

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Bishop Stopford School

Headlands
Kettering
NN15 6BJ
Diocese: Peterborough
Type of School: Secondary Academy
Appropriate authority: The Governing Body
Dates of inspection: 19th – 20th February 2013
Date of last inspection: 1st May 2008
Academy's unique reference number: 137086
Headteacher: Margaret Holman
Inspector's name and number: Nicholas McKemey 280

School context

Bishop Stopford Church of England Voluntary Aided Secondary School achieved status as an independent, publicly funded academy of a religious (Church of England) character in August 2011. The school provides an education for 1450 students, including 400 in the Sixth-Form. Most students travel to the school from Kettering and elsewhere in Northamptonshire and a small number from Rutland and Leicestershire. Most students are of UK white background and from Anglican or Christian families but a small minority are from other heritages, including the Hindu and Muslim faiths.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bishop Stopford School as a Church of England school are outstanding

The deeply embedded Christian Values of Faith, Justice, Responsibility, Truth and Compassion fundamentally shape every aspect of life and learning at Bishop Stopford School.

Established strengths

- The Christian family ethos of the school.
- The high aspirations for all the students as fully rounded individuals.
- The maturity of students' attitudes and behaviour.
- The energetic challenge and support provided by the governing body.
- The perceptive vision and leadership of the headteacher.
- The effectiveness of the senior leadership as a collegiate team.
- The quality of care and spiritual guidance provided for students and staff.

Focus for development

- The extension and consolidation of the creative "learning by doing" approach in RE.

Through its distinctive Christian character Bishop Stopford School is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners

The Christian character of Bishop Stopford School has a powerful impact on every aspect of the students' learning, development and flourishing. Students at Bishop Stopford realise their full potential as rounded individuals and achieve significantly better academically than the national expectation. The five core Christian values, identified as a focus for development in the previous SIAS report, thoroughly underpin outstanding education, guidance and care. The values are systematically and prominently displayed in high quality signage all round the school and have been designed as the focal point of the school's corporate identity. The students' enthusiasm for learning, spiritual development and moral education is rooted in these values. Developing moral values, happiness, behaviour, and community spirit are all cited by parents as outstanding aspects of the school. Students are habitually considerate in their behaviour and this marks the overall quality of relationships throughout the school. All

learning and social interactions are encompassed by the school's purposeful, inclusive and harmonious (koinonic) Christian ethos.

The students are familiar with Christian values and understand how they apply in their lives. For example, they readily describe their trust in teachers, the trust in them by the teachers, their trust in the school and their trust in each other. "I have become a responsible person because of the way they (the teachers) trust me", said a girl in Year 9. Because they feel they own the embedded Christian values their sense of belonging and worth is applied to everything they experience at school, including learning, worship, RE, chaplaincy, teaching coaching and the rich provision of cultural and extension activities and trips.

The spiritual and pastoral life of the school is significantly enhanced by the chaplaincy based in the chapel. Situated, in every sense, at the heart of school life it gives a practical dimension to faith and compassion and a shining example of Christian service for students.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship at Bishop Stopford is an arterial system running throughout the school. It stimulates spiritual development, provides moral guidance and educates in the Christian faith and Anglican tradition. Worship takes place in tutor groups, year groups and whole school gatherings. Students value highly the high level of participation they experience and the fundamental contribution they make. "They feel it's their worship," commented one parent. Through worship students develop a profound understanding of prayer in all its forms. Regardless of their personal belief or theological view, all students find that the experience of worship has a positive impact on their daily attitudes to learning and relationships. Because of the excellent liturgical artistic and musical contributions students make, collective worship has a deepened spiritual resonance.

Worship creates an outstanding climate for spiritual development for students, parents and staff. A Year 11 form registration group were quietly absorbed in a film about the impact of a Christian pilgrimage on its participants. The session finished with a prayer from one of the students and they departed to start their day's learning in a reflective and receptive mood.

All members of the school community, including those of other faiths or none, are enthusiastic about collective worship. A parent noted that, "they discuss the assemblies at home." This is because of a well thought through and outstandingly implemented policy for worship, which provides a coherent spectrum of religious experiences, from the exploration of specific moral choices to the regular year group Eucharist services in school and school services in church. Clergy associated with the school and the chaplains make substantial and regular contributions. Through worship students learn about the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and gain significant Biblical knowledge. Worship is a highly influential experience of prayer for the students. It confirms their sense of belonging and fellowship, enhances their powers of reflection and provides form for their communication with God. In all aspects worship becomes school experienced as church.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Throughout religious education students of all abilities are achieving significantly in advance of the national expectation in relation to their ability and prior attainment. In Years 7 and 8 students make excellent progress and a solid foundation is laid for the start of GCSE study in Year 9. Particularly effective is the unit of learning on Christianity early in Year 7. Knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the Anglican tradition is outstanding. By the end of Year 8 students are achieving at a level commensurate with the national expectation at the end of Year 9. Years 9 and 10 are the "engine room" of performance at GCSE that is in line with outstanding achievement in English and mathematics. Excellent levels of knowledge, understanding and theological literacy are reached as the result of mainly outstanding teaching, formative assessment and an engrossing curriculum. In year 11 students are able to tackle an A level learning task on the existence of God. AS and A2 level outcomes in RE, a popular sixth-form subject, remain above national expectations with outstanding progress being made in Year 12, which addresses the challenges presented by A level study. Teaching and learning in the sixth-form is of the highest quality. Some of the theological and

philosophical discussion would be at home in a good university seminar.

Throughout RE the use of electronic media by teachers and students is particularly effective and students learn well by, and particularly value, stimulating and well structured discussion. With great maturity and on their own initiative a Year 11 class moved seamlessly from conversations in pairs to purposeful discussion with others around the room. Learning and achievement in RE is consistently outstanding and the previous SIAS report's focus for development on student target setting and progress has been successfully addressed. The subject and school leadership recognise, however, that there is room for even greater levels of excellence. Especially effective "learning by doing" activities are becoming established, for example the tactile Year 7 "shoebox" project in which the features of religious shrines are creatively explored. The effectiveness of RE as a key element in the character of the school is substantial due to this relentless drive for improvement.

The religious education provided at Bishop Stopford School includes the very significant contribution to the excellent knowledge and understanding students have of the spiritual life and the Christian faith by worship and the chaplaincy.

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

The leadership and management have successfully produced a school community in which the proclaimed core values are explicit in the quality of everyday life. The members of the governing body are passionate advocates and watchful guardians of the distinctive Christian character of Bishop Stopford School. This ethos is core business for the governing body who provide outstanding challenge and support for the school leadership.

Working collegiately with her senior team and staff to deliver the school's Christian mission of service to the students the headteacher provides outstandingly effective leadership. Excellent progress has been made on the church school aspects of the school's "Priorities for Development 2012-15". These focus on the key strands that make up the Christian service provided by Bishop Stopford School, worship, religious education, chaplaincy, fellowship and moral purpose. Rigorous self-evaluation and constructive intervention by the leadership and management ensure these are sustained, renewed and deepened.

The leadership has developed productive partnerships with local churches and Christian youth organisations. Parental support for the school and its Christian purpose is overwhelmingly strong. Leadership succession planning for this and other church schools is sustained by the examples set by the headteacher, senior and middle leaders. One result of this successful nurture of talent is the recent appointment of an outstandingly effective teacher to lead RE from within the subject area.

The leadership, management and governance of Bishop Stopford have provided an ethos of responsibility and compassion that enables faith, justice and truth to thrive in the school community.

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