

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Bacon's Church of England Voluntary Aided College,

Timber Pond Road,
Rotherhithe,
London,
SE16 6AT

Diocese: Southwark

School's Unique reference number: 100871

Date of inspection: 24th and 27th November, 2006

Date of last inspection: 10 March 2002

Headteacher: Mr Tony Perry

Inspector's name with National Society inspector's number: The Rev'd. Richard Peers (125)

School context

Bacon's College, is an 11-18 City Technology College. There are 1 050 students on roll. The college was opened in 1991 as part of the London Docklands Development Corporation re-development. Despite an attractive site and buildings the college serves an area of considerable social disadvantage. A high proportion of students come from minority ethnic groups. A larger proportion than found nationally speaks English as an additional language. Some students come from Pentecostalist church backgrounds and there are a number of Muslim students. The proportion of students identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities is above the national average and rising.

Summary Judgement

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bacon's College as a Church of England school is outstanding.

Learners benefit from a rich experience of worship and diversity. The strong ethos of care and respect is based on Christian values and a commitment to inclusiveness. The college community has considerable spiritual maturity based on the leadership of the Principal and senior staff.

Established strengths

- The Worship and Citizenship programme.
- The provision of counselling and a student led mediation system to enable spiritual and emotional well-being.
- The Religious Education (R.E.) which provides exceptional opportunities to reflect philosophically.
- Opportunities for the sixth form to exercise exceptional levels of leadership in worship and in the life of the College.

Focus for development

- To develop explicit signs of the school's Christian ethos and ensuring that the Religious Education curriculum enables students to understand what it is to be part of a Church of England School.
- To strengthen links between the Governors and the day to day life of the school.
- To review the number of world religions studied in the Religious Education curriculum and the distribution of the teaching of Christianity.
- To develop a chaplaincy system for the college.

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

Students describe the school as a 'safe place'. The Collective Worship fosters the school's Christian values and establishes a calm orderly atmosphere that pervades the college. Students believe there is not much racism or bullying because of the themes used in Worship and tutor periods. The themes reflect the Church's year and Christian values. Students speak exceptionally positively of their teachers describing them as 'the best thing about the school'. Relationships throughout the school are based on courtesy and respect. Worship provides excellent models for this.

Students with special needs are well catered for and staff give sacrificially of their time and energy, even after students have left the school. There is a strong sense of the college as an extended Christian family.

The Worship and Citizenship programme develops in learners a strong sense of commitment to the wider world of human beings and of the eco-system. Students highlighted the presence of recycling bins in each wing of the college. Learners spoke of the development of the allotment on the grounds as a way of showing the importance of nature and of growing good food. Students described this as stemming from the biblical story of God as creator. Students are less well aware of what it is to be an Anglican school and the links that allows to the wider church community in the school and world.

Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities. Music and art provide rich opportunities for students to explore the place of diversity and spirituality. A parent described how music in the college chapel provides moments for spiritual experience. Students value the fact that art displayed is by students and that it is of such high quality. There are few traditional Christian symbols in the school but art and music do allow students to explore Christian and other religious symbolism and for this to be part of the public life of the school.

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

Learners benefit from an exceptionally well thought out pattern of worship and provision of themes. The Senior staff prioritise worship and recognise it as a key part in developing the life of the school. The themes are developed by members of staff and there is a strong sense of ownership by teachers and students. Students know that the pattern of worship reflects the Christian year and that the fundraising is linked to an understanding of Jesus as a gift. They enjoy Collective Worship and know that they 'set the tone' for the week. Students recognise that the calm of assemblies helps to create the calm in the rest of the day. Although students do not normally pray out loud together and do not generally know the basic prayers of the Christian tradition they have powerful opportunities for prayer and reflection in silence and using music and images.

An outstanding sixth-form assembly gave the opportunity for staff and students of different faiths to talk about faith communities working together in other parts of the world. Students were able to hear prayer in Arabic, Hebrew and English. They recognise that this is a profoundly important model of the way the world could be.

Another outstanding act of worship launched a focussed period of fundraising during Advent. Students responded at a very deep level to the opportunities provided for recognising the needs of others. Worship makes very good use of technology to engage and interest students and present Christian symbols in creative ways. The assembly presented a powerful image of God coming as a human being in a way that students could understand. The leadership by students allowed staff to display the kind of humble leadership that is characteristic of the gospel.

Religious Education is outstanding.

Teaching is outstanding because it is well planned with lessons in appropriately sized chunks of activity. It is clearly focussed and students know what the point of the lesson is. Teachers make very good use of the inter-active whiteboards.

Excellent progress has been made in assessment in R.E. Students know what level they are working at and are able to explain what they need to do to move to the next level. They appreciate learning about religions other than their own. Although students do not study Christianity in Years 8 or 9, only Christianity is taught in Year 7 and these lessons challenge students to engage with Scripture in a sophisticated way. Christian texts are used well where moral issues are addressed.

All students study for G.C.S.E. in R.E. and attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above the national average. At Key Stage 5 students achieve well and a significant number of students choose the Philosophy and Ethics course.

Moral issues are dealt with exceptionally well. Students are able to respond with considerable maturity because teachers have established clear procedures and an atmosphere of open enquiry. The R.E. staff have a high level of subject knowledge. The Head of Department has a clear understanding of the need to balance learning about religion with learning from religion and students recognise the difference. One student powerfully described R.E. as 'summing up all the other subjects' and of bringing meaning to factual knowledge. Another said that R.E. was a way of 'looking at everything'.

The subject leader is skilled at enabling her staff to flourish and to teach to an outstanding level this results from her own faith and that of the other staff.

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

The Principal and senior staff have high aspirations for the school and this is built on their Christian awareness of the needs of the whole person.

Trustees and Governors are committed to the school's ethos and distinctiveness. Students understand that the Admissions Policy is designed to provide a school for everybody in the community. They recognise that this desire for inclusiveness is motivated by the Anglican tradition. Governor expertise is informing the thinking of the Senior staff and planning for future developments. Nevertheless students and staff don't know who the Governors are and would not recognise them.

Because of their understanding of a church school as addressing the needs of the whole person the College Executive are committed to fostering the emotional and spiritual health of all in the community. As a result staff feel valued and supported by senior colleagues. The College recognises the importance of the family in the Christian tradition and students and their families benefit from the provision of 'Walking with Adolescents' sessions.

Students spoke of the Christian understanding of human beings created in the image of God and the Mediation scheme run by sixth-formers is a powerful example of students applying this in practice. They pointed out that being able to listen is a Christian virtue.

Students, teachers and parents described movingly the school's response to the death of the chaplain Father Nick Richards. This shows a real maturity in spiritual and emotional health.

Students are able to relate this death to others and to describe ways in which Fr Nick is being remembered in the school. They talk of being able to do 'the same sort of thing' for their own family members.

There are good links with the parish church and students visit it for lessons and worship. Students recognise that this links them to a wider worshipping community and to the history of the local area.

Staff, students and parents recognise that the school has a special quality because of its Christian ethos and the priority given to this by the Principal and his colleagues.

November, 2006 SIAS Report: Bacon's College, Timber Pond Road, Rotherhithe, London, SE16 6AT