

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Archbishop Tenison's Church of England Voluntary Aided High School**

Selborne Road

Croydon

CR0 5JQ

#### **Diocese: Southwark**

School's Unique reference number: 101811

Date of inspection: 20 & 21 September 2012

Date of last inspection: March 2008

Headteacher: Richard Parrish

Inspector's name with National Society inspector's number : Lyn Field NS151

This is a pilot inspection for the proposed SIAS framework 2013

### **School context**

Archbishop Tenison's is smaller than the average secondary school but has a large sixth form of up to 270 students. It is oversubscribed and 90% of Year 7 places are allocated on the basis of membership of Christian churches; since 2009, the governors have offered 10% as open places. The proportion of pupils with special education needs or disabilities is below that in schools nationally. For part of last year, the headteacher was seconded as interim head of another London school. This was brokered by the Diocese.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Archbishop Tenison's as a Church of England school are outstanding**

Christian scripture is central to the school's effectiveness. It informs decision-making and is the benchmark against which leaders measure success and set expectations for the whole school community. Effective partnerships with Christian organisations, especially the Diocese of Southwark, enrich what pupils experience and enable the school to play a wider role in the future of church schools.

### **Established strengths**

- The depth of Christian leadership inspired by the clear direction of the headteacher
- The breadth of worship and its impact on adults and young people
- The ability of students to reflect on their own spirituality
- The focus on Christian theology in the curriculum

### **Focus for development**

- To ensure that the monitoring of pupils' progress in religious education (RE) is directly linked to the impact of teaching on their learning
- To ensure the whole governing body understands and carries out its role in evaluating the impact of the school's Christian distinctiveness

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

The Christian scriptures are consistently used to provide a reference point for adults and young people in how they conduct themselves and how they approach teaching and learning. This directly contributes to high academic standards and the outstanding spiritual development of pupils. Matters of faith are openly discussed and sixth form students have an exceptionally mature understanding of what a spiritual journey means for them. The adults in school value the regular opportunities to reflect on biblical teaching and relate this to their own roles and responsibilities. This deepens the trust and honesty that characterises relationships throughout the school and students talk of how the staff 'navigate them in the right direction' and 'help

them be comfortable in their faith'. The majority have grown up in church families but recognise the special contribution the school makes to helping them articulate their own beliefs, independently of their parents. The Christian Union is a large and active group that meets the needs of committed Christians as well as those less certain of their beliefs. Each year, it shares an annual residential weekend with a partner secondary school. This is an example of how students establish friendships across a range of Christian networks. This affirms them in their faith and strengthens their understanding of diversity within the Church.

Over time, pupils have consistently achieved high standards compared with schools nationally. Some aspects of recent results are lower than the school hoped for but improved strategies are already in place to support all students in meeting challenging targets. Attendance continues to be high, as do standards of behaviour. On the few occasions when pupils fall short of expectations, the governors' own sanctions come into play. They meet with families and often draw on prayer and Christian values to resolve difficulties. Equal attention is paid to celebrating the many pupils whose behaviour is exemplary.

Religious education is a compulsory subject at GCSE and this has the full support of pupils. The specific teaching of theology throughout the school maintains the very high profile of Christianity. Pupils are confident to use religious language and any ethical discussions are rooted in a secure knowledge of beliefs and values. Subjects other than RE contribute to their spiritual and moral understanding although this is not monitored well enough to identify where strengths and weaknesses exist in curriculum planning. In English, for example, the selection of books for study stimulates moral debate and in history, pupils have a good awareness of the Church's impact on society through the centuries.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Worship stands at the core of the school's effectiveness. It takes many forms, shaping senior leaders through time for spiritual reflection as a team, securing the Christian values of the school in tutor groups and is the framework that ties everyone together in moments of deep sadness. Prayer is a standard part of any formal meeting for staff, governors and parents but may also be unprompted before sports matches, exams and behaviour interviews with governors. This clearly sets the purpose of any activity in the context of Christian values and has a lasting impact on those involved. Senior staff are very perceptive in monitoring the changing needs of the school. This insight combined with their own spiritual reflections gives rise to biblical themes for worship that resonate with the whole community. Planning is therefore always fresh with no repetition of past themes and results in acts of worship where adults and young people regularly find challenge, affirmation, resolution and healing. 'I like this time, it is always relevant to where I am' is a typical comment from pupils. Speaking of Jesus and of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit comes easily to all pupils because key Christian beliefs are taught extremely well.

