

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Bishop of East Anglia and Inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005



**RC DIOCESE OF
EAST ANGLIA**



**The Church of England
Diocese of Ely**

St Bede's Inter-Church School

Birdwood Road
Cambridge
CB1 3TD

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

Previous SIAMS/Section 48 grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Local authority: N/A

Date of inspection: 17th May 2016

Date of last inspection: 6th April 2011

School's unique reference number: 137924

Headteacher: Alistair Day

Inspector's name and number: Kathryn Wright 436 and Fenella Ford

School context

St Bede's Inter-Church School is a mixed 11-16 academy with 800 students on roll, recruited from over 50 primary schools, and trustees from both the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches. Pupils travel to the school from across Cambridgeshire and beyond. The school has been heavily oversubscribed for several years. Most students are from Catholic or Anglican church-going families. St Bede's has a fully comprehensive intake with the full range of abilities and a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. There are a slightly lower proportion of students with SEND and lower numbers of disadvantaged students compared to national average, and slightly higher than national average students from minority ethnic groups or for whom English is not their first language. The school has links with a number of Anglican and Roman Catholic parishes through its foundation governors and community links.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Bede's School as an inter-church Roman Catholic / Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian foundation is understood and embraced by the entire school community creating a shared vision and excellent outcomes for pupils
- The highly effective monitoring and evaluation by the leadership and governors, particularly through the chaplaincy committee, ensure that church school issues lie at the heart of school improvement
- The importance placed on collective worship and the role of the chaplaincy ensures that the Christian ethos is embedded in the life of the school and promotes a joyful and peaceful atmosphere throughout the community
- The outstanding leadership and high profile of religious education (RE) affirms its place as a core subject and leads to excellent achievement by all pupils

Areas to improve

- Enhance the role of the chaplaincy representatives so that they become confident to lead a wider range of collective worship experiences
- Provide ways for more pupils to engage meaningfully with the chaplaincy to further their spiritual development
- Consolidate the embedding of the Christian ethos through the entire curriculum to ensure all aspects reflect the school's foundations

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

The distinctively Christian character of St Bede's Inter-Church School effectively shapes the relationships between all members of the school community. Pupils identified the Christian ethos as underpinning their respect for each other's beliefs and say that they don't feel judged, or embarrassed about being a believer. They learn about differences, so that there is 'moderation of ideas as opposed to extremes' leading to appreciation and understanding. The atmosphere of respect and calmness around the school and the way the students and staff treat each other bears witness to this. Promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have a comprehensive understanding of spirituality, saying that the 'Holy Spirit flows through the school like a river'. Opportunities for students to take on leadership roles abound, including RE ambassadors and Chaplaincy representatives in every form, which are desirable and highly regarded roles among the students. The distinctive Christian character of the school is obvious, from displays on the Christian virtues in corridors, to the sacred space in each tutor base which pupils value and take pride in. Attainment is significantly above floor standards at the end of Key Stage 4 (73% including English and Maths at GCSE), however the school promotes a holistic approach to achievement. Pupils with additional needs and those entitled to pupil premium are well supported and make good progress. Teachers report that they see colleagues valuing pupils with different gifts and seeing their potential life in Christ; they respect and deeply care for one another. Pupils' feedback supports this. For example, they feel well supported to question, challenge and explore their own faith in RE lessons. The school is committed to a 'growth mindset' approach which underpins this. Pupils take part in a wide variety of charitable work and a large number of trips extends their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Since the last inspection the school has developed its work on the study of the organisation and sacramental life of the two foundation Churches within the worship and RE at the school, within the context of deeper themes. This supports pupils' understanding of their place within the wider Christian family. The teaching of Christianity in RE, including national and global perspectives, contributes to the inter-church character of the school and informs effective teaching and learning across the curriculum. This was particularly emphasised through participation in the 'What if learning?' research project that took place in all subject areas between 2012 and 2014. The school is consolidating the impact of this project to ensure the embedding of the Christian ethos through the entire curriculum and the upholding of the school's foundation in all aspects.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship and the chaplaincy are essential elements in the life of the school. Worship unites and enriches the whole school community. Worship is well planned and organised using themes based on Christian teaching and values, as well as reflecting the church calendar. The acts of worship observed reflected the Anglican and Roman Catholic foundations using a clear liturgical framework. In year group worship, pupils actively listened and responded well to stories and teachings about forgiveness. They demonstrated a sound knowledge and understanding of the Lord's Prayer. The tutor worship observed was inspiring and transformative, providing opportunities for active participation and engagement. Chaplaincy representatives regularly lead tutor group worship and have been trained to use the labyrinth with their peers to promote spiritual development. Students speak of the impact of worship on their attitudes, behaviour and personal faith. Pupils confidently talk about the persons of the Trinity, particularly referring to the impact of the Holy Spirit in helping them to make the right choices and decisions. Pupils benefit from leading and participating in the Eucharist and Mass which are both celebrated regularly. These opportunities alongside reflection days at Ely Cathedral and private prayer promote and support the sense of calmness and peace felt throughout the school. Pupils draw inspiration from a wide range of speakers including local clergy, community leaders and members of CAFOD. The involvement of local Roman Catholic priests is still being established, however the Sacrament of Reconciliation was offered to pupils during Lent. The inspirational part time chaplain provides a vision for worship and the wider role of the chaplaincy. She has maintained an effective presence in the school, and continued to develop her work despite the chaplaincy building being damaged by fire in April 2016. Monitoring and evaluation of worship by the leadership team and pupils is well established and is leading to greater consistency in tutor worship.

