

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Rawlins Academy	
Loughborough Road, Quorn LE12 8DY	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Leicester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Date of academy conversion	November 2011
Name of multi-academy trust / federation [delete as appropriate]	N/A
Date/s of inspection	6 & 7 December 2017
Date of last inspection	October 2014
Type of school and unique reference number	Secondary academy 120301
Principal	Callum Orr
Inspector's name and number	Lyn Field 151

School context

This is an oversubscribed, larger than average-sized secondary school with a sixth form and an expanding 30 place specialist provision on site (Skills for Learning). The majority of students are from White British backgrounds in Quorn, surrounding villages and the town of Loughborough. The proportions of disadvantaged students and of those with special educational needs are both below average although figures are higher for those with education and health care plans. On becoming an academy in 2011, Rawlins was identified as having a Christian designation and in 2013 extended its age range to 11-18.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Rawlins Academy as a Church of England school are good

- The academy is successfully establishing its Christian identity.
- The principal grasped the implications of this from the start and has skilfully developed a leadership team of the highest calibre. It has created a momentum in the growth of the academy as a church school and this is sustainable because improvement is embedded in the academy's systems and structures.
- 'The Rawlins Way', a set of values underpinned by biblical sources, is fully implemented by staff and gives clear direction to all aspects of academy life.
- The profiles of religious education (RE) and collective worship are both rising and are shaped by the academy's recent Christian foundation. As a result, students experience a curriculum that is rich in opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepares them for life beyond school.
- The academy makes effective use of Church of England initiatives to bring a fresh and innovative approach to school development.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that all students receive their full entitlement to a cohesive religious education curriculum at Key Stage 4 that is not dependent on their chosen GCSE options.
- Provide students with more creative and wider experiences of Christian worship to expand their spiritual development.
- Governors to pay closer attention to holding leaders to account for the development of its Christian character in order to sustain the current momentum.
- Be more proactive in accessing expertise in RE and collective worship through the Diocese of Leicester to support staff in moving these areas forward.

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

'The Rawlins Way', a statement of Christian values that express the academy's growing identity and mission as a church school, is embedded throughout the life of the academy. Students are familiar with all its elements and are aware of their biblical basis. They perceive it as a motivation rather than a set of rules and one that will stay with them for life. Its introduction has helped improve behaviour and further reduced bullying. In the last year there have been no homophobic or racist incidents and students put this down to 'The Rawlins Way'. The management of behaviour has continued to shift from a punitive approach to one of forgiveness and reconciliation and students explain this from a Christian perspective of 'two people accepting what has happened and working it out with an agreement between them'.

The academy is just emerging from a long and unsettled period of making the transition to an 11-18 school. Results in 2017 that were below national, reflected the legacy of this. Predictions for 2018, when the first cohort to have arrived in Year 7 take their GCSE examinations, indicate a much stronger profile for progress and attainment. Figures for attendance, especially in Year 11, are similarly showing a striking improvement.

RE has the full commitment of staff and students because of its importance in preparing students for life in modern society. In Key Stage 3, humanities subjects are taught under the umbrella of personal development and organised under the four elements of the new Church of England Vision for Education (Educating for dignity and respect; wisdom knowledge and skills; community and living well together; hope and aspiration). The evolving Christian ethos of the academy is therefore beginning to shape what students learn. RE is not taught as a discrete subject but mapping indicates a reasonable coverage of the syllabus. It retains its status because the RE elements are clearly discernable and students' progress is explicitly assessed. In Key Stage 4, the responsibility for covering RE falls to other departments. Although it is not delivered in the same depth, students recognise its value and draw on religious language when writing in other subjects. A typical example of this is in Year 10 English where, in studying Dickens, darkness is described as a metaphor for lack of hope and the antithesis of Christian beliefs. In the sixth form, students enthuse about the importance of religious study where it is an element of subjects such as sociology but, for some, this level of debate is limited to their coaching (form) groups. The introduction of 'Big Questions' into all lessons is part of a consistent approach to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It has accelerated this area of students' learning and is particularly significant given the academy's concerted efforts to offset the lack of RE examination courses.

