



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Archbishop Sancroft Church of England VA High School

Wilderness Lane
Harleston
Norfolk
IP20 9DD

Diocese: Norwich

Local authority: Norfolk

Dates of inspection: 2nd December 2008

Date of last inspection: June 21st & 22nd 2006

School's unique reference number: 121188

Headteacher: Mr Richard Cranmer

Inspector's name and number: 480 Mrs Gill Hipwell and 436 Mrs Kathryn Wright (RE)

School context

This small rural high school serves a market town and surrounding villages. Most of the 406 pupils come from its four feeder Church of England primary schools, although some from further afield choose it for its Christian ethos. Support from the local Anglican church is good and relationships with a range of other denominations are strong. The head teacher has been in post since September 2008.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Archbishop Sancroft Church of England VA High School as a Church of England school are good

This is a school which believes in itself as a community. Relationships are a real strength and pupils are encouraged to take on responsibility for the wellbeing of each other. A strong sense of moral purpose underpins both the taught and wider curricula, leading to exceptionally good personal development. Leadership is purposeful and ready to face the challenges of moving towards excellence.

Established strengths

- Student leadership within the school, which is an exemplar of Christian service and respect for individuals
- The commitment of staff to the personal development of students
- The calibre of specialist RE teaching
- The commitment of the school's leaders to identify and celebrate the Christian values which underpin many examples of good practice

Focus for development

- INSET to support the non-specialist teachers of RE and opportunities for the subject leader to become part of a local network
- Development of students' roles as leaders of collective worship
- The articulation of the school's Christian foundation and values in documentation and around the building
- Communication of the school's strong ethos to the wider community

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

Students spoke very positively of their own experiences of school, using words such as 'family', 'inclusive' and 'safe'. There was some disappointment that the things they particularly value about the school do not seem to be known about in the local community. They spoke of a school with a Christian ethos but not one that they would describe as religious. Staff, too, described Christian values as 'here but not explicit'. Student service is a strength, well managed and effective and of benefit both to those receiving support and those giving it. Issues of individual and group responsibility are covered in the well-structured personal development curriculum and also in Religious Education; students identified clear links between these subjects. Students felt that bullying was rare and appropriately tackled. They said that they challenged occasional racist and sexist language but would welcome an opportunity to talk about it more openly and to know 'which words it is OK to say'. On the whole students respect each others' right to learn, although some low level verbal disruption was mentioned, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Those with additional needs are very well supported and empowered, in their turn, to support others. Extra curricular opportunities are wide-ranging, inclusive and exceptionally well supported; the time and effort given by members of staff is much appreciated. Relationships are strong and valued. Teachers were described as 'supportive' and 'caring' and both staff and students said that the Headteacher is 'approachable'. All those interviewed commented on the positive atmosphere in the school and the emphasis on both effort and achievement. Excellent practice in managing a tutor group was observed; the physical environment, whilst primarily dedicated to a curriculum area, reflected the importance of the group as a unit and the mutual respect was almost tangible.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Students identified collective worship in the school as being 'very Christian'. The impact of the current system is patchy; some students claimed that 'thought for the day' is never observed by their class, others described positive and thoughtful engagement; none identified it as worship. The class worship observed was led by the incumbent with good engagement from students who were clearly used to discussing the weekly theme. Key stage worship is heavily reliant on the Headteacher and Deputy and the frequent changes of theme makes the preparation of suitable material a heavy chore. In the act observed, students listened attentively but did not seem to actively engage. Those questioned said that they would like to have more involvement in the planning and delivery of worship. Some Year 11 students with mentoring responsibilities undertake their support work during this time. The impact that worship has on members of the school community is difficult to assess as systems for formal monitoring are relatively new; the incumbent has taken on responsibility in this area, reporting to fellow governors. The Headteacher and Chair of Governors fully recognise the importance of worship at the centre of the school's Christian ethos and have begun to plan for its restructuring, in particular widening the team delivering key stage worship to include both more staff members and more visitors. The incumbent works with the head teacher on the 'thought for the week' programme and has begun to visit each form group on a rota basis.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious Education (RE) is valued as an important subject in the school by all staff and the majority of students. Students talked about understanding religions through RE, and some felt that it had an impact on their attitudes and behaviour. However, a minority of students see little value in the subject as they are 'not religious', despite the efforts of the RE department to make topics relevant and appealing to teenagers. Achievement at Key Stage 4 is excellent, with 77.9% of students achieving an A*-C grade in a GCSE Short Course. The Year 11 lesson observed was engaging and had good pace. It enabled students to consider real life dilemmas. There was some evidence of students evaluating different opinions and ideas. The Year 8 lesson observed, whilst well planned and interesting for students, did not provide sufficient challenge. There was evidence in display work and through discussions with students of a range of teaching and learning strategies being employed; however, in both lessons observed there was a heavy reliance on worksheets. Assessment of RE is well established. Students' work is regularly marked and levels used appropriately. However,

students are not always certain how to make progress. RE contributes significantly to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, at the current time students do not visit any places of worship or meet with faith members as part of their RE programme except for the local vicar. The subject is very well led. Schemes of work are detailed with clear objectives and outcomes. The subject leader has attended professional development training, but in recent years the department has become isolated. The foundation governors understand the importance of RE in a church school and are aware of the content of the RE curriculum. At the current time, there are no formal monitoring or evaluation systems.

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

The Headteacher and Chair of Governors have an exciting, shared vision for the development of the school as a vibrant Christian community. A 'vision and values' group, including an officer from the Diocese, has sent out clear signals that the leadership is ready to explore and develop the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Support for the Headteacher is very strong and he has already developed exceptionally good relationships inside school, in the community and within the cluster. A highly committed leadership team is focused on student wellbeing and progress and there is much evidence of members of staff putting in extra work on behalf of the students, for example the DVDs made by the Deputy Headteacher for every school leaver. The Chair of Governors has encouraged the governing body to take on more responsibility for Christian distinctiveness; where this is in place, for example the link with PSHE, staff are hugely appreciative. Historically, governors have not fully understood the importance of their role in monitoring and supporting Collective Worship and Religious Education but this has been identified as a priority by the Chair of Governors. At present the physical environment and the school's documentation do not reflect the school's pride in its Anglican foundation; whilst those within the school community are clear about its links with the church, many in the wider community are not. Support from local churches, Anglican and others, is good. The incumbent supports curriculum areas as well as Collective Worship and the Vice Chair of Governors runs a Christian group at lunchtime. At the Headteacher's commissioning, members of the local worshipping communities joined the school at the town's Anglican church for a service addressed by The Bishop of Thetford.

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