

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Ilsham Church of England Academy	
Ilsham Road, Torquay, Devon, TR1 2JQ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Exeter
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	August 2011
Name of multi-academy trust	Learning Academy Partnership
Date of inspection	6 February 2018
Date of last inspection	11 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy 137304
Head of Academy	Jacqi Stephens
Inspector's name and number	Daphne Spitzer NS No 37

School context

Ilsham Academy is located in the Wellswood area of the seaside town of Torquay. It is smaller than the average size primary school with 174 children on roll in seven single year classes. The vast majority of children are from White British heritage families. The proportion with special educational needs and/or physical disabilities (SEND) is below the national average and the proportion of children for whom the school receives the pupil premium grant is just below the national average. The academy is a founder member of the Learning Academy Partnership Multi Academy Trust (MAT) which consists of eight schools and has 1350 children on roll. The academy is a designated Teaching School, All Saints Teaching Alliance, leading on delivering School Direct. The CEO is a National Leader of Education. The school has recently been awarded the Gold Religious Education Quality Mark.

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

- Outstanding relationships promoted by the school's Christian values such as friendship and respect have a strong impact on children's personal development, well-being and learning.
- The prominent role of religious education (RE) in the school curriculum and collective worship in the daily life of the school contributes significantly to high level of children's spirituality.
- The links between the school and its multi academy trust (MAT) partners, the church and local communities are exceptionally strong and contribute significantly to the school's distinctive Christian character.

Areas to improve

- Head of the Academy to seek wider opportunities to work with new church school leaders and to develop new leaders and school direct trainees with the MAT in order to share best practice.
- Increase opportunities for children to plan and lead acts of collective worship on a regular basis so that they have greater ownership of this important time of the school day.

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

Ilsham Academy is a highly inclusive, warm and welcoming Christian community. The school promotes values, deeply rooted in Christian teaching, which are having a significant impact on children's behaviour, personal development and well-being. The school's safe and secure environment where each child is cherished as a unique individual made in God's image contributes profoundly to their high levels of confidence and self-esteem. This has a very positive impact on the children's good attendance and achievement. Standards and progress for all children are above the national average. The school's strong Christian ethos creates a highly respectful, open culture where everyone encourages and supports one another's learning and personal well-being. Children speak of the transformational nature of listening to one another with a well-developed understanding of spirituality and its impact on their lives at a personal level. Relationships at all levels are outstanding. They are built on the school's core Christian values of friendship and respect. Children describe good teamwork as central to life at Ilsham. These Christian values together with spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very effectively woven into the curriculum. The impact of school's Christian character is further strengthened by children's participation in 'Ethos Days' involving children from across the MAT. The children's ethos committee plays a significant role in promoting the school's distinctive Christian character. This was evident in their recent competition for children to design a class prayer box. They meet with other ethos groups in the MAT and have hosted a visit from another school when they discussed and shared their practice in worship, such as in their family groups. Inter-faith weeks where children meet speakers who are 'actual people' and who share 'first hand experiences' with them have a powerful impact. Charity work for Christian charities at home and in supporting children and communities in Zambia, is enabling children to serve others. It is also promoting a good understanding of Christianity as a global faith. Children have high levels of respect, tolerance and acceptance of people of other faiths and a strong desire to treat all with equality. This contributes toward developing children's understanding of British values.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is a time of central importance in the daily life of the whole school community at Ilsham Academy. Children clearly recognise how worship promotes the school's Christian character by its strong emphasis on biblical teaching. It is distinctly Christian, inspiring and transformational. This is because all children are fully engaged and actively participate in worship, sharing ideas and valuing others' opinions. All present feel a strong sense of community and Christian fellowship, a feature which is affirmed by the weekly worship held in seven 'family groups'. Times of heartfelt singing in praise, reverential quiet, prayer and focussed reflection create highly spiritual experiences. Worship has a strong impact on children's understanding of Christian values, often linking them with events in the church year. In this way, for example, the Christian value of perseverance is rooted deeply in the church calendar by being linked with the visit of the three kings at Epiphany. Children are developing a good understanding of Anglican tradition from simple liturgical greetings and responses including sharing a sign of peace. In a similar way, children identify the significance of the Trinity from the lighting of three candles at the start of worship. The weekly input of the church team to lead Open the Book contributes very effectively to children's good understanding of Bible stories and their relevance in the daily life of the school. Children appreciate the well-established areas and opportunities for personal prayer and reflection and see them as valuable and special. These quiet times are embedded in the school day and provide a rich contribution to the development of children's own spiritual journeys. Although children lead worship in a variety of settings, it is often with the guidance of staff. They do not, as yet, have opportunities to plan, lead and deliver whole school acts of worship unsupported on a regular basis. The leadership of worship is shared widely by key members of staff, the church team and the Ethos and Communications Committee. Meetings are held at frequent intervals to monitor and review the programme and plan ahead. Children's evaluations are a prominent part of the process including the views of the children's ethos group. As a result, there is a continuous drive to ensure that worship holds its position at the heart of the school's daily life.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Standards in RE are high. They are at least in line with expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus with a significant number of children attaining higher than this, often from starting points below national expectations. Monitoring by the subject leader and MAT RE leader provides evidence that teaching is at least good and often outstanding and this was verified in lessons seen. Progress between key stages is good. Children thoroughly enjoy the subject and recognise its central role at the heart of the church school's rich curriculum. Children's knowledge and understanding of Christianity is outstanding. Learning is of high quality because teachers use well-chosen activities, based mainly on enquiry methods which are inspiring and transformational. This was evident when young children were using a variety of artefacts to explore what it was like to belong to a Jewish community. They were able to identify and empathise with the feelings and aspirations of Jewish children. They recognised similarities and differences between a

