

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Catholic schools

All Saints Academy

Blaisdon Way
Cheltenham
GL51 0WH

Roman Catholic Diocese of Clifton Anglican Diocese of Gloucester

Local authority: Gloucestershire
Dates of inspection: 22nd & 23rd May 2013
Date of last inspection: N/A
School's unique reference number: 136016
Headteacher: Peter Kingham
Inspectors' names and numbers: Lyn Field 151 and Peter Ward

School context

All Saints opened in September 2011 as an academy sponsored by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Clifton and the Anglican Diocese of Gloucester. It was formed from two schools: one had been a joint church school for a relatively short time and the other a community school without a religious character. The local authority retains selection by ability but admission to the academy, including to the new sixth form, is not on grounds of ability.

The location of the academy is an area of European deprivation. The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and consequently trigger additional support funding through pupil premium is higher than usually found in schools. This also applies to the proportion who are disabled or who have special educational needs.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of All Saints as a joint Catholic & Anglican academy are good

The academy is at the centre of a community where the vast majority of students arrive with little experience of religious practices. As a result of strong leadership from the principal and senior staff, the work of the academy is motivated by Christian love and service to its community. Students are clearly growing into reflective and compassionate young people who take faith seriously. Leaders know there is still work to be done in drawing upon both the Anglican and Catholic traditions. At this point, however, the growing success of the academy is inextricably linked with its distinctively Christian ethos.

Established strengths

- The central place of prayer and worship in the daily life of the academy
- The responsibility taken by all adults for the academy's Christian character
- The Living Well programme for students' personal development that teaches an explicitly Christian understanding of values and contributes significantly to their spiritual and moral development
- Governors' insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the academy

Focus for development

- The Trustees to give clear direction in what is expected of the academy as a joint faith school
- The Chaplaincy team to develop its own independent role both within the academy and linking to Church communities outside
- To refine the process of self-evaluation so that it clearly identifies priorities for the Academy Development Plan
- To ensure students take an active role in planning, leading and evaluating prayer and worship in the academy community

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

Biblical teaching consistently shapes the care and teaching of students in the academy. This is a new experience for many families in this community and has a significant impact on relationships, attitudes to education and the spiritual development of students. As one student said: 'There is no hiding from the Christian faith here and you can see it in the great way teachers are with us.' Biblical texts woven into the fabric of the building and the central presence of the chapel leave no doubt as to what the academy stands for in serving its community. Distinctively Christian aspects of the curriculum constantly challenge staff and students in their moral thinking and personal conduct. Religious education lessons make a huge contribution to this because teachers do not shy away from addressing hard-hitting contemporary topics with their classes. Ethical issues such as sacrifice, euthanasia and locked-in syndrome are tackled from a faith perspective and are valued by students of all backgrounds. In addition, mixed age lessons for personal development (Living Well) have an explicitly Christian perspective. The distinctive positions of both the academy's faith traditions are recognised in RE and Living Well lessons where appropriate. All staff, both teaching and administrative, have tutorial responsibilities. This means they all contribute to daily worship, prayer and the Living Well curriculum. The fact that all staff are involved in delivering the programme of Christian values, which embodies Gospel teaching, ensures that it is fully understood by all members of the academy community and consistently lived out in relationships. Staff take advantage of opportunities as they arise for students to meet representatives from a range of organisations and the Christian Church worldwide. However, academy leaders know that these are not sufficiently embedded to deepen students' understanding of diverse communities.

Academy leaders have been rigorous in taking action to address the disappointing examination results of 2012. All groups of pupils, especially boys, are now making better progress from very low starting points and the grades students have gained so far this year already meet the government's floor targets for 2013. Rapid progress is made both by students with special educational needs and by those who find learning hard because of other difficulties in their lives. This is directly related to how Christian values influence the support given to pupils. The 'God-given potential' of students is a commonly used term by staff and the academy prides itself on its success with students who have been rejected elsewhere because they believe such students are central to the gospel teaching of the academy. A typical comment from students is: 'This school is non-judgemental. It is interested in your needs as much as your results.' Behaviour and attendance are continuing to improve as a result of the combination of 'tough love' and forgiveness that ensure every possible effort is made by staff, chaplains and governors to keep students meaningfully engaged in education.

The impact of prayer and worship on the school community is good

Worship and prayer provide a constant rhythm in the daily life of the academy. They are built around the house and tutor system. The significance of this is that all adults and students in the academy come together in mixed age groups as equal worshippers. This distinguishes the whole experience from that of teaching and learning. Prayer is a key element in every registration time and this is viewed positively by students. The material is prepared by chaplains but tutors have freedom to augment this with their own material or make adjustments in the light of topical issues. This often results in class discussion or periods of reflection so prayer times are 'owned' by tutor groups, increasing their meaning and relevance. However, the students themselves are playing only a limited role in leading or contributing to the content. Student views are regularly surveyed but they play little part in determining how to move forward.

