

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

<b>Lady Margaret School</b>	
Parson's Green London SW6 4UN	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>London</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	September 2012
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A
Date/s of inspection	7 & 8 December 2016
Date of last inspection	November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy 138607
Headteacher	Elisabeth Stevenson
Inspector's name and number	Lyn Field 151

### School context

This is a smaller than average Church of England comprehensive school for 746 girls from age 11-18. Numbers are rising as the school moves to four forms on entry. Just over half of the places are reserved for students who meet the foundation criteria. The proportions of disadvantaged students and those receiving support for special educational needs are lower than average but more than usual come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Since the last inspection, a chaplain has been appointed and the building extended. A new headteacher took up post in September 2015 with further changes to senior leadership and staffing.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Lady Margaret as a Church of England academy are outstanding

- This is a practising Christian school in every respect but one that is fully inclusive, so all students benefit as a result of the ethos expressed in the motto 'I have a goodly heritage' (Psalm 16:6).
- The headteacher's personal faith drives her exceptional leadership and has reinvigorated the school as a Church of England academy.
- The rich pattern of daily worship and prayer has a profound impact on staff and students alike.
- Students flourish within the holistic approach to learning. They achieve highly and mature into compassionate and articulate young women, well equipped to take leading roles in working for good in society.

### Areas to improve

- Support the head of RE in refining systems for assessment so that all groups of students make outstanding progress.

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

The school motto 'I have a goodly heritage' resonates with students because it expresses the way they identify with the Christian ethos of the school. A comment echoed by many others was: 'God is good so if we are in his image then our upbringing in this school is good and worship is our platform for our future actions.'

The daily pattern of worship and prayer provides them with a spiritual and moral framework for life. They recognise that they are learning guiding principles for their personal conduct and a language with which to make sense of the big issues they will face as their futures unfold. One sixth former typically said 'I have the heritage, I'm building it, it's coming.' Relationships are excellent and are palpably based on kindness. This is a key characteristic of the school. Everyone knows it, lives it and links it directly to Gospel teaching. Bullying and any form of prejudice, therefore, are rare. Students have very positive attitudes to diversity because religious beliefs are openly discussed and this continues outside of lessons because students are genuinely interested in how others live by their beliefs. Religious education (RE) has a high profile and is supported by other subjects in contributing to the Christian character of the school. Modern foreign languages, for example, address the religious element of ethical issues and church services are part of the programme for trips to Spain.

The Christian ethos is quietly expressed and does not need to be shouted because it is deeply embedded in history. Beautiful pieces of art in public areas inspire, motivate and create a spiritually uplifting atmosphere. The headteacher regularly explains that the cross at the main entrance is a constant reminder that 'God loves us but challenges us to be the best of ourselves.' Students know that 'the best' is more than academic success and that they are challenged to serve others. The careful tracking of how sixth formers are equipped to take responsibility for the wellbeing of others is impressive. The school council's initiative 'Don't be a snake online' and creative arts projects with mental health charities are just examples of this. Debate is strongly promoted through 'Have I got views for you' and work shadowing of local borough council members prepare girls to be future leaders in society. Students' attainment is well above schools locally and nationally including for the sixth form and especially for girls of higher ability. In 2016, results improved to show a return to the levels of previous years. This was the result of necessary radical changes introduced by the new headteacher to ensure that the assessment and tracking of students' progress identified any groups making less than expected progress. This monitoring is motivated by the Christian belief that all students are equally valued by God and is supported by rigorous systems that hold staff to account. Good practice is now shared more widely and team work is more prevalent so that teaching is no longer a solitary activity. The school is alert to the needs of vulnerable students and the chaplain is integral to the inclusion team.

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

A rich pattern of explicitly Anglican worship shapes each day and each year in the school. It makes a deep and lasting impression on staff and students alike. This has historically been a feature of the school as part of the 'goodly heritage' but, in the last two years, the arrival of the headteacher and the chaplain has reinvigorated the worshipping life of this community and restored it to the highest profile in school life. The chaplain has tightened the structure of worship whilst making it more accessible to the whole community. Students from Christian backgrounds are nurtured in their faith, especially by the headteacher's dynamic example. Students from other faiths are supported in their faith because they value the high quality material produced by the chaplain that challenges all students to reflect on the relevance of religious beliefs in their lives. Members of staff equally value this for their own benefit and make excellent use of support and training from the chaplain. Consequently, worship in form groups is never missed and is so firmly established that open and honest discussions about faith issues are commonplace in lessons and among friends. Students are stepping up to the mark and committing themselves to taking a leading role in form time worship, providing live music and supporting worship at a more strategic level alongside the new student chaplain.

