

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Osmund's Church of England Middle School	
Barnes Way, Rothesay Road, Dorchester, DT1 2DZ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	1 June 2012
Name of single academy trust	St Osmund's CE Middle School
Date of inspection	17 October 2017
Date of last inspection	October 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy converter 138165
Headteacher	Jim Williams
Inspector's name and number	Mike Graham 286

School context

St Osmund's is a larger than average middle school of 682 pupils who come from Dorchester and the surrounding area. It became an Academy in June 2012. The majority of students are of White British heritage. The percentage who speak English as an additional language is well below average. The proportion having a statement of special educational need and/or disability (SEND) is above the national average. Expansion to a capacity of 720 has been agreed between the local authority and governing body. A further period of consultation with the wider community will take place before the pupil admission number is officially increased. The building works will be completed in December 2017. A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Osmund's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Outstanding leadership of the school as a Christian community by the headteacher, strongly supported by the fully committed leadership team, staff and governors, ensures that Christian values underpin all the school's work with students.
- Exemplary Christian care and pastoral support is readily available to all students, enabling them to flourish in their academic and personal development.
- The Christian values at the centre of the school's ethos, particularly love, faith and hope, are lived out in the respectful and caring relationships throughout the school community.
- Outstanding worship and religious education (RE) take students on explorations of Christianity and other world faiths, leading to excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.

Areas to improve

- Deepen and extend student and staff understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christians, to deepen individuals' spiritual lives and cultivate and support more spontaneous prayer.
- Include the vision and mission statements on all policy documents so as to acknowledge and declare the Christian basis of all the school's work.

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

At St Osmund's, every student is nurtured and valued as a unique child of God. Christian values are the key motivating force behind everything the school does. The rector and co-chair of governors are rightly proud of the fact that 'the highlight...is the inclusive nature of the school. (They provide) something for everybody. The approach is holistic'. Attendance is consistently good, and is above national targets. The Christian vision, which has been gladly embraced by the whole school community, is summed up in the values that underpin the mission statement: 'These three remain, faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love.' This direct biblical quotation inspires staff and students alike to be the best they can be. These and other Christian values make a strong impact on the SMSC development of every student. The pastoral team support disadvantaged students and their families with commendable empathy and diligent work with small groups and individuals. The acceptance and inclusion of all, regardless of faith or cultural background is striking. One parent from a non-Christian faith said, 'I'm lucky to have this school. My children are able to share their faith in RE lessons.' Visitors from other faiths and cultures are involved in RE lessons, thus enhancing the students' understanding. The subject also makes a telling contribution to the Christian character of the school, with themes from worship linked to the lessons very effectively. The rich diversity of the curriculum is an outstanding strength of the school, with weekly 'enrichment afternoons' on Fridays. The students have a wide choice of activities in which to take part, including arts, crafts, sport and outreach to others. An example of the latter is the regular series of visits to a nearby care home. The students chat with the residents, build relationships and undertake activities with them. The mutual benefits are clear and are much appreciated. The drama and music team produce plays and musicals, for example one with a First World War theme, which involves the students in composing, writing and stage management. These experiences build social skills as well as providing excellent academic development opportunities. The 'Overcoming Injustice' (OI) group of students have launched several projects. For example the impressive role-playing with tents, and simple cooking for a whole day, to help the community to identify with the refugees stranded in the Calais region in France. A parent commented, 'They are telling us about these things!' Fund-raising and collections of useful gifts have been boosted as a result, with Christian compassion and generosity clearly demonstrated. The Student Voice team are equally active, with outreach to the poor as well as leadership in the school community evident and impressive. The environment around the school is vibrant, with a 'Forest School' wild area in the grounds. Outstanding artwork and interactive displays and Bible verses appropriate to the values are prominent. The students appreciate and are impacted by these and regularly use the 'prayer wall' to reflect on life and write their own prayers. These features undoubtedly enhance their spiritual awareness and understanding.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

