

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: 12-13 March 2008

Date of last inspection: November 2002

Headteacher: Richard Parrish

Chair of Governors: Revd Penny Brown

Inspector's name with National Society inspector's number : John Ross 476

School context

Archbishop Tenison's is a relatively small school. It draws pupils from all wards in the borough of Croydon and reflects a broad ethnic mix, with almost half from Black African and Caribbean communities. Most pupils are from Anglican churches but a third are from Free Church families. The sixth form admits those of all faiths and none. Few pupils are entitled to free school meals or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or a statement of special educational need. The school has specialist status as a mathematics and computing college.

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

This is a school without barriers, where those of various denominations talk openly of their faith without shame, fear or embarrassment. Visionary leadership, dedicated staff, effective governance and highly motivated learners all contribute to the success story. Everyone is known and loved in this inclusive, secure and happy school. One learner summed it up: 'I love the school and it's helped me with my faith'.

Established strengths

- the strong and inclusive Christian ethos which permeates every aspect of school life
- the clear and visionary Christian leadership of the headteacher, well supported by an effective and committed senior leadership team and governing body
- the high quality of Religious Studies and the outstanding progress made in this area since the last denominational inspection

Focus for development

- to develop Collective Worship so that it reflects the traditions of the diverse intake while building on the school's Anglican foundation
- to involve learners more fully in the school's self-evaluation of its Christian distinctiveness to ensure their ownership in major developments

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

Christian values and relationships are embedded in the daily life of the school. The school has a commitment to value and respect everyone and is highly successful in achieving this aim. All groups of learners, irrespective of ability and background, make at least good progress in their time at the school and many demonstrate outstanding success. Academic results at GCSE and at A-level are outstanding. The flexible and innovative curriculum caters well for the needs of all learners. Significantly, the most vulnerable learners achieve well. Overwhelmingly, learners feel

included and positive about the school. Learner care is a strength. Every learner feels personally known and a strong pastoral system, coupled with a culture in which learners look after one another, ensures a working environment which is safe and secure. There is a very wide range of extra-curricular activities and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are outstanding. The prospectus accurately states that the school works as a partnership involving learners, staff, governors and parents, based on mutual respect and a common purpose. Learners are articulate and confident and speak of faith issues freely and openly.

Learners' views are regularly sought through surveys and focus groups and acted upon. An assemblies forum meets to discuss what learners like about Collective Worship and what they would like to see improved. There is an active school council which meets regularly and discusses a wide range of issues, including what makes the school distinctively Christian. There is now an opportunity to develop further the role of learners in the self-evaluation and development planning of the school. There are excellent opportunities for learners to take responsibility within the school, for example older learners act as peer mentors. Many learners participate actively in sporting, musical, dramatic and other extra-curricular activities. Fundraising for charity is especially strong and links with the local and wider community are outstanding. In 2007 a group of learners and staff took part in an 'expedition' to the Anglican High School in Singapore as part of Archbishop Tenison's status as a mathematics and computing specialist school. Links with the parishes, deanery and Diocese are strong and the Archbishop of Canterbury visited recently. Striking yet tasteful stained glass images in the main reception area immediately signal the Church school distinctiveness to a visitor. However it is the warmth of reception and the atmosphere within the school which confirm that one has entered a very special place.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Assemblies and services are integral to the Christian life of the school. One act of Collective Worship observed, led by sixth form students, was outstanding because it engaged and challenged everyone present through music, Bible reading, testimony and prayer. The response was warm and appreciative. Increasingly the learners themselves are taking part in and even leading Collective Worship. Learners work closely with staff to contribute to the planning and delivery of Collective Worship. They are also actively involved in the creation of tutor group assemblies. Church services too are becoming more learner directed. In a recent Eucharist for Year 9, learners volunteered to take part in its planning and delivery: choosing hymns, writing prayers, performing drama and giving a talk. One member of staff commented, 'It was fantastic!' An inter-denominational communion service for each year group is held in St. Matthew's Church once a year and the academic year starts and ends with a service in church. Year 7 and Year 8 each attend church once a week for an act of collective worship, a creative and imaginative solution to the problem of insufficient space to assemble the entire school on school premises. Learners appreciate opportunities in Collective Worship to reflect on issues which affect their lives, such as friendship, jealousy and faithfulness. Collective Worship also responds sensitively to learners' needs at critical times, such as a death in the community.

