



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Edward's Church of England Academy

Westwood Road
Leek
ST13 8DN

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: N/A

Dates of inspection: 18 and 19 June 2015

Date of last inspection: 5 July 2010

School's unique reference number: 139171

Headteacher: Liz Clarke

Inspector's name and number: Jo Fageant 104

School context

St Edward's is a larger than average middle school which converted to be an academy in January 2013. The current headteacher was appointed soon afterwards having served as a teacher and senior leader in the school for many years. The academy works within the 'Leek Education Partnership'. Most pupils are of white British heritage and come from the surrounding area. There has been a significant recent rise in the number of pupils who are supported by additional funding known as 'pupil premium' and those with special educational needs.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Edward's C. E. Academy as a Church of England school are good

- The unwavering Christian belief that everyone is valued, loved and made in the image of God creates a caring family ethos recognised by everyone resulting in excellent behaviour and relationships.
- The strong Christian character of the academy ensures a focus on spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development in all aspects of the school and is recognised by pupils in the appreciation they express for the respect accorded to them and the degree of independence they are given.
- Christian values and beliefs sincerely held by leaders motivate detailed tracking of achievement and well-being resulting in exemplary care, support and challenge for all staff as well as pupils.

Areas to improve

- Ensure pupils have opportunities to plan, lead and evaluate worship based on a well-articulated understanding of inclusive worship in a school setting.
- Develop ways in which a clear Christian basis for the widely shared values of the school vision can be articulated for and by the whole school community.

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

The academy's commitment to living its Christian foundation through actions which bring benefit to all members of the school community is exemplified in all that happens at St Edward's. Parents and new staff alike say this is a place where Christianity is 'lived and breathed'. Values understood as Christian are mainly explored as such through links with Biblical teachings in collective worship. They are widely recognised to have a positive impact on the learning behaviours of pupils and the deeply embedded culture of aspiration and mutual respect. Pupils say teachers see them as having potential but they also learn 'we have to take responsibility'. This is demonstrated in the 'have a go' feeling the school encourages and pupils know that commitment, as well as skill, is taken into account when teams are selected. They recognise how the needs of each individual are addressed through the variety of approaches teachers use and that this reflects the Christian understanding of God's love for everyone. Responses to issues raised in the last Ofsted inspection and careful tracking all help to ensure pupils are making good progress and gaps in the achievement of different groups are narrowed. Those who use it and those who do not all value the learning support centre for how it helps with a wide range of issues. These include learning and emotional challenges as well as transition arrangements for pupils who arrive in school other than at the start of Year 5. The importance of aspiration expressed in 'be everything we can be' is additionally exemplified in the 'tons of choices' and opportunities for participation and 'making a contribution' pupils recognise the academy provides for them. Sport, for example, is seen as very important in helping pupils learn to work in teams and cope with success and disappointment. For these reasons, through the structures that encourage it, everyone is involved in sport to some degree. Similarly, everyone learns to play chess in year 5 as part of the maths curriculum and this then enables some pupils to excel in this area, achieving success in competitions at both under 11 and under 19 levels. Pupils also appreciate the opportunities they have to learn languages and extend their understanding of the world through the school's international links. They learn about democracy through an effective school council and appreciate how it influences the life of the academy. Through their learning in RE pupils develop a good understanding of and respect for religious diversity. The belief that God values everyone is demonstrated in the culture of praise and celebration of all sorts of successes which everyone enjoys. A good example is the achievements of the puppet group led by a local church team. The importance accorded to religious education (RE) and collective worship means that pupils are challenged to think deeply about ultimate questions of meaning and purpose. One atheist pupil said that her time in the academy had 'made me think about the existence of God; it makes me question.' The church 'Synapse' group supports in this endeavour with activities that pupils enjoy. Particularly popular is their annual 'sacred space' which invites quiet responses to serious issues making a very strong contribution to pupils' SMSC development and demonstrating their willingness to be reflective learners. Similarly, important topics are explored through the reflection boards developed each term in classes involving all pupils across the academy. The strong sense of mutual respect that arises from the belief that everyone is of value means behaviour, relationships and attendance are all good and exclusions are rare.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is valued as an important and influential feature of St Edward's Academy. It is understood to share important messages related to values which are explored from a distinctively Christian perspective. Biblical teachings, are used in ways which result in pupils understanding their relevance to their own lives and their SMSC development. Pupils listen reflectively and behaviour, relationships and commitment to social and charitable action indicate that they take the messages to heart. They also regularly, in worship in both school and church, encounter key Christian beliefs about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, important times in the life of Jesus and the Christian year as well as significant church practices including the Eucharist. Many are able to speak about these with a significant degree of understanding. Once a year, around Easter, following preparation provided by the vicar, they experience a Eucharist which is adapted for use with

