

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

<b>Abbey Grange Church of England Academy</b>	Butcher Hill, Leeds LS16 5EA
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Leeds</b>
Previous SIAS inspection grade:	Good
Local authority	Leeds
Name of multi-academy trust	<b>Abbey Multi Academy Trust</b>
Date/s of inspection	18 October 2016
Date of last inspection	February 2012
School's unique reference number	108101
Executive Principal	Carol Kitson
Principal	Jon Norden
Inspector's name and number	Fiona Ashton 860

### School context

Abbey Grange has just over 1400 students on roll. This represents a year on year increase of approximately 30 students and reflects changes made to the academy's admissions criteria. The majority of students are White British, but there is a diverse range of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds. Students travel from across the city of Leeds to attend the academy. The current principal has been in post since September 2014 having previously been the vice-principal. The previous principal is now CEO of the MAT and Executive Principal of Abbey Grange Church of England Academy. The academy has a full time lay chaplain who is still a member of the teaching staff.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Abbey Grange Church of England Academy as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The academy's mission statement 'In partnership, to educate, nurture, empower' clearly underpins decisions that are made and the manner in which they are implemented. It is widely known and understood.
- Christian values are promoted and lived throughout the academy. They are the focus for collective worship and as a result are becoming deeply embedded in the culture of the academy.
- The current welfare and future life chances of the students drives the decisions that are made and leads to outstanding outcomes for them.
- The exceptionally single-minded approach of governors, senior leaders and all staff to ensuring that Abbey Grange is a rich, diverse and highly effective church school and a happy place for students to learn.

### Areas to improve

- To ensure that in the light of changes to the religious studies curriculum at all key stages, students continue to make outstanding progress through maintaining a focus on narrowing achievement gaps.
- To continue the current community engagement with planning and evaluating collective worship in order to enhance further the depth and richness of spiritual development across the academy.

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

Christian values are deeply embedded and visually celebrated at Abbey Grange Church of England Academy resulting in excellent spiritual, curricular and extra-curricular opportunities and decisions. All members of the community are encouraged to work in partnership to educate the students, to nurture their faith and well-being and to empower them for their lives beyond school. Students, their parents and staff understand that the academy motto of 'In partnership, educate, nurture, to empower', shapes all aspects of the academy. A Key Stage 4 student articulated this as there being three parts to the academy 'staff, students and God'. Relationships are excellent. Staff, students and parents repeatedly attribute this to the Gospel message in action. Parents particularly value the compassion shown by older students to younger ones. Attendance is good and students enjoy being at the school. At each Key Stage, students achieve beyond expectation and in excess of national averages. Students know their targets and have a strong sense of purpose, ambition and enjoyment in their learning. Leaders successfully make brave curriculum decisions for the long term benefit of all learners. At Key Stage 3 the two-year International Middle Years Curriculum captures students' imagination and interest in learning. The use of reflective journals encourages learners to include a consideration of both Christian and British values in their self-evaluation and enhances their understanding of issues in society. At Key Stage 4, the curriculum is broad and balanced and augmented by an exciting enrichment programme based on the Archbishop of York Youth Trust Young Leaders Award. This is part of the excellent provision that exists for students to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. It also ensures that learning is set in a richly Christian context and ensures that students have a very good understanding of the needs of others. Pastoral care, structured through a house (Abbey) system with vertical tutor groups is outstanding. It nurtures all members of the community but especially the most vulnerable. Students recognise the academy as a place of safety. It is where issues can be raised and effectively resolved. Behaviour is excellent and students recognise and value the fairness that is applied to the use of sanctions. Trust and justice are highly valued and theologically understood by students. There are rich opportunities provided for prayer and worship that are distinctly Christian, but accessible to staff and students of other or no faith background. One member of staff stated that being part of the academy brought her 'a bit nearer to my own faith'. Students commented that you can always pray and there is always someone to pray with you. Excellent religious studies (RS) makes an outstanding impact upon SMSC and the Christian distinctiveness of the school. The subject knowledge of teachers is exceptional and therefore pupils gain an accurate understanding of Christianity and other faiths. Work in the classroom is augmented by a range of enrichment activities that encourage pupils in their understanding of diversity in the local context and beyond. This includes close links with the local Ethiopian community that extend to visits and collaborations with a school in Ethiopia.

