

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Mary Magdalene Academy, Islington	
Address	Liverpool Road, Islington, London, N7 8PG
School vision	
‘Show by a good life that your works are done by gentleness born of wisdom.’ James 3.13	
School strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Christian vision is very clear at all levels of leadership at St Mary Magdalene Academy. It drives its strategic direction and daily practices. Staff, parents and students have a clear understanding of the Christian vision, which enables adults and students to flourish. • The academy's ambitious curriculum features academic and creative development with a global outlook. It provides well for vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). • Pupils and students have a strong sense of fairness and justice. Wide-ranging leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility enable them to flourish. • As a result of the vision, pupils’ and students’ conduct across the academy is calm and courteous. Relationships are warm and harmonious because of the culture of gentleness and wisdom. • Religious education (RE) is a priority and given a high profile in the primary and secondary phases. Teaching and learning are effective. Pupils enjoy learning about major religions and worldviews. 	
Areas for development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen provision for collective worship in the Sixth Form, in order that students may have more consistent opportunities for spiritual growth. • Build on students’ appreciation of Christianity as a world faith to ensure deep understanding of its global traditions and denominations. 	
Inspection findings	
<p>In establishing St Mary Magdalene Academy (SMMA), the Hive Trust’s governors and leaders took great care defining its Christian vision. This continues to drive the strategic direction and is embraced by staff and pupils of all ages. ‘The SMMA Way’ provides clear expectations for behaviour and learning, including that all should demonstrate the academy’s values. These six Christian values of thankfulness, trust, compassion, resilience, integrity and forgiveness are well understood by all. Regular references in collective worship and the curriculum enable everyone to appreciate the centrality of the vision and values. Situated in a richly diverse neighbourhood, SMMA embraces a global view of citizenship. It holds the British Council international schools award, and has strong links with schools in China. Such engagement impacts positively on students’ appreciation of a range of cultures as well as their personal aspirations. Conduct across the academy is calm and relationships are harmonious. Restorative behaviour approaches enable students to resolve</p>	

conflicts, thus strengthening a Christian culture of reconciliation and forgiveness. Staff, pupils and parents speak of the impact of ‘gentleness born of wisdom’, empowering adults and young people to flourish.

SMMA provides a deeply varied curriculum. All pupils learn an orchestral instrument in Years 7 and 8. They may continue into Year 9 or explore other musical options. Several languages are taught, including Mandarin. Creative choices such as ceramics, first aid or politics enhance Year 9 students’ skills and knowledge. These equip them with understanding of the world, so that they may live ‘a good life’. Building resilience through the Duke of Edinburgh scheme or experiencing world-class arts in London effectively enables cultural and spiritual flourishing. The impact of this is clear as pupils and students achieve well and speak joyfully about their learning. Driven by its Christian vision, the school is highly inclusive and cares deeply about all of its families. Pupils with SEND and those who are vulnerable are identified at the earliest opportunity. Staff are well-equipped to meet these students’ needs because they receive excellent training. Interventions to support learning mostly take place in class. The academy invests in extensive specialist support for individual students, including for their mental health. Leaders’ determination that all should flourish is clear through the resources devoted to vulnerable pupils and those with SEND. Many students learn at an advanced level in a wide range of academic and creative subjects. Students flourish in their learning and personal development because the school’s strategies have such a positive impact.

The development of spirituality within the curriculum is a priority, about which staff receive training annually. As a result of this focus, there is a common understanding and language of spirituality across the academy. Opportunities for spiritual development are specifically identified in each subject. This is extended further through specific debating or reflection points which help students appreciate that their spiritual responses may differ. There are plentiful locations and opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual contemplation, including the chapel. Two roof gardens provide spaces for young people to engage with nature in this urban environment. The experience of raising chickens, awareness of the beehives and honey-making helps students value and connect with living creatures. Growing their own vegetables extends their appreciation of God’s creation.

A consistent pattern of worship applies in class or year group assemblies, primary and whole academy services. This reflects Anglican traditions such as gathering, praise, prayer and sending out. Pupils in the primary phase thoroughly enjoy their excellent singing assembly, featuring international worship songs and hymns. Although it is held regularly, split site logistics and complex timetables limit collective worship in the Sixth Form. The outdoors Remembrance Service, with key points led by students, including playing of ‘The Last Post’ has a deep impact. The collective, prayerful experience of over 1200 students and staff sharing silent contemplative reverence is memorable. The chaplain leads seasonal services for the whole academy, including at church, with local clergy. His generous, daily involvement offers spiritual guidance and care, inviting all to explore their personal views of faith.

Students flourish through taking responsibility at all ages in wide-ranging leadership roles and opportunities. Younger pupils are confident expressing opinions on fairness and justice because leaders and staff listen to their views. Primary pupils enjoy a project with an architect to design the ‘liveable city’ for Islington Council. They assist police in alerting speeding car drivers to the dangers for children. These meaningful activities develop pupils’ awareness of social action and their potential to be agents for change. Ambitious leaders recognise that this can be extended further.

RE is seen as an important subject in both the primary and secondary phases. Detailed curriculum planning in the primary phase includes a range of world religions. Adaptations have been made to ensure that faiths observed by the academy’s families are represented in curriculum planning. Subject leadership is of a high standard and staff are well supported through training and

development. Thorough monitoring and evaluation of RE is used to inform planning and creates a culture of improvement. All students start a GCSE course in Y9, completed in Y10. Some start the A level programme while still in KS4. RE continues for all, contextualised in terms of preparation for adult life, deepening understanding and developing personal worldviews. The Sixth Form continue some aspects of RE, exploring theology, human science and philosophy. This fosters the development of older students' personal worldviews.

Teachers' planning is detailed and RE lessons are creative across the academy. There are high expectations in terms of standards and pupils learn accurate vocabulary from an early age, such that older learners have a high level of expertise. Students value the high quality of teaching they receive and most find the subject interesting. Their knowledge is impressive across the academy, and their written work shows clear progression. Although students have strong understanding of Christianity, they have less detailed knowledge about its traditions and denominations as a world faith. Nonetheless they have secure knowledge of major religions and world views overall. They are appreciative of difference and recognise similarities across these. Students positively affirm that this contributes significantly to the religious and racial harmony that is palpable throughout the academy.

The inspection findings indicate that St Mary Magdalene Academy is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
Inspection date	9 November 2023	URN	134314
VC/VA/Academy	Academy	Pupils on roll	1566
Diocese	London		
MAT/Federation	Hive Education Trust		
Headteacher	Victoria Linsley		
Chair	Majeda Clarke		
Inspector	Rachel A Jones	No.	2237