children. Although most pupils are unable to participate fully, many acknowledge the value of their experience of the service as a whole. Their engagement with and understanding of prayer has been developed and deepened through the production of a book of prayers for which each class has written contributions. Pupils enjoy it when their prayer is selected for use in worship beyond their form context. Those who have been in the academy longest recognise changes which have been made to collective worship as a direct response to pupils' comments. However, leaders have a limited understanding of the impact of worship because there is no systematic evaluation in place. Although many pupils are willing to participate actively there are still only limited opportunities for them to plan, lead and evaluate worship, elements which were highlighted as areas for development in the last inspection.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Pupils speak positively about religious education (RE) claiming it is a popular subject. They value it because it 'encourages understanding and respect.' They also say it 'helps you understand who you are' and it 'helps you explore your mind and makes you think about stuff.' Assessment and records of achievement reveal very good rates of progress and levels of attainment which are higher than national expectations for many pupils. This success is the result of teaching which is consistently at least good arising from a well-planned, broad and balanced curriculum. This develops a good level of understanding of Christianity and a number of other religions as well as an attitude of respectful questioning amongst pupils. It also makes a rich contribution to their SMSC development. Tasks and resources are well matched to pupils' abilities and extension work is being developed to stretch the most able. The lead teacher for RE is, herself, an enthusiastic learner and seeks advice from those with special expertise so she can provide effective support for pupils for whom there may be some barriers to learning. Teachers make good use of the school's marking policy which helps pupils understand what they have done well and what their next steps are for continuing improvement. This is a time of transition for RE with a new subject leader, the development of new units of work and assessment arrangements and renewed links to ensure smooth transition to the upper school. All the indications are that with the lead teacher's enthusiasm for 'crafting RE going forward' there is capacity for rapid improvement.

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

Leaders have a clear vision of, and personal commitment to, St Edward's as a place where Christian care and love have to be seen in actions. This understanding is applied consistently to all elements of school life. It translates into concern for every member of the school community and, as a consequence, there are effective strategies for analysis of tracking achievement and well-being to ensure appropriate encouragement, support and opportunities are provided. As a result, issues raised in last year's Ofsted inspection are being addressed and gaps in the progress of different groups of pupils are closing. The care and expertise provided in the learning support centre are highly valued as an important contribution to living out the Christian vision of the academy. Staff are encouraged to develop their leadership skills and accept responsibilities beyond the school. They contribute richly to the Leek Education Partnership which in turn brings benefits to the school. Governors too undertake training, including from the diocese, and this has helped to develop their understanding and effectiveness. However, along with other leaders, they have not addressed the areas for improvement set out in the last inspection in relation to collective worship. Just like pupils, new staff feel welcomed, valued and supported. They acknowledge that the academy's vision and expectations are made clear. The headteacher commands huge respect from staff and pupils alike for the consistency with which she applies her Christian belief in the value of every individual to all aspects of her work. Other staff, similarly motivated, are trusted by pupils and parents and appreciated for their willingness so often to 'go the extra mile.' Links with the local church, the wider community and schools in a number of other countries are excellent and bring great benefit to the school helping to support pupils' SMSC development. This is also enriched by the whole school curriculum including RE which is has been and continues to be well supported by senior leaders.