Since the last inspection, the rich diet of worship has been maintained and continues to evolve. There is greater attention to ensuring the atmosphere in assemblies is one of a service of worship and, as year groups now meet weekly in St Matthew's church, there are more leaders involved. In fact, an exceptionally high proportion of teachers and all senior staff lead worship every week. Sixth form students 'host' worship and younger pupils willingly deliver tutor group materials and join in follow up discussions. The work of the chaplaincy team plays an essential role in maintaining standards when colleagues in leadership roles move on. For example, it has responded to feedback gathered from pupils to ensure the celebration of the Eucharist embraces the breadth of pupil backgrounds.

### **The effectiveness of religious education is good**

All pupils follow courses in theology and this is a strength and distinctive feature of the school. It has a significant impact on pupils because they gain a mature command of religious ideas that prepares them well for examination work in philosophy and ethics. They feel the detailed study of at least one Gospel demands considerable application to study but enables them to draw parallels with moral and social issues in contemporary society.

Results at both GCSE and A level have been consistently higher than schools nationally and the department remains one of the top performing in the school. This represents good progress for all groups of pupils from their starting points. However, dips in recent results have prompted a closer analysis of the progress pupils make year on year. Although this has identified staff changes as a contributory factor, there has not been enough rigour in checking assessment

and tracking how well teaching strategies are adapted to pupils' needs. In spite of this, the majority of teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. The new team in place is already demonstrating its capacity to deliver high quality lessons. Teachers' strong subject knowledge builds confidence in their pupils. Homework is used effectively to ensure pupils prepare for the next lesson so no time is lost and the pace of learning is maintained. Lesson plans indicate that teachers use a range of methods to check understanding but, in some instances, the starting point and the level of questioning for more able pupils is not challenging enough. The subject leader is ambitious for the department and her extensive knowledge of the subject informs strategic thinking about the curriculum. Decisions about courses take account of the spread of ability in each year group, for example when early entry to an examination may be appropriate. All sixth formers receive their entitlement for RE and a day spent visiting the places of worship of a range of faiths has left a deep impression on them.

### **The leadership and management of the school as a church school are outstanding**

The outstanding spiritual leadership of the headteacher gives clear direction to the whole school community. Since the last inspection, a new team of deputy and assistant headteachers is fully involved in the development of the school. A model of leadership, therefore, has evolved that no longer depends solely on the headteacher to articulate and implement the school's Christian vision. Part of this is to recruit two subject leaders into the senior leadership team each year in order for them to gain insight into its work and absorb this into their own practice. Senior team meetings include a time for scriptural reflection which builds a shared understanding between leaders for how Christian values shape the work of the school. When the headteacher was seconded recently to another school the importance of this leadership in depth emerged clearly. At the same time, it highlighted the excellent understanding key governors have of their wider role in securing the future of church schools. Governors have robust systems for checking that new staff have the right qualities for the school and are actively involved in promoting good behaviour. However, the thinking behind this is not always explicitly linked to Christian values because the work of all governors does not have a sharp enough focus on evaluating the impact of the school's Christian distinctiveness. Leaders ensure that Christianity retains a high profile in the curriculum and more than meets the National Society's Statement of Entitlement for RE. The vicar provides vital pastoral support for staff and school worship in church. However, as chaplaincy is part of the parish ministry of St Matthew's it does not leave sufficient scope to extend his involvement further. Parents are left in no doubt as to the Christian identity of the school. This has their full support because they see at first hand how the school both nurtures and challenges pupils in their faith.