



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### St Peters Church of England Voluntary Aided Secondary School

Quarry Lane

Exeter

Devon EX2 5AP

**Diocese: Exeter**

Local authority: Devon

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> June 2014

Date of last inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> June 2009

School's unique reference number: 113553

Headteacher: Rachel Hutchinson

Inspector's name and number: Derek Holloway 93

#### School context

St Peter's is an oversubscribed, larger than average 11-16 comprehensive school serving the city of Exeter and surrounding areas. The headteacher of 17 years resigned in the summer term of 2013. A deputy head become acting headteacher. The current head was appointed in April 2014. Almost all students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students eligible for pupil premium is below national average as is the number with a statement of special needs. The school was deemed by Ofsted to require improvement in October 2013.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Peter's as a Church of England school are good

- The success of the distinctive deeply embedded ethos and clearly articulated school values in providing stability and consistency to school life.
- The effectiveness of the whole school 'Impact' days that help enrich the students personal and spiritual development and act as a model of good practice across the city
- The value and importance that the school community places on worship and the drive of the whole school community, led by the Chaplaincy team, to make worship a rich and relevant experience for young people.
- The resilience and commitment of foundation governance and school leadership in maintaining the schools distinctiveness while improving its effectiveness.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop a rigorous and challenging RE (Religious Education) curriculum that better suits the academic needs of students
- Explore models of Eucharist that reflect the range of churchmanship represented in the

schools intake.

- Embed and monitor the newly introduced systems of tracking to ensure consistency of approach across all aspects of church school self-evaluation

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

Over a period of time the school has developed, reviewed and extended its understanding of itself as a church school through a set of values known as the 7Rs. (Resilience, Responsible, Reasoning, Resourceful, Reflective, Respect, Reconciliation). This has included a clear theological underpinning ensuring these values are explicitly understood in a Christian context. Each value is explored regularly in the collective worship programme and reinforced through posters prominently displayed around the site. Regular reference is made to them in lessons. Each department is challenged to bring these values into their work through a system of regular audits. As a result they are deeply embedded in the daily life of the school and in policy. Students say that they are the basis of what's expected of them. They also noted a significant change in behaviour of both pupils and staff with the inclusion of Respect in 7 Rs. These values form the basis of a shared understanding of spirituality which goes beyond reflection to a developed understanding of responsibility and a lifelong duty to serve others. This is most strongly reflected in the school's well established link and with a village in Malawi. This link raises money for the village but goes significantly further by providing rich learning opportunities for the whole school. Students who had visited the village talked of their time there as a transformational and life changing opportunity. School staff and many parents were able to describe how the school's ethos had helped support and sustain them in difficult times. These values consistently support and nourish the spiritual journey, personal development and well being of students. They are seen as ways of empowering the students with the tools in life to make the 'right' decisions for them. There is considerable potential to support the academic development of young people but historically this link has not always been made. The school has some significant pockets of underachievement and as a result the Christian ethos is not currently meeting the academic needs of all students. The school draws many of its students from faith communities across the city. Through the chaplaincy arrangements students are helped to value diversity and difference within the Christian faith. Students learn about faiths other than Christianity through their RE programme although this is mainly at KS3 and so its impact is limited. RE makes a significant contribution to learner's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development most noticeably through the successful 'Impact' days. The Head of RE works closely with a range of youth workers and church and community groups. These days, are in the words of one assistant chaplain the 'cutting edge'. Once developed at the school, they are then offered to other schools. Students speak of them as important and positive experiences. This excellent practice has helped define the character of the school in the eyes of the community. However, this positive contribution is reduced through some aspects of provision and effectiveness in the RE curriculum.

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

Collective worship has an exceptionally high profile in the life of the school. The Chaplaincy team is lead by an employed school Chaplain and a team of Honorary Assistant Chaplains whose churches have generously given their time to the school. They work with staff and students to ensure that a range of rich experiences in worship is offered in a number of settings. This dedicated time and care means that worship is structured and relevant. Worship effectively links biblical teaching to issues facing students and provides high quality and appropriate opportunities for reflection and prayer. Since the last inspection particularly strong support has been put in place to enable staff and students to deliver worship in tutor groups. Students recognise that collective worship has become an increasingly relevant, community experience. Worship is planned around the themes of the church year and the school's 7 values. This is increasingly supplemented by the students' own questions. Student voice has led to the development of a student worship band and student faith group. A range

of approaches exist to evaluate collective worship including questionnaires, and the school worship committee. However this is a slightly ad hoc process. Eucharist is offered to all students on a regular basis normally in small groups. Pupils enjoy this approach and feel it is more intimate. The school has identified that this programme would benefit from exploring a range of ways of celebrating Eucharist that reflect a wider range of churchmanship and the school is working with the diocese to develop this. Prayer is part of the pattern of life at St Peters. The recently opened St Peters room serves as place of prayer. The Chaplain says morning office, and Chaplains will offer to pray with students if appropriate. The school is supported by prayer groups of parents and in local churches.

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

At KS 4 pupils make satisfactory progress in RE. All students are entered for a Full GCSE course but the time allocated is below exam board recommendations. This year a small AS level RE option group has been introduced. The 2013 GCSE results were below those achieved by similar church schools in the region. School data suggests that this is improving following action taken to focus teacher specialism through timetable rotation of groups. The current KS 3 curriculum has been drawn from a number of sources and as a result it lacks coherence or a clear teaching and learning approach. Schemes of work are inconsistent and teaching often lacks challenge, particularly for students who bring considerable religious experience to lessons. The quality of teaching at KS3 seen was inconsistent and this reflects the school's own monitoring and that of outside consultants. Weaker teaching focused on consolidating knowledge about religions and failed to deepen understanding by enquiring into key questions or concepts. Assessment practice is underdeveloped being mainly summative. Work sampling suggests that pupils make limited progress at KS3 given their starting points, especially those from faith backgrounds. Students are capable of thoughtful and inspiring work when appropriately challenged. There is little progression or continuity between KS3 and KS4, few links are made between themes studied at KS3 and the GCSE syllabus followed. The result is that students are not ready for GCSE. The department has recently recognised many of these issues and has received training to address this however this has yet to impact. At KS 4 teaching and learning is stronger with the GCSE criteria providing clear learning objectives and pupils respond eagerly to a higher level of thinking and challenge. Regular monitoring and self-evaluation is helping to gain a realistic understanding of the effectiveness of the department.

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

Leadership at all levels clearly and confidently articulates the school's distinctive Christian vision and through the 7Rs understands how it impacts on the lives of learners and the whole school. This agreed vision has been a constant support that has helped sustain and stabilise the school through recent leadership changes. The school is well supported by foundation governors who have a good grasp of issues facing the school. Systems of church school self-evaluation has been effective in ensuring improvements in ethos and worship but have been less effective in RE where issues, although often identified, have not always been followed through until this year. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's distinctiveness and over the past year a growing grasp of its effectiveness as a church school. The new headteacher has built on the foundations of her recent predecessor and begun to empower middle leaders to take a greater role in monitoring and tracking. This shows considerable capacity for church school improvement. The school is highly valued by parents and by the church community. The links with the church community are rich and mutually supportive. The school has received excellent support from the Diocese and many staff have benefited from the Diocesan Aspiring Leaders course. All issues from the last inspection report have been addressed although the move to Full Course GCSE RE has yet to be matched by sufficient curriculum time.

SIAMS report June 2014 St Peter's VA School Exeter EX2 5AP

