



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### St Mary Magdalene Academy

Liverpool Road  
Islington  
N7 8PG

**Previous SIAS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: London**

Local authority: Islington

Dates of inspection: 21 and 22 March 2016

Date of last inspection: 16 and 22 November 2010

School's unique reference number: 134314

Executive Director: Paul Hollingum

Primary Headteacher: Joy Parke

Secondary Headteacher: Victoria Linsley

Inspector's name and number: Steven Gallears 802

### School context

St Mary Magdalene Academy opened in September 2007 as an all through academy. The primary school has 210 pupils and the secondary has 973 pupils of which 131 are in the sixth form. Both are heavily oversubscribed. Although there is no requirement for prior Church attendance, around 40% of pupils entering Year 7 attended Islington Deanery primary schools. The number of children registered for pupil premium funding and with special educational needs (SEN) is significantly above national average, as is the number of pupils from different ethnic minority groups. The academy's specialism is humanities and global citizenship.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary Magdalene Academy as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school has a clear set of Christian values rooted in biblical teachings which are embedded and impact on pupil's lives. The school is 'confidently Christian' and embraces the Academy specialism to be global citizens.
- Worship is inspirational, inclusive, engaging and gives pupils opportunities to reflect on their own faith, that of others and those with no faith.
- Achievement and progress in Religious Education (RE) is high. Pupils show strong religious literacy in all phases.
- The executive director, supported by the primary and secondary headteachers and a committed team, has a clear Christian vision which has a positive impact on pupils' progress, development and wellbeing.

### Areas to improve

- In primary classrooms, develop existing prayer spaces to provide better opportunities for all pupils to reflect and pray.
- In the secondary phase, plan a cohesive and clear programme of non-examined RE for those who do not study the subject up to GCSE level.
- To provide more pupils, especially in the secondary school, with opportunities to experience or be part of the Eucharist service.

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

The school's motto, "Show by a good life that your works are done by gentleness born of wisdom" (James 3:13) is at the heart of all that the school does. A set of clear Christian values have been selected in both the primary and secondary phase which are embedded and lived out by the pupils. These values help shape the behaviour and attitudes of pupils and have a biblical rooting. They are reinforced in worship, in classroom and corridor displays and in RE lessons. The school is "proudly and comfortably Christian", a saying that many stakeholders use when describing the school. Attainment and progress in both phases is very good. Pupils do well from low starting points in the primary phase and those from disadvantaged groups make good progress throughout the academy. This can be attributed to the school's mantra that all of God's children can achieve irrespective of their start point. Attendance is above average compared with similar schools and behaviour for learning, in and around the building is excellent. Pupils are welcoming, courteous and respectful and can attribute this to the school's ethos and values of compassion, forgiveness and tolerance. The school's specialism, global citizenship, is a central part of school life. Pupils have ample opportunities to experience the diverse world in which we live in but also are aware of local, national and international diversity. Recent charity work supporting Water Aid is an example of such Christian social responsibility. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education is a strength in the school. The school has carefully mapped out provision in both phases. Developing the whole child and their God-given talents is seen as a key part of school life. There are extensive extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to develop themselves and these include a good mixture of specifically Christian activities but also cater for those of other faiths and no faith.

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

A clear programme for collective worship is in place, both for the primary, secondary and 6<sup>th</sup> form phases. These are led by various stakeholders and include times for pupils to plan and deliver class worship. The effectiveness and the impact worship has on pupils is evaluated both formally and informally using a range of methods, including pupil surveys, observations and pupil voice. Collective worship is relevant, distinctly Christian and engaging whilst encouraging spiritual reflection for all present. Pupils have ample opportunities to reflect during and after these times. An example of such practice is that after secondary house worship there is a follow up session based on the key messages in the smaller guardian groups. Pupils are encouraged to act because of the messages given in worship. The school chaplain is an excellent source of support for all pupils and staff members. Her expertise and theological input into the worship programme enhances the experience for all. She has developed several groups to develop spirituality in school life. At present, pupils are taught about the Eucharist but, with the exception of the 6<sup>th</sup> form, do not have opportunities to receive or be part of a Holy Communion service. Worship is directly linked to the school's values and pupils can make connections. For example, in the primary phase, pupils can link the story of Easter to forgiveness and thankfulness, two of the primary's 'golden values'. In the 6<sup>th</sup> form, a variety of visiting speakers are used in worship. Learners comment on the fact that these encourage critical thinking and that they are given a voice. All worship includes the opportunity for pupils to pray. Pupils are respectful during this time and see the value of prayer in their lives. In the primary phase each classroom has a dedicated area for reflection but these are not used by all pupils. There is, however, a central area in the primary building which gives pupils opportunities

to pray. The commission of a creation themed stained glass window designed by some year 6 pupils helps create a peaceful and reflective space.

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

By the end of Key Stage 2, many pupils are exceeding national expectations in RE. This is because of teaching and learning which is at least good and the development of clear tracking and assessment practices. Teachers encourage pupils to think deeply in RE and set them challenging activities. Sometimes this 'deep thinking' is not captured in the pupil's books. Pupils enjoy their RE and behave very well in these lessons. The curriculum allows pupils to develop good religious literacy much of which is based on excellent questioning. A programme of visits to Christian and other faiths places of worship is well established, exposing the pupils to a mainly Christian curriculum but also an excellent recognition of those of other faiths. Pupils in the secondary phase enjoy RE and see its place as a core part of the taught curriculum. Teaching is at least good and often outstanding and attainment and progress at GCSE level is very high. In 2015 88% of pupils made at least expected progress, higher than the national average and many (over 50%) made better than expected progress. This is the result of effective teaching and a strong curriculum throughout the secondary phase. Marking and feedback (completed by the teacher, their peers and themselves) clearly shows the pupils where their strengths and areas for development are. Insightful and clear monitoring of pupil performance is in place. In the 6th form, learners are exposed to a programme of non-examined RE. The school has strong links with Liverpool Hope University who have supported this programme but also other stakeholders have contributed to this. This development allows members of the 6th form to reflect on big issues affecting them and others and is developed in their guardian time throughout the week. Many attend the 'Alpha' group which debates many local, national and international issues from an RE perspective. Many learners studying the International Baccalaureate qualification also use their 'creative action service' and extended essay time to address RE related topics. The leaders of RE in the primary and secondary school are effective. They know their subject well, have planned an effective curriculum and have the necessary expertise, through appropriate training, to lead the subject.

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

The schools Christian vision is clearly articulated by all leaders with passion and a common sense of purpose. There is a relentless striving to improve as a whole school community despite the school already being in a very strong position. The executive director, ably supported by the primary and secondary headteachers and a dedicated team have created a Christian community pursuing excellence based on robust, insightful and clear self-evaluation. There is a clear strategic vision. Decisions surrounding the curriculum and all areas of school life are solely taken for the good of the pupils. Areas to improve from the previous SIAS have been met. Statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met. There is effective and strong governance. The fine line between support and challenge is in place. Governors are regularly present in school and they know what the pupils think about worship and RE. A governor, responsible for the schools Christian distinctiveness, is in place and is effective in monitoring this aspect of school life. The school has excellent links with the local parish church, for example, pupils attend the church regularly for services. There are also strong links with the community, other local schools, the Diocese and national organisations. An example of their service was the setting up of 'The Courtyard', a unit for children with autism. The school is helping to prepare future leaders of church schools with extensive training programmes available for colleagues provided by the diocese, local and national institutions. The school is also developing a multi academy trust so this expertise and the Christian concept of service can be shared with others in the local area.

