

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Wolverley Church of England Secondary School

Blakeshall Lane, Wolverley, Kidderminster, DY11 5XQ

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Worcester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Worcestershire
Date of inspection	9 December 2016
Date of last inspection	13 December 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 135061
Headteacher	Bryn Thomas
Inspector's name and number	Allyson Taylor 768

School context

Wolverley CE Secondary School is a smaller than average sized 11-18 school, serving the town of Kidderminster and the surrounding area. The school has grown in reputation since the last inspection and has a rising roll which stands at 595, including Sixth Form. The current headteacher has been in post since April 2014. Almost all students come from white British backgrounds. The number of students with more complex additional learning and personal needs is well above national. There have been several improvements to the indoor and outdoor learning environment, including renovating the chapel and developing a farm and animal care centre.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Wolverley as a Church of England school are outstanding

- This is an outstanding school due to the way every student is known, valued and so enabled to learn.
- Leadership is exceptionally committed to meeting the needs of students and their families.
- The Christian ethos is the lifeblood of the school and is a constant presence, guiding actions taken.
- Religious education (RE) is a 'leading light' of the school and shows the way other subjects follow.
- Engagement with families is strong and so attendance, particularly for vulnerable students, is improved.

Areas to improve

- Revisit the Christian values and make more explicit the links between them, the 'Ambition Unlimited' motto and vision so these are more readily understood and articulated as driving improvements.
- Embed more structured systems for all governors to ensure that collective worship continues to develop and be of high quality.
- Extend students' role in planning and leading worship to make acts of worship even more engaging and to enhance spiritual development in line with the other aspects of strong student leadership.

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

The Christian character of Wolverley is based on the six Christian values of love, respect, belonging, gratitude, understanding and forgiveness. These run like a spine in the school providing strong support for positive relationships and attitudes to learning. One student said: 'They are branded as Christian values but applied in a way that transcends one faith.' As a result of the inclusive way the values are promoted, students of different backgrounds and faiths subscribe to them. 'It's what we do, it's who we are,' is a common theme which suggests the vision is understood as more implicit than explicit. The impact of the Christian vision is, however, seen in the significant rise in academic standards for all groups of students. This year's exam results are the 'best ever' and staff and students ascribe this to learners being in a much better place to learn. Barriers to learning are sensitively identified and students enabled to overcome them. Members of staff go over and above their usual duties, for example, helping transport not just students but family members when required, providing uniform, breakfast and showing that they genuinely care. Staff provide positive role models and their example is followed by students. Attendance is now high and persistent absenteeism tackled rigorously by helping parents and students understand how regular attendance means better grades. Support staff provide excellent pastoral care which means more vulnerable students and those with additional learning needs feel safe, secure and so are able to face challenges in their learning. Vertical tutor groups are universally popular and students of different ages describe how they build a sense of family and mutual respect. As a result, behaviour is good and students convey pride in themselves and their school. They attribute its success to their teachers who they admire. 'Belonging' is identified as a key value and this has been relevant as the number on roll rises. Students joining in Year 7 or mid-phase are welcomed and quickly feel part of the school. An overriding consideration is to 'treat your neighbour as you want them to treat you.'

Without doubt, the Christian character of the school has sustained leaders and staff through some difficult times when standards have varied, buildings demanding refurbishment and budgets stretched. 'Ambition Unlimited' is a unifying motto which exemplifies the uncompromising vision that all will succeed. The school is well-placed to reflect on its values and motto and tie these more closely together so the values are seen as delivering the vision. Historic low aspirations and deprivation are challenged and mindsets changed. In a mono-cultural area, great care is taken to enable students to understand their place in modern Britain today. The connection between British values and Christian values is explored and widespread community involvement and charity fundraising demonstrate the impact of the complementary set of values. The high status of RE, the outstanding exam results, and the high quality of teaching ensure that students have a good grounding in Christianity and Islam. Different faiths and cultures are explored through the rich curriculum so that students express the view that, 'We are brought up in the same world.' One student passionately explained how 'equality creates peace' between people. RE, therefore, makes an outstanding contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.

