



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

The Priory Church of England Voluntary Aided Secondary School

Westbank, Dorking, Surrey RH4 3DG

Previous SIAS grade: Good

Current SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Guildford

Local authority: Surrey

Dates of inspection: 8 December 2015

Date of last inspection: 21 September 2010

School's unique reference number: 125281

Headteacher: Mr Andre Sohatski

Inspector's name and number: Marcia Headon 761

School context

The Priory School is a smaller-than-average size 11-19 secondary school in the heart of Dorking. The students come from an area of approximately 100 square miles. Half of the intake have applied to the school on religious grounds. The majority are of white British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language. The percentage of students with special educational needs and or physical disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for additional funding known as the pupil premium is below the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of The Priory as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The outstanding work of the chaplaincy which provides excellent support to the students and staff at the school.
- The dedicated leadership of the headteacher and his total commitment to the Christian foundation of the school in setting an example for all to follow.
- The outstanding leadership and teaching of religious education (RE) which inspires students and develops their spirituality.

Areas to improve

- Involve students more regularly in the planning and leading of whole school collective worship.
- Extend the opportunities for students to be able to ask for prayers by providing prayer boxes and a dedicated space for reflection in the school.

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

Students in the school have a highly developed sense of social responsibility which is evident in their work for charity, their support for other students and their view that everyone is equal in the eyes of God and should be helped. This is as a direct result of the school's very strong Christian values which have a profound impact upon the lives of students. Students make links between Biblical teaching and these values with ease. The school's mission statement encapsulates its ethos and students say that 'our motto (by faith and hard work to achievement) is really important to us and that teachers expect us to work hard but help us to achieve'. Students achieve well and in 2015 there was an increase in the proportion of students who gained 5A*-C grades with English and mathematics. Progress in English overall was above national averages and students are supported very effectively in their learning. The school is totally inclusive and provision for disadvantaged and vulnerable students is outstanding. The chaplaincy provides exceptional support and there is always someone from the wide team of chaplains, who come from varying churches, to be able to turn to. The students view the school as a family and a significant number return after they have left to celebrate events in their lives or to seek solace from staff or the chaplains. Behaviour in the school is excellent and students are highly respectful of one another whether of any faith or none. Highly positive and harmonious relationships exist between all. Attendance, after a slight dip in 2014, has now increased and the school has the lowest number of students who are persistently absent in the area. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is extraordinary. This is fostered through the curriculum, especially in RE and collective worship and outside events. Activities such as 'OMG' week, the school walk, the year group retreats, the dance shows, the work with a school in Uganda, help students to develop. Initiatives, such as raising money and 'twinning with toilets' in Africa, and older students working in Uganda to build a playground for a school, are examples of the value of 'sacrificial love' being worked out in action. Students spoke of being on a spiritual journey at The Priory which developed as they grew older. One student said 'I've grown in my faith as the chaplains opened my eyes and I am always able to talk to them'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is important to students at The Priory. They value 'the messages' which they are given, the opportunity to reflect, to listen to people from other faiths and to be 'with the school family'. Collective worship is well planned and its content incorporates the school values along with other themes and follows the Liturgical year. Students experience a variety of forms of worship through the week, from class assemblies to year group worship and whole school worship. As a result, they gain a wide experience of different traditions as whole school assemblies are often led by members of the chaplaincy team. They also deepen their understanding of the teachings of Jesus and their understanding of the Trinity which is also developed in RE lessons. Music and visual aids on a screen enhance year group and whole school worship and create a reverent atmosphere and students participate in the rock band and gospel choir. They are involved in discussion and volunteer to join in enthusiastically when asked. However, although the students lead year group assembly and some read in church, there are relatively few opportunities for them to plan or lead whole school collective worship. Students value and enjoy other services such as Communion and the carol service held at the parish church. There is a strong focus on prayer within the school. Students understand its purpose and value the prayer groups which exist and especially the Prayer Spaces week, which is run by the RE department. However, there are not enough access points for students to be able to leave requests for prayer or enough quiet spaces for them to be able to reflect. The school has taken the evaluation of the impact of collective worship seriously and as a result has provided more opportunities for silent reflection and increased the use of multi-media in worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

'Amazing', 'challenging', fun' are words used by students of all ages to describe the teaching of RE. From the work seen in books and the teaching observed this is an accurate description. The lower school schemes of work are very well planned and organised with a good balance between Christianity and other faiths being taught. The lower school scheme, is centred on interesting and highly relevant 'big questions' which stimulate moral discussions and enquiry. Students' learning is aided by the wide range of teaching strategies and innovative ideas such as a lesson entitled 'God in a Box' on the Trinity. Many of these lessons include drama and art and are highly structured so that work is very well matched to the ability of the students. Students at Key Stage 3 make outstanding progress. The RE staff demonstrate excellent subject knowledge. In a Year 10 RE lesson there was a high level of debate and discussion between all students who were fully engaged in determining the arguments for and against euthanasia. Their work was preparing them exceptionally well for writing an exam question on this topic. Teachers' marking is very regular and they give very detailed feedback to students. Although GCSE results in 2015 were slightly below national averages, this was as a result of changes to the time allocated to the course and the whole school cohort being entered for the examination. Prior to that results had been well above national averages. Changes have now been made and students are being supported through additional help and helpful revision resources. Consequently, predictions for results in 2016 are higher. Students at A level make good progress. In a Year 13 New Testament theology lesson, students' skills in critical analysis were being developed well and their essay writing was being improved by use of a game. They debate complex ideas and demonstrate a very high level of understanding of the work of theologians, using correct technical vocabulary and making good use of Biblical references. The leadership of RE is outstanding. The subject leader has a very clear view of how she wishes the subject to develop. She is assiduous in monitoring the work of the department, provides excellent support to her colleagues in school and is widely respected by other subject leaders in the County. RE makes a huge contribution to students' SMSC development through all its work and deservedly has been awarded the Quality Mark in RE.

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

The headteacher through his exceptional leadership models the behaviours which he wants all young people to gain. He zealously articulates the view that the school must be an inclusive Christian family and lives this out in his work. As one member of staff described him, 'he is the father of our school family'. He knows all students by name and engages with them, thus showing belief in their abilities and motivating them. The strong Christian ethos lies at the heart of the school and its strategic planning. Its self-evaluation is thorough and accurate. Staff are very well prepared for leadership roles in church schools with two staff having moved to church school headships. Professional development on SMSC, and 'growth mindsets' has provided support for the staff and helped to develop their understanding of what it means to be a teacher in a church school. This role is made very clear to potential staff at interview. The governors provide excellent support for the school. They are very well informed, hold it to account for its work and are highly committed. They have addressed the points for development from the previous inspection very thoroughly, with a significant impact on the evaluation of collective worship. They take their responsibilities seriously. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and worship. The ongoing development of the chaplaincy has helped the school to become much stronger. It is fundamental to the success of the school as a church school and through it excellent links have been formed with local churches. It pervades all aspects of school life and is highly valued. The school has good links with the Diocese and governors and staff attend training provided. Parents speak appreciatively of The Priory as a nurturing school which lives out the values of the church and which provides their young people with the education and support they need for the future.