

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Ian Ramsey Church of England Voluntary Aided Secondary School,

Greens Lane,
Fairfield,
Stockton on Tees,
TS18 5AJ

Diocese: Durham

Local authority: Stockton – on - Tees

Date of inspection: November 14 & 15 2007

Date of last inspection: May 24 & 25 2004

School's unique reference number: 111764

Headteacher: Mr. Michael Davison

Inspector's name and number: Mr Andrew Lumsden No 392

School context

Ian Ramsey C of E Secondary school is larger than average. The majority of pupils are of white British origin with a small number pupils of minority ethnic origins. On entry attainment is slightly above average. Pupils come from across Stockton because of the Church of England status so there is a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. There are 85 places each year reserved for children of Anglican parents. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above the national position. The school has been a specialist Language College since 1999.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ian Ramsey Secondary school as a Church of England school are good

This is a good school whose overarching aim to offer all pupils real opportunities and to achieve within a Christian learning environment is strongly in evidence. There is a tangible sense of shared commitment to Christian values as a vital aspect of the core character of Ian Ramsey School C E School.

Established strengths

- The school has a distinctive Anglican character but is inclusive, in that pupils of other faiths or those of none are properly included in the experiences offered
- The school's vision and values permeate its systems and structures so that individual pupils and staff treat each other with respect, are valued, feel special and consequently achieve well and attain highly
- Acts of worship are dignified and sensitive to the needs of participants emphasising the heart of Christian belief and practice in an inclusive way
- R.E. is making a good contribution to the Christian character of Ian Ramsey School with due emphasis in the syllabus on Christianity but with sufficient time given to other major world faiths
- The Headteacher's strong Christian leadership, vision and energy are effectively being disseminated to other key staff so that these are translated into purposeful action at different levels
- The contribution of foundation governors' contribution is strong and influential

Focus for development

- Bring together various elements of assessment practice in Religious Education in a more systematic way to support the progress of pupils more effectively
- Refine the means of evaluating Collective Worship
- Increase active participation by more pupils in collective worship
- Ensure R.E. department staff take opportunities to exchange ideas and methods to

aid consistency of approaches

- Examine ways the RE classrooms display pupils' exemplary work, levelled if possible, and key information that may be used as an aid to teaching
- Work to increase the number of A*/A grades in Religious Education in GCSE.

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

The school's vision and values permeate its systems and structures to such extent that individual pupils are valued, feel special and consequently achieve well and attain highly. Pupils' achievements are regularly praised and displays of newspaper articles and extracts from reports in the reception area highlight these in a public way. The distinctive ethos strongly supports the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all learners, and gives them opportunity to explore the meaning and purpose of life and to value learning in this secure and caring Christian community. The spiritual development of learners is prioritised through opportunities for reflection in collective worship, through discussion about life's issues in Religious Education and the increased awareness of how all subjects support this process. The school's Christian values implemented well, as one pupil remarked, "Teachers show respect for us and so we give them respect in return". Aspirations to improve are acknowledged as the norm with good rapport between learners and staff. Personal responsibility is successfully and actively encouraged within the spirit of Christian values. For example, volunteer Y10 pupils who are trained as positive role models give necessary support to new Y7 pupils. Sensitivity to the needs of others is seen in active involvement in fundraising and charitable activities which is highly regarded and encouraged, with very good support for the Diocesan initiative in Lesotho, enthusiastically adopted by the whole school. Whilst the school has a distinctive Anglican character, it is also inclusive, in that pupils of other faiths, such as Muslim, Hindu or Sikh, or those of none, are properly included in the experiences offered.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is not practised for all pupils each day due to the constraints of a split site and space limitation so any variation to this is limited. There is a strong Christian focus to the planning and practice and all major Christian festivals are celebrated. There are sufficient opportunities in collective worship for reflection on moral dilemmas using key questions, 'What would you have done?' extended to 'What would Jesus do?' but opportunity to respond to these is deferred so the immediate impact is weakened. In the collective worship observed there was limited pupil participation in singing and prayers, although a very good production for Y11 by the Drama Group related to World War 1, included thought provoking poetry and music, and was a moving and sensitive experience.