As so many students rely on bus transport, enrichment activities are often planned during lunch and students appreciate how this helps them explore their interests and talents. At Wolverley, creative ways are found to allow all students to develop their interests. This is evident in the fantastic animal care facility where students learn skills beyond the academic curriculum and which benefit them in personal terms too. Student voice is acted upon and the relocation of the Sixth Form resulted after consultation with the student body.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is securely good and has some outstanding features. It is an important part in binding the school together and builds a sense of belonging to a caring community. Worship is planned to be relevant to current events and to students' interests. It is thought provoking and encourages students to take action in the service of others. Worship is understood as broadly Christian but is also inclusive and refers to other faiths when appropriate. The worship coordinator has provided excellent support for colleagues who lead tutor group worship. These provide time for reflection and for sharing any concerns. Worship often includes teaching from the Bible. Stories and quotations are offered for consideration and, when relevant, linked to the school's Christian values. Reflection and an invitation to prayer are regular features of worship and students may lead prayer during worship in tutor groups and chapel. The carefully planned time for reflection offers spiritual development for those of the Christian faith, other faiths or those of no faith. The stunning outdoor areas present further opportunities for worship and to develop spirituality. Students are familiar with the Lord's Prayer and are ready to take a more active part in leading worship, offering their own prayers and creating reflective activities for their peers. As such, they are ready to step up to a more regular role as worship leaders and build on student voice already established in the school. The fact that students supported fundraising for the refurbishment of the chapel is testament to the commitment that worship is inclusive and valued by the school community. The numbers attending weekly staff worship have grown

and for many the few minutes of reflection and calm support them in their work. Worship, therefore, has a good impact on the wider school community.

Chaplaincy has been active and instrumental in living out the school's values. Staff are keen to welcome the new incumbent and to continue the active links with the parish church and wider community. Services in the parish church enable students to feel at home with some Anglican customs of worship. The main Christian festivals are celebrated and this gives students familiarity with the church's calendar. There is also scope for students to create their own greetings and blessings which would build on the Anglican traditions which are features of worship.

Governors attend worship and support its development. Feedback is gathered but at this time there are no formal systems to ensure governors evaluate worship and direct its improvement.

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

Leaders know the school well. Self-evaluation is accurate and improvement plans show some consideration for developing aspects as a church school. Leaders are aware that, after focus on Ofsted agendas around standards, there is a need to refocus on the Christian character of the school. For example, the website, and key documents and policies do not celebrate the very strong Christian character of Wolverley as fully as they might. The school is undoubtedly blessed in the indefatigable and resilient headteacher who all members of the school community respect and admire. Under his leadership, ably supported by senior leaders, staff and governors, Wolverley is a more distinctive and so effective Church of England school than at the last inspection in 2011. Including the RE coordinator in the senior leadership team demonstrates the commitment to refocusing on the school as a Christian learning community. Support for her key role has enabled the RE department to lead the way in terms of raising standards. This also shows that leaders are mindful of the need to develop future leaders of church schools. Several staff have joined the school due to its reputation for nurturing them as well as students. Staff feel valued and supported. There is a strong sense of joyous harmony and this is a result of the way the headteacher engages with every individual and cares deeply that all flourish.

Partnerships with parents are mutually beneficial. One parent described the positive transformation in her child since joining the school and how this had helped them as a family. Staff show respect for families and this is returned. As a result, attendance at parents' evenings has risen dramatically. Leaders are to be commended for their perseverance in engaging with some families who were reluctant to get involved in school. Consequently, there is a shared and growing view that parents and staff want the same for the young people in their care.

Partnerships with the church are strong. The support of those involved in chaplaincy has been instrumental to creating the inclusive and aspirational ethos of the school. Clergy and chaplains are regarded as friends and part of the network of outstanding pastoral support. Relationships with the diocese are set to develop further. Not only do leaders aspire for high student outcomes, the headteacher articulates a desire to become a beacon church school in the diocese. 'Ambition Unlimited' applying to how the school wishes to reach out, to learn from and work with other schools. Many students at Wolverley know just how fortunate they are to be in such a beautiful environment and to have leaders making sure that 'no one is left behind.' It is clear that this school is living out its vision and values in an exemplary way. At this time of significant change in education, leaders are committed to the future success of the school as a church school and it is clear that there are no limits to that success.

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