

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bishop Wordsworth's Grammar School

Exeter Street, Salisbury, Wilts, SP1 2ED

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	1 March 2011
Dates of inspection	13 and 14 June 2017
Date of last inspection	6 July 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy 136500
Headteacher	Dr Stuart Smallwood
Inspector's name and number	Jo Fageant 104

School context

Bishop Wordsworth's is a selective Church of England academy for boys aged between 11-18 and is situated close to Salisbury Cathedral. Two thirds of the 911 boys on roll come from the Salisbury area with the remainder coming from other parts of South Wiltshire and West Hampshire. A number of sixth form courses are shared with South Wilts Grammar School. The majority of students are of White British heritage. Numbers of students with special educational needs, speaking English as an additional language or for whom the school receives additional funding known as 'pupil premium' are far below national averages.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bishop Wordsworth's Grammar School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The long established relationship with the cathedral and traditions which are interwoven with Christian beliefs and practices mean the resulting Christian ethos is rightly perceived to be the essence of the school.
- Reflecting the Christian understanding that everyone is of worth and loved by God, the school has a clear commitment to helping every individual, staff as well as students, to be the best they can be.
- The focus on holistic development, reflecting the Christian notion of life lived to the full, motivates the provision of a rich selection of opportunities that develop the interests, talents and skills of all students.
- Regular worship in the cathedral has a profound and lasting impact on all members of the school community.
- High quality religious studies (RS) is valued both for the academic challenge it offers and the understanding of diversity it enables. It also ensures that students understand the traditional worship they experience as part of school life.

Areas to improve

- Anchor the ethos statement, which so accurately describes the school, in explicit and inclusive biblical teaching in order to provide a clearer marker of purpose against which all stakeholders can test policy and practice.
- Devise and formalise ways in which to reintroduce the evaluation of the impact of collective worship on the school community as a whole and the individuals within it. This is to ensure the current very positive impact is sustained and further developed.

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

Christian traditions and values are the way of life at Bishop Wordsworth's. Boys joining the sixth form from other schools acknowledge that the care and support here are comparable with their experiences elsewhere. However, everyone is aware that here they are firmly rooted in biblical teaching and Christian practice. Students know that each one of them is valued and encouraged and supported to be the best they can be. They appreciate the high quality and tireless academic and pastoral support that helps them achieve and results in high levels of attendance and very few exclusions. This includes careful attention to their spiritual, emotional and mental wellbeing, so necessary at times when boys' natural competitiveness and personal aspiration exert considerable pressure. Students are confident that staff deal with any behaviour and relationship challenges effectively and without delay in line with the values of Christianity. Boys are usually quick to understand and resolve problems. The comment, 'we try so hard to be a good person and care for each other' characterises the views of many.

Academic progress is carefully monitored and supported to ensure the highest standards and aspirations are achieved. However, reflecting a biblically inspired understanding that life is to be lived to the full, boys are expected to engage with the wide range of enriching opportunities provided by the school. Sports, music, drama, art, languages and Christian union are just some examples of the extra-curricular provision from which students benefit. In keeping with the ethos of the school, boys who have interests not included in existing provision know they can seek approval to initiate additional clubs and activities. Students relish opportunities to take roles of responsibility and leadership. The most senior prefect roles are held in very high regard. The fact that the cathedral prefect, responsible for liaison with the cathedral, is one of the three most senior positions highlights the importance accorded to worship and Christian traditions. Character development and community service are given high priority. A large number of students undertake the Duke of Edinburgh's Award up to gold level thereby growing in social awareness and resilience. Students understand the importance of service through opportunities in school such as the role of subject prefect. Greater awareness comes through voluntary work with Oxfam, the Trussell Trust, Sarum College, the local hospital and others as part of the sixth form programme of enrichment. International trips and a vast array of speakers broaden horizons and instil in students the importance of social and political awareness as well as the responsibility they have to be good citizens. In addition, RS challenges their thinking, making them aware of different beliefs and ways of life amongst Christians as well as people of other faiths and no faith throughout the world. All these elements of provision enrich students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development encouraging them to be reflective about the people they want to be. They contribute to the school's aspiration to prepare them to live a full and fulfilling life.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Even those members of the school community who do not worship outside of the school context judge collective worship in its different contexts to be of value. Whilst themes are consistently linked with biblical teaching and explicitly Christian prayers and hymns they are also inclusive. There is widespread agreement that they are interesting, topical, relevant, thought-provoking and often inspiring. As a consequence, they have a positive impact on SMSC development and students' reflections on their personal development and conduct, and sense of concern for others. Although this is clear, as a response to recent financial constraints, there is currently no one with formal responsibility for oversight and evaluation of worship.

