

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

### The Minster School

Nottingham Road, Southwell, NG25 0LG	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Southwell and Nottingham</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	N/A
Name of multi-academy trust / federation [delete as appropriate]	N/A
Date/s of inspection	8 and 9 November 2016
Date of last inspection	14 and 15 December 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 122898
Headteachers	Matthew Parris
Inspector's name and number	Jo Fageant 104

#### School context

The Minster School is an oversubscribed, larger than average secondary school. It includes 40 pupils from the age of 7 to 11 who have been selected for their musical ability, some of whom are members of Southwell Minster's choir school. It serves the town of Southwell and surrounding villages. There are 55 places in each year group for children of worshiping members of the Church of England. This is an area judged to experience lower than the national average levels of social deprivation. Almost all students are of White British heritage. Fewer than the national average have special educational needs (SEN) or an education health care (EHC) plan. The school was designated a National Teaching School in March 2013 and is the lead school in the Minster Teaching School Alliance.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of The Minster School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The high profile and respect accorded to religious education (RE) and collective worship, the recognised presence of the chaplain and the obvious links with Southwell Minster embed a strong Christian presence within the school which is accepted as the norm.
- The long-established Christian ethos of the school is valued by all members of the school community and has a positive impact on behaviour, relationships and attitudes to learning.
- The school's understanding of Christian living promotes and gives rise to a profound ethos of service.
- The carefully expressed statement which encapsulates the school's vision of itself as a church school originally arose from Christian teachings. However, over time the articulation of these roots has been lost so the vision's anchor in Christianity is no longer made explicit for all to understand.

#### Areas to improve

- Building on their accurate self-evaluation and on-going work, leaders should find ways to express in explicitly Christian terms the vision which underpins the rich ethos of the school. This should make clear to all members of the community that the inclusive, caring, day to day life of the school is the outworking of Christian teachings.

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

All members of the school community recognise how they benefit from the long established Christian ethos of their church school. There is a general acknowledgement that it 'is taken for granted because it's part of the school.' Students and staff alike understand the ethos to be implicitly that of a Christian family which embraces everyone. Some, from the perspective of their own faith and/or what they encounter in collective worship, draw connections between the ethos and specific Christian teachings. However, these explicit links are rarely made. Very well thought-through strategies for pastoral care and support for academic achievement, which take account of individual need, are attributed to the long-established Christian ethos. Students are openly appreciative of the school's attention to their holistic development, saying things like, 'this school cares about what kind of person you are.' They recognise the benefits of good teaching which helps them achieve well and attain above average examination results. They also understand how they benefit from the wide variety of extra-curricular opportunities: 'this is a school where there's lots of things to be involved with.' These include many different styles of musical involvement, sports teams, engagement with charitable initiatives, trips to places of worship and overseas service adventures. These are carefully planned to provide experiences which broaden understanding of the world and develop personal skills. All students participate in a compulsory range of activities and many undertake additional options. These experiences and commitments ensure spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development are strengths of the school. As a result, students say, 'doing good is a natural part of the school'. This means behaviour and relationships are good and students assert that 'you don't see many nasty people here.' A commitment to the worth of every individual means learners, staff and students, are nurtured to be the best they can be. The appreciation and loyalty to which this gives rise are demonstrated by the willingness with which older students accept roles of responsibility and past students return to help. They want to 'give back'. The youngest pupils benefit from their engagement with older students and from the specialist teaching and high levels of challenge the school provides. Effective pastoral and academic support give rise to high levels of attendance so there are very few exclusions. The strong Christian ethos of the school means that when they are necessary they are managed with compassion and attention to what will be best for each individual. Links with Southwell Minster and the involvement of the chaplaincy team embed an overtly Christian presence. This helps to make the school a place in which it is easy to be a Christian. The 'explore' group offers opportunities to explore faith and its implications. RE contributes to the school's inclusive Christian character by helping students listen to and debate different opinions in lessons. It enables a deep understanding of and instils a respect for diversity and difference through the exploration of the influence of belief and faith on people's lives. Students are challenged beyond stereotypical understandings, developing a good grasp of diversity within all faith communities. As a result, they recognise that the subject helps prepare them for life beyond school.