Themes of Christian values and festivals in the Church year are mirrored in House assemblies and in the Living Well curriculum. This cohesion, with its constant focus on Christian citizenship, deepens students understanding of the place of God in their lives. Chaplains regularly provide prayer 'stations' in the chapel. These are imaginatively presented and, as a result, stimulate students' spiritual and moral reflection. However, access to these is limited to supervised sessions so individual staff and students cannot take advantage of this rich resource independently. The majority of students are aware of the theological differences between the Catholic and Anglican traditions. This comes from specific religious education teaching and from opportunities to observe celebrations of Catholic Mass and the Anglican Eucharist which are regularly

celebrated in the academy by members of their respective communities. Students feel that attending a joint faith academy 'gives you opportunities to incorporate new ideas into your own spirituality', 'see the breadth of your own Church' and 'realise there are different ways of seeking God'. Christmas, Easter and All Saints are major festivals celebrated by the whole academy community in services of prayer and worship. These are consciously being developed and refined in order to establish traditions appropriate to the new joint church academy.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Students' attainment in religious education is generally low on entry. As a result of good teaching students make accelerating progress in Years 7 and 8 before embarking on a three year GCSE Religious Studies examination course that consists of two papers, the Gospel of Mark and Religion and Life based on a study of Christianity. Attainment at GCSE was well below the national average in 2012 but results already achieved in modular examinations and the academy's tracking of student progress indicate achievement is improving. All students follow a General Religious Education course in Years 12 and 13, which is well regarded by students, and achieve Level 1 and 2 qualifications.

Lesson observations and work scrutiny confirm the academy's assessment that teaching is consistently good. Teachers employ various strategies and a wide range of print and digital resources that engage students and provoke thought and reflection. For example, one student in a Year 9 lesson on the causes of world poverty considered the main reason was lack of education 'because it means that children do not have the same opportunities as I do, which is unfair'. Attractive classroom displays of posters and student work support a positive learning environment. Lower attaining students are particularly supported by structured activities that encourage and reward incremental learning. The department's teaching assistant also provides targeted intervention. Regular formative marking is supplemented by periodic assessments that support tracking and inform students of their attainment and targets, thus motivating learning. Students enjoy RE and behaviour in lessons is good. Good curriculum links, particularly with the Chaplaincy and the Living Well programme, reinforce and consolidate students' understanding of Christianity and their appreciation of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural.

Teachers are aware of distinctive Anglican and Catholic interpretations of Christian theology and are committed to reflecting them, for example in the teaching of the Anglican Eucharist and Catholic Mass. They also acknowledge that there are instances where the distinctiveness or nuanced terminology of one or other Church is not yet recognised and are working to identify them in the schemes of work. The curriculum in Years 7-8 is that agreed by the Diocese of Clifton and the Diocese of Gloucester when the predecessor Joint Church School was established. The three year Key Stage 4 curriculum adopted by the academy for all subjects has resulted in changes to the agreed Year 9 RE curriculum but the academy has ensured that it is fully covered in Years 9-11. GCE A Level starts in September 2013 with currently 25 potential students. This indicates the positive impact of the subject in earlier years. The curriculum meets the Anglican 'Statement of Entitlement' for Religious Education. This includes the time allocated to RE which is 8% in Years 7-11 and 5% in Years 12-13. It has yet to be mapped against the 'Religious Education Curriculum for Catholic Schools and Colleges' issued in 2012 in order to ensure that it meets catholic requirements.

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

All Saints is rapidly gaining momentum as a joint church academy under the strong leadership of the principal. Senior leaders regularly reflect on its progress. They take note of feedback from a range of sources and do not hold back from taking hard but astute decisions in order to improve students' achievement and spiritual wellbeing. Major changes to the staffing of the RE department, for example, have led to better rates of progress and have increased students' enthusiasm for the subject. Similarly, the expansion of the chaplaincy team to meet the needs of sixth form students has already proved to be a wise move. These examples demonstrate how religious education and worship are consistently given a high profile by leaders. Governors are well informed about the stage the academy has reached in its journey because they rigorously question, as well as support, the actions of its leaders. Although systems for self-evaluation are thorough and detailed, written documents sometimes lack the refinement to give leaders a clear steer in where improvement is most needed.

The status of All Saints as a joint church academy has proved challenging from the start as it serves a community where few families are regular worshippers. This is an unusual context for a Catholic school and represents new territory for the Catholic Diocese. Trustees representing both dioceses have been slow to give clear direction in what they expect of the new school as a joint venture and this has left the principal and senior leaders with the responsibility of setting out objectives. They express their vision in four words: *Outstanding Community Inclusive and Christian (OCIC)* and this has driven their work forward. It has the full support of members of staff at all levels, many of whom are passionate about their roles in a church academy and how the Christian faith shapes their approach to teaching and the care of students. When recruiting staff, the principal pays close attention to the ability of candidates to contribute to the Christian character of the academy. Once in post, their potential to develop their roles is recognised and supported. Individual staff have benefited from the resources, training and advisory support of both dioceses since the academy opened. This is clearly seen in the focus on an explicitly Christian understanding of the values programme and in the excellent quality of the prayer stations that challenge students of both faith and no faith backgrounds. More recently, all staff and governors have attended training jointly led by the sponsor dioceses but it is too early to see the impact of this across the curriculum.

The involvement of local clergy, although restricted by their parish workloads, has maintained the distinctive Catholic and Anglican traditions in the academy. The Chaplaincy team is fully staffed for the first time to reflect both church traditions and the impact of this is already clear. It has played a key role in establishing the central place of prayer and worship in the academy. Up to now, the Chaplaincy has been closely aligned to the RE department and pastoral team. Its development has been constrained by trying to emulate the traditional model of chaplaincy whilst attempting to meet the needs of this particular community. The new team has demonstrated its capacity to establish its own identity in reaching out to faith communities and schools as part of its mission to the academy community.

Section 48 report May 2013 All Saints Joint Church Academy Cheltenham