good contribution to the school's Christian character because students see its relevance to their own lives. They appreciate that it helps them develop a knowledge and understanding of different beliefs and practices, locally, nationally and indeed internationally.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship takes place daily with well-developed aspirational themes clearly linked to the academy's values, biblical teaching and Christian and other faith community festivals. Year group and coaching group worship effectively provides the backbone of the programme. This is appropriately extended by half termly Eucharistic services. Students and staff respond very positively, listen respectfully and join in well. The importance of worship and prayer, both for the school and their own lives, is very well understood and expressed by many students and staff. As a result, worship contributes effectively to the academy's ethos as well as to the religious, spiritual and moral development of those who take part. Worship is explicitly Christian with an appropriate focus on the person of Jesus and on a wide range of biblical material. It is also inclusive of those of other faiths and of none. Year group acts of worship are very well led by a range of staff and occasional visitors. The detailed and helpful materials provided to support the delivery of coaching time worship supports the community in worshipping together very well. Students have regular opportunities to take part in leading worship and to evaluate its impact through surveys: suggestion from which have been acted upon. Students know the Lord's Prayer and have an appropriate understanding of Christian belief about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is reinforced through worship. To support an understanding of Anglican worship, practices such as lighting a candle and an opening sentence and response are in place. This is an improvement since the previous denominational inspection. The chapel is a space of prayer for all and is well used, for example,

by some Muslim students who pray there at lunchtimes. The academy has rightly identified the need to extend the range of visitors who come in to the academy to lead worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE is part of the Humanities faculty. There is a detailed and helpful action plan, drawn up collaboratively by the new Head of Humanities and RE staff. The RE curriculum has an appropriate balance between addressing Christianity and other world faiths. In the sixth form AS and A2 Religion and Philosophy is offered. Students who follow this course achieve well. For all sixth form students RE forms part of the PSHE programme. Whilst the RE elements are in place the impact on student progress is not recorded or recognised. The RE department provides a good balance of activities to engage students in their learning. There are very high expectations and a very effective climate for learning within classrooms. Teachers' detailed subject knowledge enables them to plan lessons that are very well focused on student progress. Consequently, students are deeply engaged and on task. They listen respectfully to their teachers and to their peers. Most students enter with below average attainment and many are making good progress from their various starting points. However, Key Stage 4, attainment in RE has been below the national average. Over the past two years, despite the very strong teaching, student attainment in RE has lagged significantly behind that of attainment in other areas of the academy's curriculum, for example, in English. In an effective response to this, since September 2015, the department has taken on board the school's rapid improvement plan and significant progress has been made by students. Teaching is now explicitly focused on supporting progress and improving attainment against GCSE criteria. This is already impacting significantly on deepening the quality of student learning. Current data indicates that the current Key Stage 4 cohort is making at least good progress from their various starting points. Some are making very good progress. Marking, assessment and feedback in RE is detailed and accurate. It includes students' responding well to teacher comments in their books and redrafting work as appropriate. This supports learning well and means that overall students across the academy know how well they are doing in RE and what they need to do in order to improve their work further.

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

School leadership, at all levels, is ambitious for improvement to enhance the life chances of all students, irrespective of their starting points. This is clearly led by the principal and her leadership team and linked for the majority to the academy's Christian foundation and values. Governors are closely and appropriately involved in the academy's life and are committed to it as a Christian institution serving a diverse community. This is also reflected well through the school's links with its sponsor and with the Diocese. Following a period of instability, senior leaders and governors have a clear and accurate view of the strengths and areas for development necessary. The rapid improvement plan has been implemented in response to disappointing GCSE results in 2015. This is already impacting really strongly on the progress being made, especially by Key Stage 4 students. It is accurate and gives a clear steer for further development. The use of data to support learning and progress has improved significantly under the plan. Consequently, there is now an accurate picture of the progress individuals are making set against challenging targets. The academy is working well to engage parents more effectively in the education of their children. This is an area that has rightly been identified for further development. In a clear expression of its Christian and caring foundation the academy is providing support for some parents to improve their English language speaking skills. The academy supports staff well in working within a Christian foundation institution. This is evident for example in the regular training received but also in the internal promotion opportunities that many staff have had. In keeping with the academy's Christian foundation and its collaborative ways of working there are strong partnerships with varying groups including, for example, the parish church, other church schools in the Diocese and the police cadets. These support students' personal well-being and academic development very well. Arrangements for both worship and RE meet statutory requirements and the key issues from the previous denominational inspection have been appropriately addressed. A chaplain was appointed following the previous inspection who made a good

contribution to school life but has now 'moved on'. The academy has rightly made attempts to fill this vacancy but as yet with no success.

SIAMS report January 2016 St Mark's CE Academy, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4 ISF