The 'Skills for Learning' provision is highly effective because it enables students with specific needs to move seamlessly between mainstream and special classes. As a result, all students show exceptionally inclusive attitudes to any form of difference among the people they meet. There is a strong infrastructure for managing student concerns and this is strengthened by the active involvement of student leaders. The 'Character Awards', prompted by the Church of England initiative 'Fruit of the Spirit', have been extremely successful in their first year. The awards are nominated by students who also take responsibility for suggesting what rewards are offered and how the awards are presented.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

For the first time, the status and value of time for reflection and worship is now recognised as part of academy life. This is still at an early stage but students are able to make connections with other activities such as voluntary services in church, 'listening lunches' and a Christian Union group that together are building the academy's emerging identity as a church school.

Much of the planning and delivery of year group worship falls to year leaders. It is well prepared and students take this time seriously because of the respect they have for staff. Although senior leaders offer a strong level of support, opportunities to adopt more creative approaches through training are not accessed. A discernable pattern is emerging that is helping to promote a Christian approach to worship and a quiet time for reflection is a consistent component of this. The vast majority of students value the themes for reflection although do not always possess the necessary skills to make full use of this time. More effective is the way in which these themes are followed up in coaching (form) groups. Students appreciate the interactive nature of discussing the themes in greater depth and this is another strand by which leaders ensure 'The Rawlins Way' is securely in place. In Key Stage 4, elements of the RE curriculum are delivered in this slot and so are accessed by all students. It is clearly distinguished as teaching rather than worship time but the emphasis on personal reflection maintains a focus on spiritual matters.

The main Christian festivals are included in the themes for each year. The core Christian beliefs about the person of Jesus Christ and the Trinity are explored with thought-provoking material that challenges students' spiritual thinking. However, there is a limited sense of celebration in these occasions because there

are few opportunities for students to experience different forms of Christian worship, particularly the role of music. Leaders are aware of this and it now figures in their planning for the future, with Year 7 students already experiencing a more traditional style of Christian worship.

Senior staff monitor the quality of reflection time through coaching walks and discussions with worship leaders. This informs their strategic planning and identifies exactly where development is required.

However, this is not always given priority in subsequent action planning. Students are beginning to take responsibility for planning and delivery. They are growing in confidence and their involvement is motivating all students to respond to calls for social action through charity work and volunteering.

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

The principal has worked in very measured steps to mould a highly capable and inspiring senior leadership team from within the existing staff. This team has gained the full trust and confidence of colleagues through its open, consultative style and clear communication. For the first time in the academy's history, a systematic approach exists to establishing a recognisable, workable and sustainable Christian culture. The watershed for this has been the innovative creation of 'The Rawlins Way'. It acts as a central tool in the procedures for recruiting staff and students to the school and in the attention to their subsequent wellbeing. It therefore has a far-reaching influence on relationships and the strategic work of leaders in embedding a sustainable Christian ethos. Previous actions to develop this have often been cautious and lacked sufficient challenge from governors and the Trust. There are still gaps in the systems for checking statutory requirements and engaging in a cycle of review. Nevertheless, governors are now firmly committed to implementing the Christian ethos and far more proficient in doing so. This particularly applies to religious education and collective worship that are now reaching a stage where they meet statutory requirements. Few students opt to take RE at GCSE among a wide and attractive set of options. This results in insufficient numbers to make a course viable. However, leaders are determined to address this and have the full support of staff and governors. They have revised its marketing so that students recognise its relevance to contemporary society. The GCSE short course in RE is now being offered as part of the impressive number of enrichment activities available to all students.

The Christian ethos is now informing decisions about the whole curriculum as well as the development of academy leadership at all levels. National Church of England initiatives are taken very seriously and every opportunity is used to attend regional conferences and join networks in seeking out best practice. The academy takes a leading role in the provision for special needs in the local area. Links with the Diocese are positive but opportunities are missed to access expert advice for RE and collective worship. Staff have forged partnerships with RE departments in other schools and benefit greatly from these. The vicar has a limited role as chaplain but is available when needed. The recently appointed family worker, however, is already accelerating the development of the partnership with the church. She is working effectively with staff to introduce new activities for students alongside existing events led by members of the local church community.

Leaders have an accurate view of the stage the academy has reached since its confirmation as a church school six years ago. Elements of the Christian ethos are features of strategic planning and pertinent action points are identified through regular self-evaluation. However, these do not always translate into clear priorities and milestones in development plans and this makes it more difficult for governors to monitor progress. In spite of this, wisely-made decisions to introduce the Christian character of the academy from the roots up are bearing fruit because the Rawlins values are seen to have relevance to all aspects of academy life. They have made the exploration of faith accessible to staff and students and gained the local community's acceptance of the academy as a church school.