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

Collective worship is a significant strength of the school. Deeply rooted in the Anglican tradition it has a depth and variety that ensures that all members of the community can explore and develop their personal relationship with God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Collective worship facilitates students gathering weekly in their Abbey group as well as, occasionally, in their year group. On other occasions, worship in tutor groups uses materials that are provided by the chaplain. Staff value these for their strong sense of purpose and ease of use. Parents appreciate worship materials being accessible via the website so that conversations started in school can be continued in the home. The student Chaplaincy Council, with the Chaplain, who is inspirational, determines the themes and scope of worship. It reflects both Christian values and the liturgical calendar. Students have many opportunities to lead formal and informal worship. For example, the Global Justice group led a worship introducing Operation Christmas Child linked to the message of Jesus, 'Freely you have received, freely give' (Mt 10:8). Worship flourishes and extends beyond the academy. It includes worship involving the local parish church and the annual whole academy Carol Service at Leeds Minster, an experience which both staff and students cherish as 'special'. Through exceptional partnerships with faith groups, youth workers and clergy, the chaplaincy provides a welcoming and busy hub for spiritual development. The well-established 'Cell' groups led by senior students provide an opportunity for Bible focused discussion and prayer and give students a 'confidence to speak about faith'. Rock Solid and Encounter are other examples of the diversity of Christian worship available. All tutor groups visit the chaplaincy annually for Anglican morning prayer. At other times, voluntary morning prayer in either the Anglican or Celtic tradition is available to staff and students. The local parish church and the priest enhance enrichment experiences such as the Year 7 'Discovering the Space Within' day and the 'Listening Yurt'. These experiences emphasise the close and mutually supportive relationship between the school and the local parish. Robust and varied monitoring and evaluation of worship has been introduced following the previous inspection. It takes account of the full range of views and is shared openly and honestly with governors and senior leaders. The new Chaplaincy Vision Group, made up of parents, governors and representatives of outside faith

groups is an exciting venture focused on developing collective worship further.

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

Religious Studies (RS) has a very high profile within the academy and governors and leaders have invested significantly in subject staffing and resources. Students achieve excellent academic and non-academic outcomes as a result of the hard work of the ambitious head of RS and a dedicated and talented team of specialist teachers. Through teaching that is often outstanding, and never less than good, students are inspired to achieve beyond expectation. Results in RS are among the best in the academy at both Key Stages 4 and 5. Students speak of RS lessons that 'make you think' and 'push you to do your best'. The very significant increase in students studying the subject at A level is a direct response to the quality of teaching and support that is received at Key Stage 4. Students recognise RS as a subject where they will succeed because of the nurture they receive. Classroom relationships are respectful and affirming. Students are desperate to succeed but equally confident to ask for support and clarification. While there is a relentless focus on the acquisition of examination technique, there is an even greater determination to make learning relevant. For example, Year 11 students were asked to apply the Just War criteria to the current conflict in Syria. Skilful questioning ensures that learners make informed, reflective and mature responses. Students speak enthusiastically of RS as 'like no other subject'. Since the last inspection there has been a wholesale remodelling of the Key Stage 3 curriculum. It is now robust and firmly enables students to learn both about and from religion. The Archbishop of York Youth Trust Young Leaders Award is delivered as part of the Key Stage 3 provision. It is modified to ensure that it is theologically challenging. Similarly, the new Key Stage 4 GCSE course has been carefully chosen to reflect the expertise and interests of the teachers. This ensures that it is delivered with confidence and continues to inspire student engagement which it does with great success. There is an appropriate balance between the study of Christianity and other faiths and excellent collaboration between the RS department and the Chaplain. This collaboration supports both the worship life of the community through extra-curricular activities and academic RS through classroom talks and debates.

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

The school's purpose in enriching students' lives through nurture and empowerment lies at the heart of every plan, development and activity. All are nourished by a deep understanding and application of Christian values. Parents say they 'feel blessed' to have a principal who 'talks about faith in a direct and personal way' and who ensures that the academy takes all decisions in the light of its church school status and mission. Governors, together with senior and middle leaders all plan, monitor and evaluate their strategic decisions in the light of the academy motto. Thus, the students' education, nurture and empowerment are evident at all times. Governors are proud of the academy and its achievements. They are supportive and challenging of academy leaders and know the academy well. They spend time in school and with leaders. They make highly effective use of a link governor system and robustly hold Abbey Grange to account as a church school. This was a focus for development following the previous inspection. Governors are constantly mindful of the well-being of students and staff. When taking decisions, they are conscious of their impact and the longer term good of the students. For example, by investing in staffing and resources in RS, governors have ensured the continuing development of the department. Additionally, they ensure that the academy continues to meet the demanding Statement of Entitlement for RE in Church of England Schools. Staff feel nurtured both to be effective in their existing roles and also to take on new challenges and respond to new opportunities both within the academy and the wider Abbey MAT. The two-year appointment of associate assistant principals and the realigning of senior leadership responsibilities are examples of how the governors and principal working with the CEO develop colleagues and build capacity within their existing team. The Chaplain provides all new staff with an introduction to what is unique about a church school, and Abbey Grange in particular. This offers testimony to the importance that is placed upon the academy's Christian distinctiveness. Staff stay at the academy because of the care, support, guidance and encouragement that they experience. This provides stability and continuity for students in their learning and ultimately their achievements. Staff attribute this to the manner in which the academy's Christian ethos permeates every decision and relationship. The academy is unapologetically Christian and because of this, welcoming and inclusive of everyone. Relationships are a palpable strength of the community and at all levels members of the community speak of trust, love, forgiveness and fellowship. Student leadership is excellent. It is promoted through the academy council, chaplaincy council and roles of responsibility within the Abbey structure. Students are loyal and generous. They consider, pray and work for the well-being of others. The academy has highly effective partnerships with the Christian faith communities throughout Leeds and internationally through links with a diocese in Ethiopia.