



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Dursley Church of England Primary Academy

Highfields, Dursley,
GL11 4NZ

Previous inspection grade: Satisfactory

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Gloucester

Local authority: N/A

Date of inspection: 20 April 2016

Date of last inspection: 1 December 2011

School's unique reference number: 139337

Principal: Paul Daniels

Inspector's name and number: Daphne Spitzer NS No 37

School context

The academy serves the town of Dursley and has 292 children on roll, arranged in 11 classes. Most children are of white British heritage although an increasing minority are of European heritage and speak English as an additional language. The numbers of children with special educational needs and/or physical disabilities is higher than average. The proportion eligible for the pupil premium is in line with the national average. The school converted to become an academy in June 2013 and is part of the Diocese of Gloucester Academies Trust. At the time of the last inspection the school was judged to be a failing school. Staffing has remained stable and constant throughout this period and standards have risen quickly.

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

- The high quality of children's spiritual awareness promoted by the academy's distinctive Christian character has a strong impact on the whole life of the academy
- The promotion of the academy's Christian values, in particular the value of friendship, has a significant impact on children's academic achievement, personal and spiritual development
- The visionary leadership of the principal, spiritual lead and governors is providing strong strategic direction for the academy's distinctive Christian character

Areas to improve

- Provide opportunities for prayer and reflection within the day in order to enhance children's sense of personal spirituality
- Provide opportunities for children to plan and lead collective worship on a regular basis so that they develop a greater understanding and ownership of worship

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

Dursley Academy is outstanding because high quality spiritual experiences underpinned by strong Christian values make an exceptional contribution to the children's learning and personal development. This creates a warm and welcoming Christian community in which all children are cherished and nurtured as individuals in line with the core Christian belief that each is made in the image of God. A set of core values rooted in Christian teaching have been identified, have friendship at their heart and are integral to the whole life of the academy. The strength of a cohesive Christian community is widely understood by the explicit sense of unity in the academy's motto 'Together we shine brightly'. For instance, children recognise this from their innovative 'Together' curriculum which very effectively promotes spiritual awareness. This feeling of 'togetherness' exemplified by the comment 'all are kind, all are included, just like a big family', as well as the academy's six core Christian values, ensures children gain confidence and security and are very happy. The impact on children's good academic achievement, personal development and well-being is significant. For instance children say that whilst the value of friendship is very important it is still crucial to take responsibility for your own learning and not be distracted by friends. Regular 'children's weeks' which focus on exciting subjects of relevance as well as wide involvement in a variety of core decision making teams ensure children understand the high priority the academy places on their views and opinions. It is also evident in the highly popular philosophy lessons which children say transform their thinking and enable them to develop their own beliefs as well as explore a range of feelings. As a result spiritual development has a strong impact on daily life. It is reflected in the way children welcome and show respect for others who join the academy from all over the world. The religious education curriculum seeks to celebrate those who whose faith may be different from the academy's, actively encouraging positive attitudes of acceptance and tolerance towards others, values which underpin British society. Religious education (RE) is part of the 'Together' curriculum which emphasises its importance in the life of the academy. Children enjoy the subject because it is taught in an exciting way. For instance, this was evident in the innovative way younger children heard the parable of the Good Samaritan by being part of the audience, reproducing the context when Jesus first told the story; experiencing the same surprise and shock of the unexpected.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is an important part of the academy's day for the whole community. It is explicitly Christian and promotes the academy's distinctive Christian values very effectively. For instance, the Christian value of respect was understood by the illustration of Christ's command to 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. The message was understood very well because it was set in the everyday context of children's lives, ensuring it was meaningful and relevant. Children enjoy worship because they are highly engaged and recognise that messages provided can 'make you think differently' such as understanding that it's 'not just you who's important it's others too'. Worship develops the children's understanding of Anglican tradition effectively. For instance, the increased use of the church for services, as well as the liturgical greeting led by children as they light the candle ensures children appreciate how worship in the academy reflects their own church. The colours and names of the seasons of the church year, displayed prominently on the hall wall, reflect their importance in the academy calendar. A lit candle as a focal point for the presence of Christ is understood and the inclusion of references to the Trinity during worship is becoming established practice. Worship promotes spiritual development very well. Children refer to the hall as a spiritual space and the sense of a spiritual response they feel when singing their hymns, many loved and learnt from the visits of 'I Sing Pop'. Times of reflection and stillness are integral and have a good impact. Classroom spiritual spaces, sometimes interactive, provide opportunities for reflection. A spiritual garden, currently in the process of being built within the central courtyard is planned to offer a quiet reflective space for the academy community.

However within the day, apart from during worship, times of prayer are not yet established. The leadership of worship is good. Themes promoting the academy's values are well understood and the delivery of worship is varied, led by clergy and all staff although not children. The planning of worship is also shared and involves a wide range of leaders. Governors, as well as the spiritual lead, evaluate worship in a number of ways and have adapted plans to address issues raised by children.

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

The improvement in the academy's distinctive Christian character since the last inspection of the former school has been profound. The principal's Christian vision and the leadership and staff team's commitment to this vision are the driving force at the heart of the academy's success and significant improvement as a church school. Under his inspirational leadership the Christian vision has grown from strength to strength, is now deeply embedded and has a significant impact on the lives of the whole academy community. The academy leadership's inclusive style is a strength. For instance, it was evident in the consultation process to select the academy's core Christian values. The open invitation to parents to be part of daily life by nominating their children for showing the values in action is another example of the way parents now play an explicit role within academy. This has resulted in greatly increased support and understanding of the academy's distinctive Christian character. The academy's self-evaluation process is good. The monitoring and evaluation of key aspects of the distinctive Christian character is thorough and embedded. Its self-evaluation has accurately identified areas for improvement. The leadership of RE by the spiritual lead is of the highest quality. She ensures her professional development is up to date, enabling her to have the appropriate expertise to fully support staff, introduce new initiatives successfully and ensure maximum benefits for children's learning. Her passion and commitment to the subject is infectious and together with the curriculum leader, she has ensured that RE is recognised as a prominent subject within the academy curriculum. The academy's partnership with the diocese through the Diocese of Gloucester Academies Trust (DGAT) is very effective and is having a mutually beneficial impact. This is reflected, for instance, in the academy's performance as a church school being externally evaluated and the way the principal shares initiatives with other academies within the trust. The partnership with the church has grown over the last year since the appointment of the new vicar and is now strong. Together with members of the church community he led the recent Easter Experience which has a significant impact on the whole academy community.

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