

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Queen Eleanor's Church of England Junior School

Queen Eleanor's Road, Onslow Village, Guildford, Surrey GU2 7SD

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Guildford

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Date of academy conversion

1 October 2014

Name of multi-academy trust

Good Shepherd Trust

Date of inspection

27 November 2017

Date of last inspection

21 November 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Academy 141446

Headteacher

Roger Blackburn

Inspector's name and number

Marcia Headon 761

School context

Queen Eleanor's is a larger-than-average junior school of 373 pupils aged 7-11 in an urban setting. It serves a mixed socio-economic catchment area. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage and the percentage who speak English as a second language is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is just below the national average. The same applies to pupils entitled to free school meals. The school became part of the Good Shepherd Trust in 2014. The senior leadership team, teaching staff and governing body have changed significantly since the last inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Queen Eleanor's as a Church of England school are good

- The involvement of the local clergy in collective worship has enhanced pupils' appreciation and understanding of the breadth and variety of styles of Anglican worship.
- Relationships within the school are very positive and caring and ensure the needs of pupils are met effectively.
- The support provided by the local churches has had a significant impact on the learning, personal development and welfare of many pupils.

Areas to improve

- Ensure the connection between the values and Christian teaching are understood by all and are applied in collective worship, religious education lessons and the whole curriculum in order to strengthen the church school distinctiveness.
- Establish an agreed definition of spirituality and ensure that opportunities for developing it are mapped across the curriculum to enable pupils to better explore their personal beliefs in greater depth.
- Involve pupils more in the planning and leading of collective worship in order to deepen their understanding of the purpose of worship.

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

The school meets the academic needs of pupils well. Achievement is good overall. Attainment in reading and mathematics are above national averages and in writing is almost at national average. Progress in reading and mathematics is strong. There is good challenge for pupils of all abilities. Pupils who need additional support are well-catered for as a result of the belief that all children should be given the opportunity to succeed. The school has very recently completed a review of its values. The four Christian values of forgiveness, courage, compassion and truthfulness were chosen by staff and pupils as those which best summed up their school. As these values are new, not all children are fully aware of their meaning. The majority do not appreciate their explicit links with the teachings of Jesus. However, pupils can explain how the values of forgiveness, courage and compassion affect their thinking. Because of the impact of the values, they are supportive of one another and go to help when someone falls over in the playground. Pupils explain how the values affect them beyond the school day. Recently they showed their compassion when a 'wear your spots to school day' was held to support Children-in-Need. This value was also highlighted as a reason why they supported the local foodbank at harvest festival. Behaviour is good overall, and the use of restorative justice has reinforced the value of forgiveness. However, the values are not given a high enough profile on the school website or around the school. Policies do not always reflect the individual values. For example, the behaviour policy says little about the value of forgiveness. Relationships within the school are respectful and the teaching staff commended the compassion shown to them by the headteacher when faced with difficulties. The school is highly inclusive, and pupils show tolerance and respect to those of other faiths and none. There is currently no agreed definition of spirituality across the school. Although some teachers take the opportunity to encourage pupils to reflect when the moment arises in lessons, it has not been mapped across the curriculum. Most reflection takes place in weekly 'thoughtful time'. As a result, the pupils are not yet developing a sufficiently wide or specific enough vocabulary to be able to discuss their own personal beliefs. Teaching in religious education (RE) makes a significant contribution to the cultural dimension of the school, with most pupils aware that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith. It also contributes well to pupils' social development through the variety of shared activities they enjoy in these lessons.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship, known as assembly, is carefully planned by the headteacher and covers a four-year period. The headteacher sets a theme at the beginning of the week. Pupils listen to readings on a thought such as 'right and wrong' or the importance of Christian heroes or a question, such as 'can you resist temptation?' This is developed by teachers in class worship with 'thoughtful time'. This allows pupils to reflect. It leads to a final act of worship at the end of the week, when a selection of pupils' ideas is read out and considered. A separate act of worship on another day, centres on Christian values, and is led by members of staff or the clergy. When led by visitors from other churches or staff with different experiences, it allows pupils to experience the breadth of Anglican worship and beliefs. However, as yet the newly revised school values have not been considered as part of the planning. All assemblies follow a set pattern with an opening Christian greeting, a reading from the Bible or other texts, music and a prayer. A sending-out message completes the worship. The pupils and staff welcome this simple liturgy and established pattern. Most pupils describe worship as a time when they come together and listen to the Bible. They particularly enjoy it when asked to discuss matters or there is some form of drama involved. Prayers written by pupils are used during the week. The school has focused upon the Lord's Prayer, which is now becoming more familiar to pupils. The school has also developed pupils' understanding of the nature and purpose of prayer during 'prayer spaces week', which the pupils enjoyed. However, overall there is not enough opportunity for pupils to write and read their own prayers. Older pupils understand the purpose and nature of prayer, but younger pupils have a much weaker knowledge of why prayer is important to Christians. Special services mark the major Christian festivals, such as Christmas, Easter and Harvest. These take place in local churches or the cathedral when available. Parents remark on these services as a special time and they are always well attended. Pupils often act as readers in these services. However, pupils are not involved in planning or leading worship, except in a minor way in class worship. The staff have been asked to evaluate worship, but the pupils have not yet been fully involved with this. The school is aware, from its own evaluations, of the desire from pupils to play a far greater role in collective worship. Although older pupils are beginning to show some understanding of the nature of the Trinity, younger pupils show little understanding.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards in religious education are at national expectations by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6. Pupils make steady progress as they move up the school. Improvements in the quality of planning, following the adoption of the new diocesan guidelines for RE, have ensured that teachers use a greater variety of activities, which the pupils enjoy. Planning is very thorough and consistent. The RE coordinator writes long-term plans and teachers support one another in year teams to refine these into short-term planning. This develops and shares their understanding. Teaching is good overall, with teachers showing generally good levels of subject knowledge. Teachers use good questioning. Sometimes there is too much emphasis upon the element of knowledge, without allowing pupils time to consider how topics are relevant to their own lives. This was very evident in the scrutiny of books. Insufficient time is also given for reflection, which slows the development of pupils' spiritual growth. Work is generally well-matched to the ability of pupils and the inclusion of the 'chilli choice' means that all are given the opportunity to succeed in RE. Teachers give helpful feedback to pupils. Assessment is developing. The school has recently moved to a new assessment and tracking system. Although teachers check books and compare standards with one another, they are not yet totally confident in making the judgements. There has been no moderation with other schools to ensure standards are being assessed accurately. Pupils show a secure knowledge of other world faiths and, in an RE lesson seen, were comparing the fabric and contents of a mosque with a Christian church. The pupils were well engaged and asked challenging and thoughtful questions. However, they are less secure in understanding that there are values which are shared by all faiths. 'Pause' days and 'friendship week' off-timetable days contribute to the teaching of RE. Currently there is not enough emphasis placed upon linking the values of the school to teaching in RE. The coordinator provides effective leadership. She checks books but has not yet carried out lesson observations. She attends diocesan RE network meetings and has drawn up an appropriate action plan for RE. Resources in the subject have recently been enhanced by the provision of new Bibles donated by the local churches.

