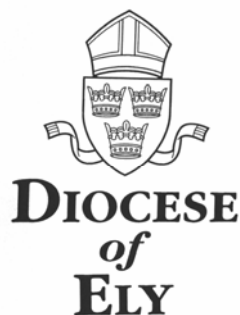


**Joint National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report
and
Report of the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia Schools' Commission**



St Bede's Inter-Church (VA) Comprehensive School

Birdwood Road,

Cambridge.

CB1 3TB

Diocese: Ely (Church of England) and East Anglia (Roman Catholic)

Local authority: Cambridgeshire

Dates of inspection: 23rd November 2007

Date of last inspection: 27th September 2004

School's unique reference number: 110887

Headteacher: Dr Jan Hunt

Inspectors' name and number: Mrs Kathryn Wright (436) and Mr Sean Hayes

School context

St Bede's is a joint Anglican and Roman Catholic school and has a specialism in humanities. Applicants who attend either of the two church traditions have precedence. Students with other faiths are admitted if there are places. The school is smaller than most secondary schools and students come from many primary schools in the area. The school is not linked to one particular parish, but has relationships with many Anglican and Roman Catholic churches through its foundation governors and community links. The school has a full time ecumenical lay chaplain who is based in an on-site chaplaincy building.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Bedes (VA)Comprehensive School as an inter-church school are good

St Bede's is committed to the outworking of its Christian ethos throughout the school and its community. Its mission statement, based on Gospel values, clearly expresses its desire to both 'create and sustain a learning, caring and serving community'. It provides its students with a safe and ordered place in which to learn and they respond accordingly. Behaviour and attitude are outstanding and the students speak very highly of the support and guidance they receive from the staff. The headteacher and governors have established a strong sense of mission within the school community which pervades the life of the school. The Inter-Church nature of the school is addressed well with both traditions valued and respected. Strengths and development needs have been correctly identified by the school and it has a good capacity to improve. The prayer life of the school is effective and valued by all members of the community. Standards in Religious Education are satisfactory although other aspects of the subject warrant attention.

Grade: 2

Established strengths

- The impact of the Christian ethos on the lives of students
- The involvement of students in all aspects of the life of the school
- The balance between its Anglican and Roman Catholic foundations
- The impact of the role of the chaplaincy on the lives of students
- The vision and leadership of the head teacher

Focus for development

- Develop assessment and marking in religious education so that students are aware of their level of work and what they need to do to improve
- Improve the quality of lesson planning in religious education, allowing for pace and challenge
- Revise schemes of work for religious education, for Key Stage 3 in particular, so that they are comprehensive, accessible to staff and meet the requirements of the school's foundation
- Improve the quality of inter-church school self-evaluation by referencing evidence and detailing how improvements are to be made
- Explore ways to further develop the chaplaincy provision

Improvement since the last inspection

The school has addressed many of the issues raised in the Section 23 Inspection of 24th September 2004 including enriching the sacramental life experienced by the students. There remain concerns in relation to religious education including the level of differentiation and the assessment of students' work. Formal systems for monitoring collective worship have yet to be implemented. The school is aware of these issues and is including them in its plans for further development.

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

Students achieve well at the school and enjoy being here. Academic standards are good with dedicated teachers who strive to do their best for the students, who in turn appreciate this. There is a high level of pastoral care and this is now encompassing a tutorial system for individual target setting. Students that need additional support are identified and receive suitable attention and there is a strong sense of equality at all levels of the school. Students report that bullying is rare and effectively dealt with, and the school senate provides an opportunity for them to have a say in the running of the school. Students describe the school as a place where they feel safe and reassured, and where they know they will be cared for. They describe teachers as approachable and friendly. Spiritual and moral development is very good with students receiving the education they need to become impressive citizens in adult life. The school environment is utilised well to support this. Prayers, statues of saints and inspirational images are located in many areas of the school. Extra-curricular provision is comprehensive and provides valuable enrichment to the basic curriculum.

Grade: 2

The impact of collective worship and the liturgy of sacraments on the school community is good

Prayer and worship play a daily part in the life of the school. There are regular opportunities for the celebration of the Eucharist in both the Anglican and Catholic traditions and the Sacrament of Reconciliation is available to students at certain times of the year. A recent review of the frequency and quality of collective worship has led to the strengthening of provision and its recommendations are already embedded in the daily routine. The quality of this development work is good and it is appreciated by the students, although they would welcome a greater degree of variety in the material used.