The effectiveness of religious education is outstanding

The quality of and provision for religious education is exceptional. Pupils hold the subject in high esteem, valuing its role in terms of community cohesion, understanding the world in which they live and helping them to reflect on their own spirituality. The RE prefects (Key Stage 3) and ambassadors (Key Stage 4) promote the importance of RE within and beyond the school, and the latter regularly present their campaigns in national forums. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is significantly above national standards (GCSE 84% A*-C). Pupils make outstanding progress, with increasing numbers of disadvantaged pupils achieving well. The subject is underpinned by a coherent rationale based on the development of pupils' religious and theological literacy. This is supported through an enquiry based approach to learning focusing on higher order thinking and engagement with complex theological ideas such as the ransom theory of atonement. Pupils have a good command of religious and philosophical language and are able to discuss questions relating to truth and interpretation of text. Teachers use skilful questioning to help pupils deepening their understanding. The spiral curriculum ensures continuity and progression, particularly in developing pupils' understanding of the sacramental life, Christian doctrine and other faith and belief traditions. Assessment for learning strategies ensure pupils know how to make progress. Peer and self-assessment are used effectively to help pupils understand what it means to succeed in the subject. All teachers of RE are continually reflecting upon and developing their professional practice through engagement with networks, research projects and conferences. The subject leader provides challenge and support to colleagues, and is establishing the department as a beacon of outstanding practice in the local area. Department priorities are clear and well organised through accurate self evaluation, reading and research into best practice. A robust system of monitoring and evaluation, including by the governors, takes place to ensure that RE upholds and promotes the foundations of the school.

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

The school is very well led and managed by a strong headteacher and leadership team, ably supported by governors who know the school well. Leaders are reflective practitioners whose deep commitment to the Church's mission in education is evident and effective in promoting a strong Christian ethos. The headteacher is a source of inspiration for the whole community, modelling the way he wants staff to treat pupils by showing care for their well-being, taking a personal interest in their progress and being visible around the school. The headteacher draws inspiration from John 10:10 'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full,' saying, 'we must do something about it and put it into place.' He promotes a 'no blame' culture where staff and students can take risks and try things, creating a dynamic and vibrant learning community. In the parental exit survey 2014/15 97% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the school is well led and managed. St Bede's leaders, including governors, secure the impact of the school's Christian vision through the robust monitoring and evaluation of provision and outcomes, which informs strategic planning. The areas for development highlighted in the last inspection have been acted upon effectively. The leadership team ensures the Christian ethos of the school is central to the recruitment and induction of new members of staff. The headteacher has spoken at local events to promote recruitment to church schools. All staff benefit from effective links and professional development opportunities with other church schools in the local area. The Christian identity of the school and its Christian mission are very evident around the school, with 'sacred space' in each classroom; displays on 'Christian virtues' in a corridor; developed tutor prayer and charity work. The manner in which staff and pupils treat each other is testament to the importance placed on Christian values and on spiritual and moral development of pupils. Prayer underpins the life of the school, with regular opportunities for staff and other members of the community to pray together. The school Chaplain provides good spiritual leadership with weekly themes for prayer and reflection which are used throughout the school. Staff and pupils have a high regard for the Christian life of the school and collective worship; they understand the school's mission well, share its purpose and are keenly and actively involved in shaping and supporting it. The RE department is very well led with vision and clear direction, supporting new members of staff enabling them to develop and contribute to the department.

Joint SIAMS/Canonical/Section 48 report May 2016
St Bede's Inter-Church School, Cambridge CB1 3TD