



St Bede's Inter Church School
Birdwood Road
Cambridge
CB1 3TD

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

Local Authority: Cambridgeshire

Dates of Inspection: 6th April 2011

Date of last Inspection: 23rd November 2007

School's unique reference number: 110887

Chair of Governors: Claire Downham

Headteacher: Mr Richard Wilkin

Inspectors' names and numbers: Michael Asquith (317) & Patrick Harrison

School context

St Bede's is an inter-church school with trustees nominated by both the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. Students, attracted by its distinctive character, originate from throughout Cambridgeshire. It gives priority of admission to students from Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions. Students from other faith communities are admitted if there are places. The school has links with a number of Anglican and Roman Catholic parishes through its foundation governors and community links. The school is smaller than most secondary schools. The school has a full time, ordained, Anglican chaplain and an on-site chaplaincy building.

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

St Bede's inter-church school encapsulates the traditions of its two founding denominations in a balanced and effective way. Strong Christian values underpin the school, giving the opportunity for staff to be fully involved. Since the last inspection, a new Headteacher and Head of RE have been appointed. Religious Education, identified the most liked subject by students in a recent survey, is outstanding.

Established strengths

- The progress made since the last inspection within the Religious Education department and the affection with which students now hold the subject
- The strong Christian ethos that pervades the school
- The delicate, yet powerful, balance maintained between the many Christian denominations represented at the school and the shared common ground
- Collective Worship, including those within tutor groups

Focus for development

- Increase the engagement of students in the planning and leading of Collective Worship
- Explore ways of incorporating a systematic study of the organisation and sacramental life of the two foundation Churches within the worship and RE at the school
- Involve local Roman Catholic priests more in the life of the school

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

Strong Christian values underpin every aspect of the life of the school. Whilst some values, for example, hospitality, are explored in overtly Christian terms, others, like determination and responsibility are more evident in other ways. The school takes every opportunity to enhance the spiritual development of students, though it is aware of the breadth of understanding expressed by both students and their parents.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students appreciate the strong ethos of the school, recognising the support it gives them in nurturing in their faith, and that they “can go and discuss” their issues and concerns in openness and safety. Students feel the school supports them well and are great advocates for the school – “even wanting to undertake a two hour bus journey to get to the school.”

The “Student Senate” gives all students the opportunity to suggest ideas and positively contribute to the life of the school. Additional opportunities are given for students to accept responsibility at the school, for example as bus monitors, and as members of the Chaplaincy group.

Reflection days, focussing on personal development, are enjoyed by all students. Support for individual students, through the pastoral system, the learning assistants and the Chaplain, makes a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school. The behaviour policy of the school is rooted within Christian values; no inappropriate behaviour was seen at the school during the inspection.

The chaplain and the Governor’s Chaplaincy Group ensure a balance of liturgical and spiritual practices of the founding churches. Community cohesion is supported by the very nature of the school and the students clearly value that aspect of school life.

The school policies and practice build a sense of equality that is further expressed in students’ support of local and international charities. The Chaplaincy provision makes a strong contribution to all aspects of the life of the school and their work is valued by both staff and students.

Grade 1

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

Collective Worship takes place each day for every student in either tutor groups or in year groups or two year groups. The collective worship of the school is well supported by a number of local clergy which is appreciated by the students. Eucharists are celebrated regularly within RE lessons and at other times, though currently the sacrament of reconciliation is not regularly available. Students also have the opportunity to engage in liturgical services for example on Ash Wednesday and at the end of terms. In one such service, students were led to consider the significance of Jesus’ death through a series of meditations from those involved at the death of Jesus. Here, both “Mary” and the “Centurion” created opportunities for emotive responses. Students were then given the opportunity to respond with their thoughts, however little time was given for reflection. Students appreciate both the inter-active times of collective worship and the reflective times, though would like further opportunities for reflection.

Worship underpins the school day for the whole community. In tutor groups collective worship includes carefully planned prayer, discussion and individual reflection. Students clearly responded with respect and some with obvious reverence. Collective worship is planned termly by the Chaplain, though students would appreciate the opportunity to be involved in this planning. Collective worship is not yet fully and explicitly linked to the liturgical calendar.

Grade 1

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Under the leadership of the Head of Faculty, Religious Education (RE) has become a strong subject at the school. Students hold the subject in great affection, with the largest number of students declaring it as their favourite subject. This is because the scheme of work is well devised, motivating students in their own faith and looking to answer the questions that students raise.

Standards and provision in Religious Education have improved significantly since the last inspection. The RE lessons provide an excellent opportunity to explore the common ground and differences between the Christian denominations. Students feel they are allowed to question, to challenge and to explore their faith. They feel confident in doing so in an environment that respects different views. All students sit a GCSE examination, with over 75% attaining A* to C. Some students complete the exam in Year 10 and are able to study an AS level course in Year 11.

Students make very good progress in RE. Lesson objectives are made clear and students are guided in progressing to a higher level of attainment. Lessons are well structured and actively engage the students. All lessons observed were either outstanding or good with outstanding features. The Faculty has a robust process of observation and monitoring of the RE specialists, and it recognises this process now needs to be extended to include the non-specialist teachers. Students enjoy their lessons, appreciating the opportunities "to think about the bigger questions," to question and thence to strengthen their faith and understanding. Students "develop life skills and characteristics through RE." One student commented, "*It feels rare for 16 year olds to be contemplating the ontological argument*" whilst another commented, "*People are not sheltered in their own views. We are perfectly free to say what we think.*" The inclusivity of the school is further supported by the study of other world religions within the RE curriculum. However, there is not a systematic study of the organisation and sacramental life of the different Churches beyond Year 7.

Grade 1

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

The Headteacher provides strong and distributed leadership for the school. He articulates with passion and commitment the distinctive nature of this inter-church school.

Governors take an active part within the life of the school and are encouraged to be involved within curriculum areas. Governors regularly visit the school. They rightly feel that the school has "improved" as a church school since the appointment of the Headteacher, and that the school "strongly enriches" the spiritual development of all staff and students.

"Christianity is here every day in every way." Strong self-evaluation processes engage a variety of staff and Governors driving the clear developmental planning. The Headteacher strongly advocates the balance between the many Christian backgrounds of the staff and students, seeking to include everybody, yet not to water-down the distinctive nature of faith communities represented in this inter-church school.

Opportunities are given for staff development, including looking towards future leadership of schools and the school's distinctive character. The school has strong links with the many feeder schools and with many of the churches, though looks to increase the involvement of more Roman Catholic clergy within the life of the school.

Grade 1