The acts of worship observed were satisfactory. Students were given an opportunity to reflect on a biblical reading and consider what this might mean for them in practice. There is scope

for an increase in the range and frequency of opportunities for student involvement in the planning and preparation of liturgies and collective worship. The chaplaincy provision is outstanding and this is recognised by the students, parents and governors. The school is fortunate to have the services of a full-time chaplain and this enables an effective overlap between the spiritual aspects of the pupils' development and the pastoral support systems. For example, the Chaplain has had input into discussions on a number of issues including implementing the 'Every Child Matters' recommendations.

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of community cohesion is good

The headteacher and governors have established a welcoming atmosphere with a strong sense of equality. Students from different backgrounds are recognised and their needs addressed in a way that enables them to become full and active members of the school community. Students with English as an additional language and those from other cultures are included; there is planning for their induction on arrival. Students in the lessons that were observed were fully involved and able to participate easily. The religious education curriculum includes the study of other major world religions and this strengthens the inclusive nature of the school.

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of religious education is inadequate

Religious Education (RE) is valued as an important subject within the school by staff, governors and students. The subject is allocated eight per cent of curriculum time and is well resourced. Many students at Key Stage 4 enjoy their RE lessons and talk about the opportunity to express their own insights, to question and debate issues.

Standards within RE are generally satisfactory at both key stages, although compared to other subjects many students do less well in RE. All students are entered for a GCSE Full Course in religious studies at the end of Key Stage 4, although the RE curriculum at Key Stage 3 does not provide an adequate preparation for this.

Progress across Key Stage 3 is limited. Although some students are aware of the level at which they are working, many do not understand what this means and are unable to articulate what they need to do to improve. The lack of frequency and quality of marking of students' work has contributed to their not always achieving their potential.

Teaching and learning is satisfactory. The majority of lessons observed were satisfactory, and one was good. The good lesson was characterised by a range of teaching and learning activities to meet the needs of different learners, the creative use of the interactive whiteboard and interesting relevant content. However, other lessons were poorly planned with unclear learning objectives, little or no differentiation specified and unfulfilling tasks. In addition, these lessons lacked pace and challenge in both key stages. Despite this students' responses were good. For example they gave suggestions for their own interpretations of the 'I am' sayings in St John's Gospel.

The RE curriculum is inadequate. There are a small number of schemes of work in place, but these do not fully meet the requirements set out by Foundation Governors in 2002. This was a key issue in the last inspection and has not been addressed.

The leadership of the subject is inadequate. The vision for the subject is not put into practice effectively. Self-evaluation is weak and there is a need for clear plans for the development of the subject, including the support and retention of staff.

Grade: 4

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

The headteacher articulates a clear Christian vision for the school. This is demonstrated in all public documentation, through her contributions in worship and through the school website. She is committed to creating a balance between both foundations in the spiritual life of the

school. The distinctively Christian ethos of the school is made clear to new staff at the time of interview. The governors wholeheartedly support the mission statement and demonstrate this through, for example, attendance at the Eucharist celebrations and festivals and through their link governor roles. In addition, inter-church school issues are identified in the school improvement plan. Prayer forms an integral part of school life. Governing body meetings and staff meetings all begin with prayer. Events, such as open evenings, begin with an act of worship for all who attend. However, the formalising of monitoring and evaluation by governors of the school as an inter-church school is underdeveloped, and the Joint Diocesan Self Evaluation Form was not used effectively to support the self evaluation process.

There are effective links with local churches as well as the chaplaincy. The school has created special links with four of its primary schools, where its worship band often plays. Local priests are regular visitors to the school to take the Eucharist. In addition, the school has been host to Christian Events, such as the Riding Lights Theatre company.

The well being of staff and provision of spiritual development opportunities for them are a high priority. Each training day begins with an act of worship and staff are invited to join a retreat each year. There are also opportunities for staff to use the chaplaincy. In addition, the school has been awarded 'Investors in People' for the second time.

Grade: 2

St Bede's Inter Church Comprehensive School, Birdwood Road, Cambridge. CB1 3TB Joint Anglican and Roman Catholic Report November 2007