'We always come out of assemblies thinking, "How can I put that into my daily life as a Christian?'" This comment from a student illustrates the impact made by worship here. All are engaged by its sincerity and relevance, with links between Christian values and daily life challenges. Frequent biblical references emphasise the basis of the school's Christian foundation. As another student put it, 'Passages from the Bible (help us) learn a lot about life. This helps us even if we're not Christian.' The headteacher's leading of worship is exemplary, with humour, music, video clips and student involvement in leading prayer and in demonstrations of the message. A Year 6 student prayed, 'Help us to use our knowledge to change this world for the better.' All these elements combine with excellent use of Bible verses to deliver a deep and meaningful spiritual experience for all participants. Prayer is a key part of school life, and is open to all. The prayer wall is well used, as are the students' prayers in tutor group, year group and whole school worship. Several staff members and some Year 8 students utilise spontaneous prayer when appropriate, but this is comparatively rare. The worship co-ordinator said, 'Every child can have space to reflect.' This simple statement is supported throughout the school in lessons and in many extra-curricular activities. Priority is given to allowing time for reflection, and this often involves prayer. The rector leads in church for welcome and leavers' services and at Christmas. These occasions always include encouragement to students to bring with them 'a hope and a fear'. These are then prayerfully included in the worship. Parents are thrilled to have these opportunities to join the school in worship. The links between school and church are strengthened effectively by these special occasions. Rector and curate also have links with school for worship, and the school choir, the 'Ossie Singers', occasionally lead worship on Sunday mornings in church, especially in 'all-age' worship. Their contributions are significant, and include unaccompanied singing at times. The planning, evaluation and leadership of worship is excellent. The co-ordinator is passionate about her role and provides high quality resources and support to staff and students who lead tutor and year group worship. She is constantly looking for ways to improve the worship experience for students, and engages them in the evaluation exercises. Worship at St Osmund's is exciting and constantly evolving.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The quality of teaching and learning is at least good and often outstanding in RE, leading to excellent progress by all students in line with and often beyond national expectations. The Christian values are clearly taught and linked to their biblical origins. The revised local agreed syllabus, including very recently published 'Understanding Christianity' project, is already making a significant impact on students and staff. The depth of study involved is demanding, in a positive sense, with increased challenge already being achieved in the work on Christian belief. For example an outstanding Year 7 lesson included deep discussions about a modern artwork depicting 'The People of God'. One student posed the question, 'I wonder if you can believe in God and not be a Christian?' Another responded to the suggestion that in life we have to face many temptations by placing his miniature image of himself on the picture, saying 'I'm here to keep people away from bad things!' During a Year 5 session, symbols representing creation and God's guidance for His people were discussed. One student said, 'I think God created things in black and white and then applied the colours!'

Understanding about the Christian concept of the Holy Trinity is good. Students are clear about God as Father and Creator, Jesus as Son and Saviour, but are less sure about the role of the Holy Spirit. They appreciate the way RE is taught, relishing the discussions, drama and interactive approach. Their understanding has been developed through topics such as 'How radical was Jesus?' and 'What will happen when we die?' Other world faiths are well covered, with wise involvement of students and visitors from non-Christian faiths. Students are sure of the benefits of such study, one saying, 'We can understand different people – what they can't do (because of their beliefs). This helps you not to judge them.' The leader of RE is skilled and experienced, with a passion for her subject. This is exemplified by her thorough and sensitive work with staff and students. In-service training, resources and evaluation through observations and team teaching are excellent. Assessment is thorough and regular, with team discussion and moderation with neighbouring schools key elements. The subject is constantly reviewed and developed so as to ensure the best possible experiences for students. Their learning is constantly applied to their every day lives, and this is clearly evident in the respect, care and humility shown in relationships throughout the school.

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

Leaders express and demonstrate a strong Christian vision. This generates the loving care and security that is experienced by students, enabling them to give of their best, with no fear of failure. Achievement is therefore good to outstanding overall, as demonstrated by the school's own tracking systems as well as available national data. The headteacher and all staff treasure the concept and outworking of the 'faith, hope and love' statement. This is the key to the inspiring and caring ethos that pervades this school. The headteacher leads by example. His commitment in promoting the school's Christian ethos shines through in all his work. He is uncompromising in his determination that all students receive the best possible love and care in their years at St Osmund's. Staff and governors are unstinting in their support. The Christian values arising from and exemplifying the vision make a strong impact on the school curriculum. The rector said, 'All...have access to the Lord Jesus'.

Governor monitoring and evaluation ensure that it is balanced and develops the whole child, and that worship and RE meet statutory requirements. Every family is aware that the openly Christian love and care is always available, especially at times of need. The impact of the Christian ethos of the school is secured through diligent strategic planning. The senior leadership team and governors regularly undertake thorough and honest evaluation of this planning and policymaking. There is, however, little mention of the school's Christian vision statements in policy documents. Partnerships with the local churches, the wider community and of course the parents are strong and mutually supportive. Parents and carers are very appreciative of the Christian care shown especially when life is difficult. They know that, for all of the staff, the wellbeing of every child is paramount. Parents are very proud of their school. One commented that 'the care and love shown is amazing!'

SIAMS report October 2017, St Osmund's Middle School, Dorchester, DTI 2DZ