

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

### Malcolm Arnold Preparatory School

Trinity Avenue, Northampton NN2 6JW	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Peterborough</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	no previous inspection
Date of academy conversion	01 September 2014
Name of multi-academy trust	David Ross Educational Trust
Date/s of inspection	03 February 2017
Date of last inspection	n/a
Type of school and unique reference number	140946
Headteacher	Marie Lally
Inspector's name and number	Revd Douglas Spenceley 368

#### School context

This average-sized primary free school, which opened in September 2014, moved into new buildings in September 2016. It is growing and developing, with pupils currently from Reception to Year 2. An acting headteacher from within the school's senior leadership is providing cover for the headteacher, who is on maternity leave. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average, as is the proportion in receipt of pupil premium. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is higher than the national average. Pupil mobility has been high, especially in year 2, but is now more stable. The Trust has a non-religious ethos and comprises a mixture of church and non-church schools.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Malcolm Arnold Preparatory School as a Church of England school are good

- The committed and enthusiastic team of leaders and staff ensure that, through modelling the school's distinctive Christian virtues, children thrive in a safe and caring atmosphere.
- Parents have confidence in the school and increasingly wish to be involved in the whole life of the school. They particularly value the strong impact of its Christian virtues on their children.
- The distinctive Christian virtues, which underpin the school's ethos of high expectations and aspirations, inspire the pupils to do their best and 'reach for the moon'.
- The importance which the school places on grounding all work in Christian principles ensures that pupils have good spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.

#### Areas to improve

- Organise the formal governor monitoring and evaluation procedures into a regular structured cycle in order to hold school leaders to account for the development of the school as a church school more effectively.
- Increase the visibility of the distinctive Christian character of the school in public documentation, including the school's website and policies.

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

An atmosphere of purposefulness and calm is evident as soon as one enters the school. Staff and parents both comment that pupils 'want to be here'. It soon becomes clear that the Christian virtues underpinning the daily routine and life of the school make a major contribution to the pupils' good behaviour, learning, relationships and attendance. Consequently, pupils are achieving above national expectations for their age and stage.

Pupils are clear about the Christian virtues and are able to relate them both to the teaching of Jesus and biblical stories, as well as how they affect their own lives. They enjoy developing thinking and analytical skills through the regular challenge to relate their learning to the 'four reflection zones': world, identity, question and prayer. These provide a clear and evident contribution to pupils' good SMSC development.

Parents see the rootedness of Christian values and virtues as one of the key reasons for choosing the school. They say that children 'develop an inquisitive mind about our faith' and 'question why different faiths hold different views'. A growing 'respect for all' and 'teaching for life' are central to the development outcomes parents see in their children.

Religious education (RE) plays a key part in helping pupils recognise and work hard to develop positive attitudes within school towards community, inclusivity and respect for people of all faiths and none. Both collective worship and RE firmly reinforce the importance of the Christian character of the school. Pupils recognise clearly the commonalities and differences of the broad cultural and faith mix of the local area. As a result of the strong links with the local community, pupils experience good development of social responsibility and respect for the diverse cultures and faiths of the area. Along with their experience of churches, they are developing a solid understanding and respect for worship places of other faiths.

The school is to be applauded for many excellent outcomes already evident. In only its third year it has confidently embedded an overt Christian character. Naturally practices are not yet in place to reflect and respond to the whole range of ages and developmental stages of the primary phase. However, there is clear evidence of capacity and determination to continue a strong emphasis as a church school.

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

Pupils enjoy collective worship. They participate enthusiastically and sing with obvious pleasure. Worship is rooted in the school's Christian virtues, which drive all aspects of school life. Pupils talk confidently about how what they learn in worship 'helps us make the right choices'. They clearly understand the Bible as 'telling of God's story' and have a growing knowledge and understanding of different Bible stories and parables. Suitable music creates a quiet atmosphere, which encourages pupils to adopt a respectful attitude in preparation for worship. Focal points for worship include a cross, a Bible and three lighted candles, which pupils understand to represent the Holy Trinity. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of the nature of the Trinity and the importance for Christians of the person of Jesus Christ. Godly Play sessions, which a parent leads for each class to introduce each new Christian virtue through a suitable Bible story, are inspirational. Pupils become engrossed in the story and are led to reflect deeply on its meaning and the impact it has on them.

Pupils pray naturally and take opportunities to write their own prayers, often related to specific Christian virtues. These are used in collective worship, read by the pupils, as well as at other times in the day. They see prayer as an opportunity to 'say things you want to tell God'. They know that prayer components include asking, thanking, asking for help and 'telling God you love him'. Pupils regularly use the reflection areas in class to write their own prayer thoughts.

The regular visits by the vicar and the curate to lead worship are eagerly awaited. Their contributions are valued by staff and pupils alike. Clergy feel that they have a healthy and supportive relationship with the school, which they would like to extend. The parish church hosts the school for its special services to mark the various important Christian seasons. Pupils enjoy preparing and participating in these services, which are well attended by families. Although the school is still in its early stages of development, there is room for pupils to be increasingly involved in preparing and leading the daily collective worship. Clergy, staff and the diocesan governors regularly evaluate worship, but without sufficient focus on its impact on the whole school community and especially on pupils' spiritual development. This means opportunities to inform future development of the worship programme are missed.

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

The school's very committed leadership, together with its strong, highly motivated staff, actively promote the trust's challenging vision. The trust is not a Christian organisation. Nevertheless, the school is able to bring a very strong Christian ethos to the trust's non-religious corporate vision without its active support. Thus the core Christian character and ethos of the school does not have sufficient prominence on the website or in relevant policies and public documents. Leaders are able to relate how the Christian values have a definite, positive impact on learning behaviours, relationships, which support pupils' good progress and attainment. The school self-evaluation provides

accurate judgements of their current stage of development. Leaders effectively evaluate the school's development and the strong and committed governing body holds them to account equally vigorously. However, the formal monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a church school is not yet clearly embedded into the annual cycle of monitoring.

RE is managed well and complies both with legal requirements and the expectations of the Church of England Education Office's 'Statement of Entitlement for RE in Church of England Schools'. Resourcing for RE is good. The RE subject leader takes diocesan training opportunities for her continued professional development in RE, which she then cascades effectively to staff. Very good general professional development opportunities are accessed from the Trust, all of which ensure the development of strong middle and senior leaders, capable of transferring these skills into future leadership in church schools.

Plans for collective worship show clear progression through the school's Christian virtues, with appropriate biblical reference and expectations for pupils' SMSC development. The policy and programme for collective worship meet legal requirements. Parents feel very strongly that they have been part of the consultative process of developing the Christian virtues. They feel very much part of the school community and some wish to be more fully involved.

They praise highly the way staff are approachable and deal quickly and effectively with concerns. The school is increasingly involved with the local community and the local church. Strong links have been developed with the diocese, which is accessed additionally for professional and governor development relating to being a church school. Good and active links are in place with the local family of church schools in the town.

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