



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Esher Church of England High School

More Lane
Esher
Surrey KT10 8AP

Previous SIAS grade: Not previously inspected as an academy

Current SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Guildford

Local authority: Surrey

Dates of inspection: 28 April 2015

Date of last inspection: Not applicable

School's unique reference number: 140650

Headteacher: Mike Boddington

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

School context

Esher is an average size secondary school with 1100 students aged between 11-16 years on roll. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above the national average as are the numbers who receive the pupil premium. The majority of students are from a white British heritage with varied socio-economic backgrounds. Attendance is in line with national averages. The school converted from voluntary controlled to academy status in March 2014 as part of the Esher Learning Multi Academy Trust (MAT). The headteacher was appointed from September 2014.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Esher High as a Church of England school are good

- Students discuss and share their thoughts and opinions about matters of faith and belief with confidence in an environment that fosters openness and challenge.
- The impact of a distinctively articulated Christian ethos is becoming increasingly more overt and explicit which is making a difference to the quality of students' learning and wellbeing and is having a positive impact on the school environment.
- The headteacher, supported by senior leaders, has a very clear understanding of how to develop the school's Christian character so that it has deeper meaning and purpose for all members of the school community.

Areas to improve

- Involve all members of the school community in identifying a core of aspirational values that are explicitly rooted in Christian teaching to make a significant contribution to the students' learning and personal development.
- Develop a shared understanding of spirituality across the school community that enables students' to reflect at a deeper level and acquire a language to enable them to express their thoughts on questions of meaning with greater clarity.

- Improve the impact of collective worship by involving students to a greater extent in the planning and delivery of the programme of themes that are explored and ensure that each act of worship has Christ clearly at the centre.

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

Students are clear about the importance of values as part of the life of the school and articulate with conviction the contribution they make to their learning and personal development. A strong element of this is justice and fairness in how we treat others regardless of background and the need to understand a diverse range of faiths and cultures. Students speak with confidence and openness when sharing their views on these issues and listen with acceptance and respect to the views of others. Care and respect are regarded by students as those that most directly reflect the school's Christian ethos and are able to link them to Christian teaching such as the Ten Commandments.

Other school values, such as striving to achieve through effort and determination, are seen by students as an important contribution to their learning. Achievement has been broadly in line with national averages over the last three years. Taken together, the school's four key values are not understood by students to have explicit roots in an overt Christian ethos. A greater emphasis on restorative justice as a means to resolve behaviour or relationship problems has contributed to a calmer atmosphere and a heightened awareness of the need to listen to each other and provide time for students to reflect on what the causes of the problems might be.

Students are well behaved and considerate of others. They have a strong belief in charitable giving as a way to live out the school's Christian ethos. The school's long term commitment to support a school in Zambia is a good example of their sense of fairness and justice. There are some opportunities for students to reflect in the school day and some areas where they can go to be quiet and still. They say that these places offer a respite from the busyness of life in school.

A shared understanding of spirituality across the school community has not yet been explored and opportunities to develop this aspect across the whole curriculum are not fully embedded. Students speak openly about matters of faith and belief but sometimes they are not fully able to express precisely their thoughts in depth. Religious education (RE) makes a good contribution to the experiences of exploring complex concepts and encourages students to think in greater depth.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Students regard acts of worship as one of the main ways through which the school expresses its Christian character. In particular, students feel that the weekly tutor time offers them the time to reflect on the 'Thought for the Day' in greater detail and in the more intimate setting of the tutor group. Themes are thoughtfully planned so that students have a broad range of topics that have relevance to their own lives. They are frequently related to current events, such as the General Election, but care is taken to try and ensure that they are linked to Biblical text or Christian values. Students have some involvement in planning acts of worship but do not do so on a regular basis. They contribute to the programme of worship themes but do not have regular opportunities to contribute their ideas as to how these themes can be developed over time.

The current programme of worship, with a weekly year group setting followed by a tutor group session, does not fully meet requirements. However, the leadership has explored ways to increase the number of times that students experience acts of worship by introducing visits to the local church and the celebration of major Christian festivals such as Christmas as a whole school. Students speak positively about these innovations and say that coming together as a single community is 'a good thing'. Students have a mature understanding of the purpose of prayer explaining that it can bring hope to those in need. Students of all faiths, and those of none, say that they are comfortable with the school's approach to prayer because they are given the opportunity to respond in a way that is personal to them. The school has plans to

create a prayer space and students, when asked, have firm opinions about how this space should be used and its purpose. The school has begun to address the area for development from the previous report but more could be done to gather the views of students as part of a more structured way to monitor and evaluate its impact.

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

The school is making good progress in developing a more relevant and aspirational interpretation of its Christian ethos. The headteacher has a very clear understanding of how to continue the ongoing development of the impact of the school's distinctive Christian ethos so that it has greater meaning and purpose for all members of the school community. Since his appointment, students and adults in the school community say that the school is more peaceful and calm and that an emphasis on restorative justice places greater value on the individual. The headteacher is fully supported by senior leaders and governors who have accurately identified the need to revisit the core values that underpin the ethos and create stronger links to explicit Christian teaching. The leadership and management have a good capacity to take this forward.

The Christian ethos group is a well-established committee that ensures the Christian character of the school maintains a high profile. It has successfully monitored some aspects of the school as a church school, which have led to improvements, although some lack of clarity in its remit means that it is not fully effective. Governors ensure that key appointments in leadership secure the Christian character and that there are good opportunities for staff to develop as future leaders of church schools.

Links with the local church are an important aspect of the life of the school and have been strengthened with the closer involvement of the vicar and more regular opportunities for students to experience church. Leadership of RE is strong. The RE leader has a good grasp of the subject and what needs to be done to improve it further. For example, although the school meets minimum statutory requirements for RE at Key Stage 3, time allocation for the full course RE GCSE at Key Stage 4 is not sufficient.

The school does not meet the requirements for delivering a daily act of worship for all students but the impact of current provision is good. The school's leaders and managers have a clear understanding that the worship experience offered should be constantly evaluated so that it has the highest impact on the lives of students and adults in the school community.

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