

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### **Bishop Justus Church of England Academy (VA)**

Magpie Hall Lane, Bromley, Kent, BR2 8HZ	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Rochester</b>
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	March 2011
Name of multi-academy trust	Aquinas Church of England Education Trust Ltd
Date/s of inspection	5-6 July 2017
Date of last inspection	May 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Secondary academy - 136466
Headteacher	Simon Murphy
Inspector's name and number	Pamela Draycott 161

#### **School context**

Established in 2004, this large and popular secondary academy serves students from Years 7 to 13. Around half are from a variety of Christian backgrounds with others being from a range of different religious and non-religious backgrounds. The percentage for whom extra funding is received due to social or economic disadvantage is at the national average. The percentage from minority ethnic backgrounds is above the national average. Bishop Justus is one of nine schools in the Aquinas Church of England Education Trust (Aquinas Trust). Since the previous denominational inspection, the headteacher is new to post but not to the academy.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bishop Justus CE Academy as a Church of England school are outstanding**

- The academy's Christian vision and ethos successfully underpin its Christian service to its students and impacts positively on the strong sense of purpose, nurture and care. This means that students of different ability levels and backgrounds thrive.
- The academy's motto of 'Through Faith and Learning' is underpinned by a Christian understanding of love which both supports and challenges students and staff to give of their best. This is expressed through supportive pastoral systems, strong relationships and through the excellent behaviour of the vast majority of students.
- The worship programme and religious education (RE) are strengths of the academy contributing deeply to the outworking of its Christian and inclusive ethos.
- The academy is supported effectively by its membership of the Aquinas Trust which impacts positively on its day to day life and strategic development.

### **Areas to improve**

- Refresh the academy's vision, motto and character traits in order to fully reflect and refine current practice and to drive forward future improvements
- Extend opportunities for visits out or for visitors to come in which focus on deepening knowledge and understanding of the range of faiths studied.

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

The academy's motto of, 'Through faith and learning,' is lived out by way of its Christian service to its community. This is expressly based on striving to allow all to flourish as individuals loved and precious to God. It means that the academy takes seriously the need to support students' personal development and wellbeing alongside their academic development. This is because they recognise the two areas as intertwined and complementary. An example of this is the way in which awards are given based on effort and for different gifts and talents and not exclusively for academic attainment. Based on its inclusive Christian foundation, the academy gives a high priority to meeting the learning needs of all, irrespective of their starting point or background. Consequently, the academy knows its students well and each is treated as an individual. The academy's admission criteria allow for church and community places in keeping with its Christian mission of service to the community. Attainment on entry is broadly average. When students leave, either at the end of Key Stage 4 or at the end of their time in the sixth form, attainment is well above average. This is due to the high aspirations, a broad curriculum and committed and effective teaching. Therefore, gaps in attainment and progress between different groups, particularly the more disadvantaged and their peers, have been well addressed. Accordingly, all groups of learners make at least expected and often accelerated progress. As a result of the school's embedded Christian ethos, which sets high standards for all, students' behaviour is outstanding and attendance is above the national average. On those few occasions where behaviour or attendance gets in the way of learning, the academy works realistically and compassionately to resolve the problem. Relationships are very strong and reflect its Christian caring and inclusive ethos very well. The academy is a happy and nurturing institution, where the vast majority of staff and students thrive.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development opportunities are very well catered for through the curriculum and the wide-ranging extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities provided. Students' responses are very positive. They are developing as thoughtful young people who are willing and able to present their own beliefs and ideas whilst listening respectfully to others. This includes those who may disagree with them. Opportunities to apply what the academy calls 'Christian character traits' such as perseverance, dedication and compassion are clearly provided and contribute deeply to students' understanding of themselves and others. RE and the worship programme contribute very effectively to these areas. The faith in action programme successfully helps to develop a sense of social responsibility locally, nationally and internationally. This helps students' understanding of some significant moral and social issues. It also encourages them to positively respond to the needs of others. RE, through the content addressed and the teaching and learning approaches used, supports students' understanding and appreciation of difference and diversity very well, including within Christianity.