synagogue and their own church. Their Christian values of respect and responsibility were understood to be common to both faiths. Spiritual awareness is developed very effectively from the excellent use of questioning and 'I wonder' scenarios. Children demonstrate high levels of interest in other faiths and worldviews as well in Christianity. Philosophical discussions generating insightful responses result from questions such as 'what does the word good or moral mean?' Children use persuasive arguments to develop and justify beliefs, for example, from the point of view of a Humanist. As a result, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very effectively. The leadership of RE is outstanding. This is because the academy's own RE leader is challenged and supported in her role by the RE leader for the MAT who has a very high level of expertise. In this way, very effective practice is promoted and shared throughout the MAT with very beneficial outcomes for Ilsham. New systems have been adopted for tracking children's learning which are raising teachers' expectations and thereby standards of attainment. Following relevant training, often provided by the RE leader for the MAT, the school has very effectively adopted the new Devon Agreed syllabus. Religious education is monitored and evaluated rigorously in a wide variety of ways. The exceptional strength of RE has been recently recognised by the special award of the RE Quality Mark.

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

The school's distinctive Christian character is of the highest quality, is deeply embedded and has a significant impact on the whole school community and beyond. The school's vision 'Together We Empower Excellence', rooted in the biblical teaching of St John that Jesus 'came so that we might have life and live life to the full' and its four Christian values of friendship, humility, responsibility and respect are very well known and understood. They are at the heart of the school's ongoing drive to improve and continually provide the best education for each individual child. This vision, that has been born from Ilsham, as the founding school within the partnership, underpins the vision of all schools within the Learning Academy Partnership. This vision is tailored specifically to meet the needs of all children within the context of the school and is specifically rooted in the context of Ilsham Church of England Academy. The academy is working to review the school's vision and values to ensure that they develop in line with the new framework. The highest priority is given to the self-evaluation of the school as a church school. The process is multi-layered and rigorous, involving all members of the school community. This reflects the equal value placed on every single member, whether parent, leader, governor or child. The roles of the Ethos and Communications Committee as well as the church team are integral to the outstanding way that the school knows itself as a church school. Staff are a very caring and supportive team who live out the school's Christian vision. The leadership team's constant focus on staff's professional development in promoting the school's Christian character is exceptionally strong. They use a range of opportunities including their teaching school and the diocese as well as national speakers very effectively for the benefit of raising outcomes for all children. This is a strength of the school which is also an area for further development. Parents are very supportive of the school and highly appreciative of the school's warm, friendly and inclusive nature. The school enjoys very close relationships within the local community, particularly with the local shopkeepers who act as an extension of the school staff, by regularly providing rewards for children who have become 'stars of the week'. The spiritual life of the school is enhanced considerably by the strong partnerships between the school and the church. The Ethos Days planned and led by the clergy and church team have a significant impact. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report February 2018, Ilsham C of E Academy, Torquay, TR1 2JQ