Worship takes place in a variety of contexts and groupings including whole school gatherings in the sports hall and cathedral, smaller groups in the drama studio and chapel. Each has its own character. Teachers, the chaplain and students are all involved in leadership. This variety is appreciated and enriches the worship experience. For staff and students for whom worship is a matter of choice, there is a fortnightly optional Eucharist held in the school chapel. The worship which has the most profound and lasting impact is the half termly worship in the cathedral, often attended by parents and alumni. In this context, students experience traditional Anglican worship. One of these services each year is planned and led by students, guided by the chaplain. Another is a Eucharist service. Participation is invitational not coercive and most boys choose to take communion or receive a blessing. Their active participation demonstrates their understanding that Christian worship is at the heart of the school and its long established traditions. Growing in understanding of prayer, the seasons of the Church's year and Christian festivals is intrinsic to being part of Bishop Wordsworth's School. Students have a very good understanding of the centrality of Jesus and the trinitarian concept of God they encounter in worship as a result of the learning in RS. Students talk about these key concepts with a deep understanding.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Students are inspired by RS, recognising that it develops high level transferable skills of analysis, evaluation, interpretation, debate and reflection. They gain a thorough understanding of Christianity. Key Stage 3 students, for example, talk about the link between the narrative of the tower of Babel and the disciples speaking in tongues

at the festival of Pentecost. They are also able to compare concepts of God in different religions. They value highly how the subject engages them with the beliefs and practices of other religions and enables them to appreciate their impact on the lives of adherents. The chance to meet people of faith during the multi-faith day usually featured each year is something they speak about with enthusiasm. This learning and these experiences enrich students' SMSC development and their own engagement with values and questions of meaning and purpose.

Attainment is high and progress, monitored closely, is rapid. Inspection observations and school records confirm that the standard of teaching is consistently very good and often outstanding. Students' enthusiastic views are summarised in the words of one boy: 'teaching in RS is exceptional'. Lessons build on prior learning, and involve a variety of activities which engage students' interest. A notable example during the inspection was a Year 10 investigation of 'the case of the missing body' to research biblical accounts and Christian beliefs about the resurrection of Jesus. Marking is thorough. Best practice explains what students have done well in relation to learning objectives. It also poses challenges about how work can be improved and expects students to respond with the proposed improvement. Students recognise this kind of marking as helpful, one saying that looking back through all the 'even better ifs' is helpful for revision. Rigorous assessment enables teachers and students to have a good understanding of progress so appropriate support can be sought and provided.

Subject leadership, and the work of the well-qualified RS team, is of the highest quality. This is exemplified in the innovative way all RS resources are available to students online. An independent website created for A level students, including those from the girls' grammar school, enables them to access reading lists, podcasts, film clips and much more to support their studies. Well-reasoned decisions have been made about new GCSE and A level courses.

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

The Christian understanding that everyone is of worth and loved by God is lived out in all leaders' determination that staff and students should be helped to be the best they can be. The focus of this is not simply academic achievement or professional development. A more holistic vision of education exemplified in the rich and varied opportunities open to all students and concern for the wellbeing of staff reflects the notion found in John's Gospel of life lived to the full. Through monitoring and analysis, leaders, including governors, have a thorough understanding of the school's performance and distinctiveness. They are motivated by Christian beliefs. This is expressed in an ethos statement that accurately describes the school and the work of senior leaders and governors. It does not, however, set out a clear biblically inspired marker against which all stakeholders, including those with a limited understanding of Christian beliefs, can test policy and practice. In recent years responsible financial management has had to take precedence over some ideals, such as the breadth of curriculum provision. Within these constraints leaders maintain their commitment to and support of high quality and GCSE RS for all students. Difficult decisions are always informed by the Christian values that are inherent in the everyday life of the school. These are also evident, for example, in the way all members of the school community have opportunities to contribute to its ongoing development through freely contributing ideas and also answering questionnaires. Responses are taken seriously and when, for example, analysis reveals concerns, staff and governors work hard to establish clarification and take action to bring about improvements in the best interests of everyone. The professional development of all staff is a high priority. Senior leaders monitor performance and set out expectations but all departments are empowered to interpret and apply them in ways that best suit their contexts. Staff work together in small groups to research, develop and trial new initiatives based on monitoring feedback and awareness of their needs. Sharing outcomes benefits everyone. Recent work on developing independent learning amongst sixth formers, for example, was shared at a teaching and learning conference in Exeter attended by almost all teachers from the school.

Deeply embedded Christian traditions have a positive impact on SMSC development and relationships throughout the school. They are clear in the close relationship with the cathedral and the consistent presence of the chaplain, a post funded by the school. Her contributions to the school's worship life and to the high quality pastoral care for staff and students are highly valued. She also plays an important role in the transition of students from Year 6 to Year 7. Parents are positive about the school and responses they receive to questions, comments and concerns. The active parents association makes a strong contribution to the life and resources of the school. Staff maintain mutually beneficial relationships with a range of organisations which can be seen in the many examples of inward and outward facing service. Leaders have a clear Christian commitment to social mobility illustrated by innovative 'familiarisation days'. These are designed to attract students and families who conventionally might not consider a grammar school to be for them.

Statutory requirements for RS are met in full. They are not met for collective worship because it is not provided everyday for all students.