

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Ark Alexandra Academy	
Address	Park Avenue, Hastings, TN34 2PG
School vision	
<p>Ark Alexandra's vision is to provide all members of our community with opportunities to engage with 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10). Our values of Faith, Kindness and Excellence underpin the work we do.</p>	
School strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Christian vision and associated values are increasingly prominent in the work of the school. Recent changes in leadership are resulting in a greater emphasis upon the school's Christian foundation. • Leaders and staff are passionate about instilling aspiration in young people to 'live life to the full'. They are unwavering in their pursuit of this goal. • Partnerships with local churches and with Ark Trust (The Trust) are increasingly enabling young people and adults to thrive. This is especially evident in the support for staff in their professional development. • Religious education (RE) is a strength of the school. Well planned curriculum and expert subject specialists are enabling pupils to make increasingly swift progress across all year groups where pupils study RE. 	
Areas for development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School and trust leaders have not ensured that collective worship is enabling pupils and adults to flourish spiritually. Therefore, leaders should develop a shared language and understanding of spirituality so that pupils are engaging in inspiring worship that enables spiritual flourishing. • School and trust leaders have not ensured that the school's Christian vision creates an active culture of justice and responsibility. Leaders should develop opportunities for pupils to become advocates of positive change within their school and wider community. • Develop systems to effectively monitor and evaluate Church school effectiveness that will inform future improvement. 	
Inspection findings	
<p>In 2019, two separate schools merged and Ark Alexandra Academy was formed. Coupled with very recent changes of a number of key senior leaders, the school is undergoing significant transformation. At the heart of this development is the increasingly prominent Christian vision. The importance of the school's Christian distinctiveness is recognised by the Trust. This was a fundamental part of strategic decision making when recently appointing new senior leaders, including heads of school. As a result, the vision for pupils and staff to 'live life to the full' is increasingly Christian in its distinctiveness. The values of excellence, kindness and faith are the</p>	



expression of the vision and are the driving force for change. Less well known is the overarching vision of 'life in all its fullness'. Equally less prevalent is the focus upon spiritual flourishing as part of fullness of life. Visual imagery around the school offers reminders of the values and of the biblical underpinning of each. However, the opportunity to consider faith as a spiritual concept is not present. The value of faith is understood as self-belief and does not include the exploration of faith in God as a fundamental part of the Christian faith.

Life in all its fullness is expressed through the aspiration leaders have for pupils academically and in their attitudes towards each other. Recently there has been a substantial focus upon how the school community lives well together through the 'Alexandra Way'. The school is a much calmer place as a result of these recent changes in approaches to managing behaviour and insistence upon all pupils meeting much higher expectations. As a result, pupils' are able to learn better and teachers are able to focus their attention upon teaching their classes more effectively. The Trust is pivotal to the positive changes made. Furthermore, students are encouraged to strive for excellence and to show kindness. When they do, they are rewarded through golden tickets which reinforce the school values. The positive focus upon students who are meeting the 'Alexandra Way' and demonstrating the school values is helping the school community to increasingly live well together. Adults equally value the investment in the extensive range of professional development opportunities as well as wellbeing support available from the Trust. Increasingly, the vision and values the school holds are cited as the reason for this.

The curriculum is enabling pupils to thrive academically as part of fullness of life. Adults in the school are unwavering in their desire for pupils to achieve the highest possible outcomes in order to improve future aspirations. Leaders regularly review and adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of the pupils. For example, the introduction of the Compass Centre is providing an alternative education where needed for some students to be successful. Equally, GCSE RE is now taken by all pupils at the end of Year 11, rather than Year 10 so that they can increase their success. The consistent lesson structure across all subjects is helping students to feel increasingly confident in their learning, especially those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Enrichment opportunities such as sports and performing arts, are valued by pupils. The onsite Army Cadets programme is highly popular and provide those who take part with a sense of identity and pride. However, there are very limited opportunities for pupils to engage with issues of injustice and social responsibility and develop a culture of advocacy. Pupils desire the opportunity to have an increasing voice within the school so that they can champion positive change.

Opportunities for prayer and reflection in staff meetings are growing and are valued by adults in the school. However, occasions for pupils to engage with meaningful collective worship as part of spiritual development are very limited. Although dedicated time is given during the week, pupils do not recognise this as an opportunity for worship. Within the sixth form there is no provision for collective worship. The time for collective worship in Years 7 to 11 is used to remind pupils of behaviour expectations and to give announcements. Its purpose is confused. As a result, pupils cannot define what worship is. Equally, although planning for worship is evident, pupils are not involved in leading, planning or monitoring collective worship. Consequently, they do not value the existing, limited provision. Therefore, pupils' spiritual development is stunted and they are not able to fully explore what spiritual 'fullness of life' might mean for them. More widely, although the vision is present within the school, leaders including governors, are not effectively monitoring its impact. Therefore, meaningful evaluation of the vision is not informing the development of the school as a Church school.

The kindness shown to pupils through pastoral care is well supported by local churches. These partnerships are enabling the most vulnerable pupils opportunity for support, such as art therapy with the youth worker from one of the churches. Furthermore, local clergy are developing much

more purposeful opportunities with the school as it develops its Christian distinctiveness. Equally, the fulltime counsellor and the 'Place2Be' provision are helping pupils who are struggling with their mental health. This kindness extends to adults who may need support. The staff body is supportive of each other, demonstrated through the care and compassion it shows. Long serving members of staff cite this as the reason they work at the school.

RE provision is a strength and is prioritised within the curriculum. All pupils study GCSE RE. Subject leadership is strong and there are a number of subject specialists who are passionate about the teaching of RE. Parents and pupils value its relevance within a multicultural society. The curriculum is well planned and sequenced as a result of combining the locally agreed syllabus and the Ark aligned syllabus. The quality of RE is routinely monitored by school and subject leaders. Consequently, curriculum time has been adjusted to enable more time for RE. Although the progress of pupils historically has been weak, increasingly pupils are now making good progress across all key stages. Effective partnership working with the diocese and with the Trust is enabling the quality of RE to improve. Increasingly the school is taking a lead in RE development work. However, within the sixth form there is currently limited provision for RE for those who do not take it as an A-Level.

The inspection findings indicate that Ark Alexandra Academy has strengths, but that there are also issues that leaders need to address as a matter of priority. These relate to collective worship and Christian vision and are listed in the areas for development.

Information			
Inspection date	5 February 2024 - 6 February 2024	URN	139821
VC/VA/Academy	Academy	Pupils on roll	1600
Diocese	Chichester		
MAT/Federation	ARK		
Executive Principal	Rhys Spiers		
Chair	Clifford Smith		
Inspector	Sadie Batstone	No.	2125