Students have a very secure understanding of key Christian beliefs and values through the constant use of biblical teaching and Anglican liturgy. Christian festivals, particularly Advent and Lent, take on greater significance because they are marked by special activities and visits in rotation to a variety of Anglican churches. Consequently, students have a mature awareness of the breadth of traditions within the Church.

The prayer life of the school is a constant thread that extends across the school community because the power of prayer is taken seriously. It is a starting point for staff briefings and governors' meetings and, at other times, may be the sole focus such as for parents, who come together on a regular basis.

Most remarkable is how the saying of the Grace creates a unity from the repetition of the same words at the end of every day in every classroom, every week, every year of the girls' school life. It gives a spiritual pattern to life that, for some, will last a lifetime. For students of all faiths and of none, it is widely recognised as a time where they make use of the freedom to reflect on their own spirituality.

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

Religious education is very popular and students fully support its status as a compulsory subject at GCSE. Consequently, they do well and achieve higher than in schools nationally. This continues at A level where take-up is extremely good and results are consistently better than national especially at the highest levels. The percentage achieving A\*-A in 2016 was twice the national figure. However, the more robust approach to assessment now being developed shows that disadvantaged students do not always progress as rapidly as other students and the department is working hard to remedy this.

All students benefit from working with four enthusiastic specialist teachers of RE and this underpins the subject's popularity. This is particularly relevant for 'Beliefs and Values', the course taken by all sixth formers, where staff are able to respond to the variety of topics requested by students so each course reflects their current concerns. The strong subject knowledge of staff creates a secure environment for students to explore their own faith and the subject makes an excellent contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The department has embraced the whole school initiatives of the last year to improve teaching and learning and lessons in RE reflect this changing culture. As a result, students are actively engaged in lessons and paired discussion works effectively. Written feedback is used effectively because its clear structure helps students of all abilities to make improvements to their work and to select resources that precisely match their needs. They have a wide knowledge of religious language and are confident to use this in different contexts such as the essay competition run jointly with the English department. Teaching is never less than consistently good and sometimes outstanding. Year 7 students arrive with very varied experiences of learning about Christianity. The curriculum addresses this through a variety of topics but depends too much on the good biblical teaching emerging through worship. Staff are fully aware of forthcoming changes to examination courses and are already implementing changes in Key Stage 3 so that students are well prepared to sustain the current high standards.

All members of staff have extra roles of responsibility across the school such as the development of 'Philosophy4Children' and the Extended Project Qualification in the sixth form. This not only raises the profile of RE staff but enriches what they offer to the leadership of the department and the sharing of good practice. There is, therefore, strong capacity to deliver the ambitious aims for RE.

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

The governors, many of whom are practising Christians, are deeply committed to the school's core purpose as a Church of England academy. This emerges clearly through the retention of church foundation places, through the appointment of a chaplain at a time when there was pressure on financial resources and in the recruitment of a headteacher who would lead from the basis of a strong personal faith. The Christian ethos is, therefore, intrinsic to strategic decisions.

Since the last inspection, there has been an impressive extension to the building within the existing footprint. This distracted attention from standards and progress and there are signs that the school began to coast. The new headteacher brought an immediate halt to this and has given clear and uncompromising direction that is totally aligned to the governors' vision for 'honouring the image of God in every child'. This shines through in the meticulous attention to the plans created for individual students and in the immense care taken by staff and governors in coming to decisions about potential exclusion and alternative provision. Attendance is improving and, for all groups of students, is above the national average.

The new senior team is ambitious and passionate about its work. Under the inspiring leadership of the headteacher, members of this team are rapidly building capacity as leaders specifically of a church school. They know exactly the stage the school has reached but the written record of self-evaluation does not do justice to the insight of school leaders. It is not sufficiently analytical because it treats the Christian character as a separate entity which it most clearly is not.

The headteacher has offered far more scope for the chaplain to assert an influence over all aspects of school life. This has achieved the cohesion that was missing at the time of the previous inspection and enabled the chaplain to be a source of immense strength following the recent tragic death of a student. During this time, the already strong partnerships with local clergy proved invaluable to the school community. Links with the Diocese work effectively at many levels from the Diocesan Board to school network meetings. Visits from diocesan advisers both challenge and affirm the strategic thinking of leaders as part of the constant drive to improve.

Statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are fully met. This includes for sixth form students where an impressive and regular timetable slot with specialist teachers is highly valued by students and parents. 'Bible and Brioche', Youth Alpha and Senior Alpha are among the groups that are popular with a small but significant minority of students. This indicates the huge emphasis the school places on spiritual wellbeing and on helping students to develop their own faith and to own it independently of their upbringing.

