

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Canon Slade Church of England Voluntary Aided Comprehensive School, Bolton.

Bradshaw Brow,
Bolton,
BL2 3BP.

Diocese: Manchester.

Local authority: Bolton.

Dates of inspection: 11th. January, 2008.

Date of last inspection: 17th. November, 2004

School's unique reference number: 105267.

Headteacher: Mr. P.H. Williamson.

Inspector's name and number: Neil Whitehead 498.

School context

Canon Slade is a large 11-19 comprehensive school situated in the northern outskirts of Bolton. Students originate from approximately 125 primary schools, some of which are in other local authorities. The school is heavily oversubscribed and therefore has clear admissions criteria to maintain consistent control over entry.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Canon Slade as a Church of England school are outstanding.

Christian beliefs and values underpin every aspect of school life. A strong sense of mutual respect based on the Christian faith creates an environment in which students flourish academically, spiritually and socially. Strong Christian leadership from the head, the staff and the developing chaplaincy model are important in the Christian ethos of the school.

Established strengths

- The centrality of worship.
- The developing role of the chaplaincy team.
- A strong, developing religious studies department.
- Strong overt Christian leadership given by school leaders.

Focus for development

- Further use of written comments in R.S. books to indicate how pieces of work can be improved.
- The use of a P.A. system in the Millennium Chapel to improve access to worship.

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

All members of the school, staff and students are highly valued in a Christian atmosphere of mutual respect. Students feel happy and safe and are totally confident that there are always members of staff available should there be a problem. This view is endorsed by the results of an external survey. The chaplaincy team, with its drop-ins and high availability are praised highly by the students, and the full-time chaplain is seen as a "real asset". Students are aware of the Head's vision for the school and feel that he and the staff communicate this vision very clearly to them in an approachable way. Although there is a very strong Christian basis to the school, students value greatly the contacts made with Muslim schools, which has the impact of widening the horizons of the participant students, as does the fact of the school being a Fair Trade school and what that means in practice. An important part of the Christian ethos is the very strongly supported charitable work within the school. The support given to local caring charities, especially Winterwatch and the Victoria Hall refugee shelter organisation demonstrates the school's commitment to the local community. Students feel that they are very well represented by the form captain and school council system. Recommendations are reviewed and often acted upon, for example in the area of uniform. A large number of students take part in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities which

encourage personal responsibility and spirituality in its wider sense. In particular, there is a Christian Union group, "Refuel" led by students, with a regular committed support of roughly 30 students but with a much wider outreach through some of the events organised. This organisation makes Christian-led spiritual activity conspicuous in school life. The Christian character of the school is very strongly emphasised by the prominence of the two chapels and by the installation of wooden crosses, made in the technology rooms, in every classroom. Students can offer an understanding of "spirituality", are aware of its presence in their lives and feel that the ethos of the school enhances this quality.

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

Worship is at the heart of school life. In addition to the two acts of worship observed during the inspection: Form Communion service in the side chapel and a Year 7 Assembly in the Millennium Chapel, there are also year assemblies led by heads of year in the gym and a programme of form tutor worship. The Communion service led by the full-time chaplain was characterised by the atmosphere of reverence, and student participation through a "a server" system and the prayer initiative, which ensure that students contribute meaningfully to the service. The Year assembly, led by one of the assistant chaplains based in the community, engaged the attention of the students very successfully through a DVD clip and a talk on the theme of "acts of random kindness". Students demonstrated a good knowledge of Christian liturgy and practice through their participation in the assembly, in particular the good singing of a hymn, accompanied very ably by a Year 10 instrumental group and the reverence shown in the saying of the prayers. The Head of year by her control of the assembly established a warm atmosphere despite the formal setting, thus emphasising the exceptionally cohesive impact of this act of worship. The quality of participation in worship would benefit from the use of P.A. system as there were audibility issues for those seated at the back of the chapel. Students are regularly requested to evaluate worship and modifications result from student proposals. Particularly popular is the prayer tree. The chaplaincy team have been successful in conjunction with the worship committee in providing varied and stimulating acts of worship. Students praise the variety of worship offered and feel that a wide range of needs and interests are met and also that different opportunities for participation for example dramatic presentations and reading actively involve the students. In addition to the regular worship there are special services for the whole school marking the main festivals in the Christian calendar which are held in locations including churches within the town. Students feel that the acts of worship make an impact on them by challenging their thinking in everyday life.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.

The curricular time allocated to religious studies is at slightly above the recommended duration. The department is well-staffed with appropriately qualified teachers. The R.S. staff, especially the head of department, are praised highly by the students. The combination of Christian teaching and themes from other faiths, meets the needs of all learners very successfully. Almost all students are entered for G.C.S.E. R.S. with standards often exceeding the very high general standard attained in the school. A and AS Level are increasingly popular and very successful options. The non-examination philosophy and ethics course in the 6th form is valued by students from a range of faith backgrounds and none. In lessons observed, year 7 students were able to understand and respond very ably to information relating to Mohammed. The use of the white board and group work enhanced the high quality of individual learning in this lesson. Year 10 students were able very successfully to distinguish between different approaches to the understanding of a passage from Genesis. Year 9 students were very successfully in their response to an intellectual challenge by the teacher to discuss the compatibility of the "big bang theory" and Christianity. Lessons were characterised by excellent relationships, very good behaviour, with enforcement unnecessary, and a conscientious attitude towards written work. There is considerable use of praise in all lessons and in the marking process which is prompt and thorough. Written work is of a high standard. Differential learning styles are acknowledged and catered for successfully in the learning situation. It is clear that the staff are successful in enabling the students both to learn about religion and learn from religion The R.S. Department is a developing department, already successful, through a strong system of preparation, monitoring and assessment, with the capacity to improve further.

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

The Headteacher has a very clear Christian vision for the school, based on strong beliefs and

values. He is ably assisted by the senior staff and a governing body, chaired by the area dean. The governing body is both supportive and challenging and actively encourages the Christian life of the school. It fulfils its statutory role regarding worship and religious education and has link governors in both areas. The close contacts between the school, local churches of various denominations, the Deanery and the Diocese enhance further the Christian family feeling which exists in the school. The exemplary work of the head of year 7 who visits the churches of origin of as many students as possible is a major link between home, parish and school. Parents are very supportive of the school and are involved in the evaluation process, praising highly the quality of provision and the very successful external examination its in worship and religious studies. Recent decisions to appoint a full-time chaplain and a full-time head of R.S. as two separate posts have been effective both strategically and in the wider spiritual influence on the school life.

SIAS report January, 2008, Canon Slade C.E. School, Bolton