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

The headteacher aspires for all pupils to learn and achieve within a distinctive Christian ethos. He also aspires for the school to be at the centre of its community and to model how a Christian school should act and behave. Staff are fully aware of this and very supportive of the headteacher's ambitions. Following on from the work to introduce new values, work to develop the school's vision further is now taking place. The governing body is fully involved in this process. Progress on this, and on the areas for development from the previous inspection, have been very slow because of many changes in the governing body, vacancies in the clergy in the local church and staffing turbulence at school. The headteacher and governing body have a good understanding of the performance of the school. However, the governing body has less awareness of the effectiveness of the school's Christian distinctiveness. Currently the school development plan has no separate section on the Christian ethos and the governors' monitoring of the action plan for RE is relatively new. Nevertheless, the governing body is fully committed to the school and is beginning to fulfil its responsibilities more effectively. Governors monitor progress in RE, visit the school and write astute reports on their findings. There are now more procedures in place to allow them to gather evidence about the school's Christian distinctiveness. The vicar of All Saints' Church is part of this process and makes a valuable contribution. Previous governing bodies have accessed training from the diocese, although the current body has not yet done so. Links with the local churches are very strong. The school has used its buildings for major festivals while the cathedral was being renovated. The churches have made generous financial donations to the school over a number of years and the most recent monies purchased new Bibles for use in RE lessons. The churches pray for the school on a regular basis and church members have given significant help to the school, enabling them to hold 'prayer spaces' events and 'pause' days. The local clergy lead collective worship weekly, which means they are well known to the pupils. They have helped with discussions in RE lessons and provide valuable pastoral support to the staff. The school contributes to the parish newsletters. Parents are supportive of the school, describing it as a welcoming place where teachers are always willing to help. They consider its church school distinctiveness is made apparent in a number of ways, including on open days, through assemblies and through 'thoughtful time'. They especially like the extracts from this which are placed on the website. The school meets its statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.