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

Collective worship is understood by all to be an important part of school life. Themes are widely acknowledged to be accessible, relevant and thought-provoking. The positive degree to which they inspire social and charitable action reflects the careful planning that takes account of the spiritual and moral development of all members of the school community. Planning and evaluation involves a variety of people (including the lead teacher, chaplain, clergy from different denominations, a local Christian youth worker, teachers and students) which develops a good understanding of the diversity of Christian traditions. Worship takes place in different contexts, some of which enable more active participation than others. In the tutor group settings, where everyone knows one another and they are of similar ages, students are all able to share and discuss their thoughts. The introduction of the 'thought for the week' programme has established a consistency of focus across the different contexts. Excellent resources and help from the chaplaincy team are supporting tutors, who have varying levels of confidence, to adapt the message to engage their students when worship takes place in tutor groups. A respectful sense of occasion is evident when students and staff gather for worship in house groups on two days each week. In keeping with the Christian character of the school, worship always includes biblical teaching so students are able to see its relevance to their own lives. Their understanding of this relevance is demonstrated when they prepare tutor group led house worship. These opportunities develop a variety of skills with students thinking about and finding ways to successfully communicate serious messages. Students express appreciation of worship led by their peers whose ideas and presentations speak with particular resonance for them. Traditions which give shape to house worship have been reviewed. As a consequence, music played during entry and exit is now a consistent feature as is the lighting of a candle accompanied by the reading of a 'candle prayer'. Sharing out the responsibility for these elements means they do not consistently contribute to an appropriate sense of reverence. Students respond respectfully to the invitation to pray. Although personal engagement varies there is a richly reflective response which has a positive impact on attitudes and relationships throughout the school. End of term and festival services are held in Southwell Minster. In this setting all members of the school community develop a familiarity with more traditional forms of Anglican worship and seasons of the church year. Students have a good understanding, from these occasions as well as their RE lessons, of the important place of Jesus in Christian worship and why worship is

addressed to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Those who are in the choir school are actively involved in the worship life of the minster and develop a very sophisticated understanding of its worship. For the small number of staff and students who want it there are opportunities for Eucharistic worship and additional gatherings for prayer.

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

The RE department benefits from a strong team of enthusiastic specialist teachers and the insight and commitment of an established leader. Keen to continue their own learning, they all take part in training opportunities. They share responsibility for developing strategies that bring about ongoing improvement within and beyond the department. They have very successfully addressed the areas to develop suggested in the last inspection report and an external subject review in 2014. The course gives prominence to Christianity. It has been developed from the local authority's RE syllabus in a way that provides a helpful transition to GCSE studies in Key Stage 4. Much of the teaching in the department is outstanding and never less than good. Effective assessment procedures and tracking of progress enables teachers to respond to the needs of all learners. Lessons are well planned, not only in relation to the 'what' of learning but also the 'how'. This means students develop and successfully use a range of higher order thinking skills as the norm. Interactive activities, discussion and questioning are particular strengths of the department. Teachers draw even the most reluctant students into discussions and they listen to and answer one another respectfully. They know they are expected to justify their viewpoints and, where appropriate, use biblical references to do so. They enjoy this challenge as is clear from the high standards achieved in GCSE grades and the significant number who go on to successfully study the subject at A level. There is a proud history of supporting students who gain less than ideal GCSE grades through the challenges of this higher level of study. It is not unusual for students to continue their studies in university theology and philosophy courses. Students value the course for much more than examination success, however. They express this in comments like, 'it has really made me think about what I believe and why.' The exploration of topics goes beyond the superficial and stereotypical so that students develop a very good understanding of the diversity within Christianity and the similarities and differences between the religions studied. The department accepts responsibility for delivering the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum in addition to RE. This ensures that issues of faith and belief are addressed in the context of topics of immediate relevance to all learners. As such, this combination makes a strong contribution to SMSC development.

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

Leaders, including governors, are confident that their vision, which is understood to arise from Christian principles, beliefs and values, is lived out in all their decisions, policies and actions. However, the Christian roots to which the vision is attributed are not made explicit in a way that ensures universal understanding. Leaders recognise this and it is reflected in their accurate self-evaluation of the school and their plans for future developments. The Christian roots are, however, interpreted in a well-articulated desire to enable all to become the best they can be. This is clear in the rationale for the establishment of the teaching school alliance. Other schools have been drawn to involvement as a consequence of its Christian character which sees the initiative as a transformational partnership of equals. Strengths within the partnerships are identified and staff, including teaching assistants, benefit from the sharing of expertise and learning from one another. There are opportunities to explore the nature of church school leadership and the diocese uses the expertise found here to contribute to its courses. A commitment to identifying and maximising the benefit of people's skills, interests and abilities is evident in staffing decisions. Non-teaching pastoral leads are passionate about their newly created roles and how they can provide more and better support for students' needs. Leaders are committed to maintaining a strong RE department which achieves above average examination results and in the words of non-examination sixth formers 'opens up your thoughts.' The particular skills of the RE department are used to good effect to deliver the PSHE curriculum in addition to RE. A teacher appointed to have responsibility for collective worship works closely with the chaplaincy team to create structure and resources for worship. As a consequence, the 'thought for the week' initiative is well supported. There are, however, inconsistencies across the school in the implementation of the plan. This means that statutory requirements are not fully met as 'worship' is not provided for all students every day. The commitment to supporting staff to be the best they can be in turn supports the academic achievement and personal development of students. This overarching endeavour involves regular reviews of each department, the careful tracking of students' progress and support and intervention as appropriate. It has also given rise, partly in response to suggestions made in the last inspection, to a carefully constructed 'enrichment' programme. This engages students with experiences and responsibilities which richly support their SMSC development. Related involvement with the local community, charities and churches results in mutual and substantial benefit for all groups. The inclusion of the choir school and the Key Stage 2 talented musicians is an example which demonstrates this. The school works well with parents so they understand the provision being made for their children and how they can support them at home.