## **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Worship takes place each morning following a well thought-through and well-structured programme planned by the chaplain. The programme is closely linked to the academy's priorities and to its daily life. It follows three threads focused on Christian festivals, themes and charity. Through worship, students are developing a deep understanding of the significance of the Bible and of Jesus for Christians. Their appreciation of the Christian understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is less well developed through worship although they do cover this key belief in RE. The Lord's Prayer is said regularly, particularly during the Eucharist services. Students know the prayer and have a basic understanding of its importance for Christians. Worship is distinctively Christian in nature and inclusive of those from other faiths and non-faith positions who are part of the academy's varied community. This means, for example, that prayer is central to the programme. However, the opportunity is given to reflect rather than to pray, if they so wish. The community as a whole is respectful and engages very well with worship. A simple Anglican style liturgy is used daily as a framework for worship with which students and staff connect effectively. Students have the opportunity to lead worship, particularly in tutor groups but also in year groups. They do this skilfully and with understanding. They also have the opportunity to lead worship in some of the trust's primary schools. The worship programme is based on its Anglican foundation. It aims for worship to place a deep

emphasis on tolerance, respect and free-thinking. The result of this is that students and staff are given time and space to reflect on issues of religious, spiritual and moral significance. Staff and students can articulate the importance of the worship programme within the academy and its impact on individuals. 'It's a time to consider really important things and to think about what your position is and if you can do anything to make things better,' as a post-16 student reflected. A Key Stage 4 student commented, 'I'm a Christian so I pray to God. It gives me a time each day which reminds me God is always there'. Daily worship is well extended through a regular Eucharist and by retreats and other activities organised at various times, particularly across Key Stage 3. Recently, a short time of reflection has been introduced at the beginning of afternoon lessons. This is proving to be popular with staff and students. 'The reflection time is very short but it helps you be calm to start learning again after the lunchbreak,' as a Key Stage 3 student commented. The programme is well monitored by leaders and by students.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

RE plays a central role in the academy's life and work. This is expressed by adequate curriculum time being provided as part of a broad and balanced curriculum offer. There are also good specialist staffing ratios. The curriculum is well balanced between content focusing on Christianity and that which addresses a range of other world faiths and non-religious life-stances. It also appropriately addresses various moral and ethical issues. The department makes very good use of the curriculum time it has. This is demonstrated by the high examination results attained consistently at both GCSE and A level. It is also shown by the very good progress made by the majority of students of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. The majority find RE enjoyable, stimulating and challenging. They see its relevance to the academy and for their lives personally. As a Key Stage 3 pupil commented, 'I'm not religious but I think RE is important in helping me to understand what religious people say and do. Otherwise, I'd be more ignorant and I could be prejudiced which I don't think would be a good thing.' The team of RE specialists are trained in an approach called Philosophy for Children (P4C). This clearly supports very well the breadth and depth of the teaching and learning activities provided. Opportunities for visits out of school or for visitors to come into school, to deepen knowledge and understanding of a range of faiths is limited. Students respond with enthusiasm whether working individually, in pairs or small groups or as a whole class. There is little evidence of unfinished written work and the majority of students take a pride in the way in which they present their work. Monitoring of the department by senior leaders and by the trust shows that teaching is consistently strong. This was confirmed during the denominational inspection. The skilled RE team work in a collegiate way which enhances the effectiveness of the department. Planning is detailed and rigorous and opportunities are taken to ensure that marking and assessment are consistent across the department. The strength of RE within the academy has recently been recognised by its successful completion of an application to receive the RE Quality Mark, which is a national RE award, at the highest gold level.

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

The strong leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by his leadership team and through the Aquinas Trust structures, ensures that the academy's Christian distinctiveness is lived out across its community. The wider staff team share this vision and strive to ensure that students' personal and academic wellbeing lie at the heart of their work. This means that students and staff flourish under an effective leadership team. The academy's self-evaluation and development plan which focus on its Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness is detailed and accurate. This demonstrates that leaders, members of the academy's council and trust members know Bishop Justus academy well. Appropriate next steps to focus on developments for the coming period are firmly in place. It fittingly involves reviewing the school's vision, motto and character traits by drawing on insights from the recently produced Church of England vision for education (June 2016). The key issue for improvement from the previous denominational inspection was to ensure that the chaplaincy team expanded its impact, influence and outreach. This has been successfully addressed in the intervening period and has led to refinements to how the academy functions. The professional development and wellbeing of staff are taken seriously. They are directly supported through trust

membership and through a suitable professional development programme. To support staff wellbeing, recent staff meetings have included strategies to help staff to relax and prioritise correctly. Many staff are finding this helpful. Links with parents and carers are strong. They are kept well informed of their children's academic progress. Any issues or concerns are dealt with sensitively and productively. This is rightly recognised as an expression of the academy's care and concern based on its Christian foundation. Links with local Anglican parishes and representatives of other Christian denominations are in place. They support learners' developing understanding of the significance of faith in the world today as well as their appreciation of difference and diversity within Christianity. The academy draws very deeply on its membership of the Aquinas Trust which includes having strong links with its primary counterparts. Links with the Diocese focus mainly on training courses. The most recent training was that around the new national resource focusing on exploring key concepts within Christianity.

SIAMS report [May 2017] Bishop Justus CE Academy, Bromley, Kent, BR2 8HZ