

Principal Mike Wood with Rosanna Spurr, aged 10, at St Blasius C of E Academy



Our academies get top marks

Children are thriving in the Church of England academies run by our trust

A GROUP of six and seven-year-olds are placing candles on a map of the UK, marking the people and places in their prayers. Policemen, firefighters, the Queen, a hospital and the academy itself are all depicted with photographs in their dedicated prayer area.

Providing space for prayer and reflection at St Columba C of E Primary Academy in Fareham is part of its mission to embed Christian values in school. This vision comes from being part of a family of academies run by our diocesan trust.

The conversion of our academies marked a fresh start for them

Three of the academies in our diocese are sponsored and run by the Portsmouth and Winchester Diocesan Academies Trust (P&WDAT). This multi-academy

trust was founded in 2012 and is open to church and community schools across both Portsmouth and Winchester dioceses.

Its mission is to help children excel in a variety of ways – academically, socially and spiritually – through a framework of underpinning Christian values.

The trust and its academies aim to forge strong relationships with parents and the local community, reflecting the origins of the very first ‘church schools’ more than 200 years ago.

Like all academies in England, they are run independently from the local authority and receive the same levels of funding per pupil from the government. Our trust provides advice, challenge and support to the academies, which enables the headteachers to focus on teaching and learning, and ensuring that all staff and pupils flourish.

Today, the trust runs three

primary academies in our diocese and two others in Winchester diocese. The conversion of each of our academies marked a fresh start for them, and an opportunity to re-think the approach to learning and the community that each serves.

It marked a new era for our diocese. Church schools had always previously been supported in areas including RE, admissions, collective worship and Christian ethos. The P&WDAT takes up the mantle that the local authority would have previously held, including responsibility for improving all pupils’ attainment and progress, safeguarding and Ofsted outcomes.

The trust has worked hard to improve standards in its academies. Shanklin C of E Primary was rated inadequate and subject to special measures when it joined the trust in 2013. The new academy, St Blasius C of E Primary Academy, was inspected by Ofsted during 2017

Developing pupils’ skills for the future

ROBOTS have invaded the classroom at St Blasius C of E Academy in Shanklin.

As part of their focus on science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM), pupils built and coded their own Lego robots. They’re also becoming digital natives by using iPads and Netbooks regularly in class.

It’s just one of the ways the academy is developing the skills of its 200 pupils to be ready for the modern workplace - and sharing its expertise with other schools on the island.

It’s this kind of drive and determination that was recognised last summer by Ofsted inspectors. They confirmed the

academy’s rapid transformation by declaring it ‘good’ in all areas.

Principal Mike Wood – who took over only six weeks before the Ofsted inspection – paid tribute to his predecessor and the dedicated staff for the improvement. He also said the support of the P&WDAT was vital.

“The support from the trust is second to none,” he said. “Everything is done in a professional and calm manner.

“They focus on policy and procedures, which means teachers can focus on teaching and learning. We were also given a school improvement partner with exceptional knowledge of education, and the chief

executive officer visits regularly to support the development of leaders.

“Being part of a close-knit family of academies and a larger family of C of E schools really helps. The trust worked with us to bid for and secure funding for a two-storey extension, which will make a real difference. We’re on a restricted site, so have to use our space creatively.

“Our children are very proud of their school, and we want them to have the best learning environment. And we can see the confidence of families in the school growing, as more local families make this school their first choice.”