There are elements of the Anglican tradition used within the school's worship, for example each assembly begins with the words 'The Lord be with you'. Eucharistic worship follows the Anglican liturgical cycle and key festivals of the year feature in assemblies. For those who come from outside the Anglican tradition the school provides an opportunity to gain an understanding of Anglican worship. There is further scope to explore and develop ways of incorporating the school's Anglican foundation into Collective Worship, while at the same time reflecting the increasingly diverse background of the school's intake. There is an active and well attended Christian Union which gives opportunity for learners across denominations to share their faith together. A popular event is the residential Christian weekend held at Halls Green Centre near Sevenoaks. Here some activities are led by Christians from outside the school, for example the 'Jesus and Me' (JAM) Team. After a recent visit to Halls Green one learner commented, 'I feel inspired to do something more with my life and change it for the better'.

Religious Education is outstanding.

Standards and achievement in Religious Education (known in the school as Religious Studies or RS) are consistently high at every level. Learners of all ages and backgrounds make good and often outstanding progress. The department has improved significantly since the last inspection. RS is taught mainly by a team of dedicated and highly qualified specialists who have a passion for

the subject. Leadership is strong and inspiring. Schemes of work are detailed and thorough and are reviewed regularly. The department is well resourced but has insufficient teaching space. Teaching and learning are always good or better. The range of learning activities is a strength. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively and audio visual presentations, film clips and slides are used well to bring the subject to life. All learners now study the subject to GCSE level and in 2007 93% achieved A*-C, with 50% achieving A*-A. The results show a rising trend over the last three years. At A-level there were 28 candidates in 2007, a remarkable number for a small school, and there was a 100% success rate, over half achieving Grades A or B.

Learner attitudes are good and often exemplary. In one Year 11 lesson observed, learners spoke openly about their own personal beliefs and feelings in an atmosphere of security and respect. RS is a popular subject, enjoyed by learners of all ages. One learner said, 'It is fun but I learn a lot'. Older learners particularly appreciate the opportunities for discussion on ethics and important life issues. All major world religions are covered in Years 7 to 9 and Buddhism, Islam and Judaism are studied in depth. Overall there is a clear emphasis on Christianity, as required by the governing body. Teachers in the department say that they are 'incredibly well supported' by the headteacher, senior leadership team and governing body. The growing success of the department is having a positive impact on the overall Christian ethos of the school.

The leadership and management of the school as a Church school are outstanding.

The leadership of the headteacher is strong and visionary. Since his arrival in 2005 he has made developing a Christian educational vision a priority. This has been successful because the vision is shared by all stakeholders within the school: learners, teachers and associate staff, parents and governors. It also quickly becomes apparent to visitors. There is a strong and highly effective senior leadership team which, combined with a well informed and efficient governing body, promotes the distinctive Christian nature of the school. Governors actively monitor the school's life through visits and committees. Governors are involved in staff appointments and ensure that the school's Christian ethos is upheld by staff. Parents are becoming more involved in consultation on school issues and a parents' forum meets each term to discuss a topic of the moment. Parents speak appreciatively of the school and the way it treats everyone as an individual with abilities and needs. The general level of parental satisfaction is high and overwhelmingly most parents believe their child likes the school. One said, 'I would recommend this school to anyone'.

Staff training has focused on the nature of a Church school and staff recognise that the school is distinctively Christian. Even staff of other faiths and none are fully supportive of the school's mission and ethos. Staff readily acknowledge that the Christian vision of the school is not an optional extra but an integral part of it. It is a place where Christians can be open about their faith and live it out in their lives. Staff training days begin with prayer and reflection, as do meetings of the senior leadership team. There are staff Eucharists twice a year and an active staff prayer group meets weekly. Associate and teaching staff are well integrated with one another. Many staff contribute to the extra-curricular events which help define the school's distinctiveness. One teacher described the Christian residential weekend as 'Exhausting but brilliant'. The school receives excellent support from the Diocese and local clergy including the Bishop of Croydon. The school chaplain is incumbent of the parish in which the school is situated and has developed strong links, including regular acts of collective worship in the church and a Eucharist for each year group. The school's motto, 'Academic Excellence in a Christian Community', is embedded into every aspect of the school's daily life and work, to the immeasurable benefit of all its members.