

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Archbishop Thurstan Church of England Voluntary Controlled School

Hopewell Road
Bilton Grange Estate
Hull
HU9 4HD

Diocese: York

Local authority: Kingston-upon-Hull

Dates of inspection: January 15-16 2007

Date of last inspection: October 2001

School's unique reference number:118114

Headteacher: Dennis Palmer

Inspector's name and number: Sue Foster 146

School context

Archbishop Thurstan is a Voluntary Controlled Church of England mixed, 11-16 comprehensive school serving the Marfleet ward in East Hull. The Marfleet ward is one of significant deprivation and is characterised by high unemployment and crime rates with significant drug and alcohol problems. The school currently has the most deprived pupil population in the city with 38% entitlement to free school meals. On entry pupils' attainment is well below average and the proportion of children on the SEN register is well above national figures. It is the only Church of England secondary school in Hull.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Archbishop Thurstan as a Church of England school are good

The school has improved dramatically since the last inspection in all aspects. The culture in the school has changed from one where underperformance was widespread to one where staff, students, parents and Governors believe in themselves and their potential to improve and to reach the highest goals. Recent successes have shown the school community that they can achieve at the highest levels and compete with the best both locally and nationally. This has been achieved in no small measure by embracing and celebrating its Anglican values and principles.

Established strengths

- The very strong sense of community
- Commitment to Christian values which underpin the life of the school community
- A holistic view of education which nurtures and encourages, challenges and strengthens all learners

Focus for development

- A more synchronised approach to Spiritual Development across the whole school
- Monitor the quality of acts of collective worship and evaluate the outcomes for students using the self-evaluation toolkit

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

Students and parents are positive about the school and say they are proud of being members of the 'Archie' family. They feel safe and valued and can eloquently describe the benefits of the positive discipline programme, which has had a significant impact on students' attitudes and behaviour. Excellent relationships between staff and students are exemplified throughout the school. Staff are caring, confident and committed to the vision and values espoused in the aims and values statements. They live out the Christian mission by providing all groups of students with appropriate, targeted support from the nurture groups and learning support to the provision for able, gifted and talented. Specialist staff, including

teachers, teaching assistants and learning mentors contribute to the success of all learners, which is reflected both academically and socially and is evidenced in the wealth of activities available every day. The school has been identified in the 2006 league tables as the 34th most improved school in the country. This is a tremendous accolade for this school, which is challenged by the social deprivation in its immediate catchment. Opportunities for young people to achieve success are many and varied, from the rewards for improved attendance and effort to taking part in creative partnerships, sport, faith to faith events and the superb success in achieving the top award as national champions of 'Rock Challenge'. The self-esteem, motivation and aspiration of students and staff are palpable as one walks around the school. Students believe they can do anything and that is their stated aim! Staff work tirelessly to support students to reach their goals and share their successes with pride and love. All of this is reflected in the way Gospel values are lived out day by day. The school nurtures and encourages, challenges and sustains all learners so that they can rejoice in reaching their full potential. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is acknowledged as a significant contributory factor in the school's continuing success and further developments are in the planning stage. Religious Education too is beginning to benefit from a higher profile and to play its part in shaping the school's distinctive character.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective Worship has been identified as a key priority and has shown significant improvement since the last inspection. Students respond very well to worship in both formal settings and in the classroom. The variety of experiences is appreciated by the students who talk animatedly about the 'fun' elements when visiting Christian groups lead their worship. Opportunities for students to participate are actively sought and the collective worship planning group is seeking to develop this aspect further. The role of the Chaplain together with the Deputy Head has been pivotal in ensuring an approach that is both sensitive and inclusive and that sits comfortably in a VC school. Prayer is currently underdeveloped as an integral part of collective worship and this is an area for further development as part of the school's monitoring and evaluation system.

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

The quality of leadership contributes significantly to the success and improvement of the school. The Christian vision is shared by all stakeholders and is clearly understood and promoted through the aims and values statements. The appointment of the two Deputy Headteachers has had a visible impact on leadership throughout the school. Well defined roles and responsibilities, together with the Headteacher's style of leadership have enabled the school to move from underperforming to improving. A newly qualified teacher said '...I don't know any other school that offers NQTs the opportunities that I have had this year. It's absolutely fantastic and I feel so privileged to be here.' Another teacher voiced the common view that the staff and students care about each other and that is modelled both in school and in the enrichment activities that take them into the wider community.

This is a school that is well led by a committed and trusted Senior Leadership Team, supported and challenged by an increasingly effective Governing Body and appreciated by parents, students, the local community and the Local Authority. The school development plan identifies the direction of travel, strengths and weaknesses and sets appropriately challenging action plans to ensure improvement year on year. The next phase in the development of the school is very exciting, building on current good practice and with an aspiration of working towards outstanding, possibly in a new academy in Hull. Given the overwhelming amount of evidence gathered during this inspection, whatever the future for Archbishop Thurstan's, its continuing success is guaranteed and well-deserved.