The communion service, like collective worship, is dignified and sensitive to the needs of participants. It provides a sense of commitment and emphasises the heart of Christian belief and practice in a warm, inclusive way. Good use is made of The Lord's Prayer reflecting the Anglican traditions in the form of prayers and liturgy, although rightly the Chaplain simplifies the language to allow pupils to engage more fully with the Eucharist meaning.

Currently the use of the school chapel is restricted because of building work elsewhere in the school. It is a good provision to which pupils can come, supported effectively by the school chaplain in times of personal need such as, when following the tragic death of a pupil, she was able to meet pupils and help them through that sad experience. It is also the base of the active Christian Union, which enables pupils to contribute alongside the School Chaplain and be involved in Collective Worship. Systems to evaluate collective worship are emerging but are not sufficiently focussed to enable a useful analysis to be made. Evaluation through tutor groups is good but as yet is limited in its scope to the whole year.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

There is appropriate time provision within each Key Stage for R.E. KS4 recently moved to the Welsh Syllabus in an attempt to raise standards further, particularly for boys. R.E. is making a good contribution to the Christian character of Ian Ramsey School with due emphasis on Christianity and with sufficient time given to other major world faiths. As an Anglican school the place of R.E. is valued highly and lessons are covered by a majority of specialist R.E.

teachers. Results in Full Course R.E. have shown great improvement since the last inspection in 2004 when there were 66% A*-C grades, in 2007 this was 84%, above the national grade by 13%. There are insufficient A*/A grades.

Most lessons observed in R.E. are good; one is satisfactory. Good lessons are marked by good links to previous learning, the content on moral dilemmas is delivered confidently and relevant vocabulary is used. Good use is made of learning objectives and open questions. Effective use is made of IT, of Bible texts such as Genesis ch. 22 on the account of Abraham and Isaac and through stories of historic events as well as more recent matters such as the murder of a child when the question 'Why do bad things happen to good people?' provoked consideration of issues of justice and fairness within a faith setting. The atmosphere in rooms is conducive to learning, humour is encouraged and the subject knowledge of staff is very secure. Pupils engage with the work and apply themselves to the expected outcomes. Where learning is satisfactory there is an over reliance on passive listening and watching, and little opportunity to explain, discuss or draw out the expected learning. The learning environment has displays ranging from good to adequate in the rooms. Insufficient use is made of pupils' work as exemplars of standards achieved at different levels or of key vocabulary to aid learning.

Assessment, an issue from the 2004 inspection, has been tackled well as part of a drive to improve. There are good elements now in place such as the assessment of pupils against RE criteria on entry to the school, the setting of targets on an annual basis and the use of key assessments three times a year when reports are published. Where teachers annotate books with such comments as "This is a good argument but more evidence is needed" the assessment process is moving forward positively, as is the use of level descriptor sheets written in learners' language. Peer assessment is used well in a good lesson on Judaism where pupils graded their partner's work, and noted what could be done to improve attainment. An element that is under represented is marking of ongoing work which gives guidance on what is needed to improve learning rather than a reliance on termly assessments alone. This linking of outcomes from day to day work, termly assessments and annual progress targets is not therefore, developed enough. Consequently any needed interventions are not fully in place.

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

The headteacher is described as "passionate about his work" by a Y11 pupil, and this singleness of purpose in pursuing excellence for all, and opportunities to achieve are strongly in evidence. He is supported strongly by the Senior Leadership Team and the governing body which has ensured significant numbers of Anglican foundation governors on committees of the Governing Body and whose contribution through these and the Christian Ethos committee is strong and influential. The Headteacher's vision and energy are effectively being disseminated to other key staff so that these are translated into purposeful action at different levels within the school. Staff at all levels of responsibility are valued and so are able to engage with the mission of the school. Learners are convinced that over the past three years the school has moved onward and upward.

The work of the school chaplain and year group chaplains gives good support to the leadership and management of the school and has a valuable impact on the school's Christian ethos. Areas of evaluation of R.E. and Collective Worship are rightly high on the agenda for action and the School Development Plan has a significant action point in developing the ethos of the school.

This Anglican school has moved forward strongly in its spiritual journey as a successful, caring, Christian community under the focussed leadership of the headteacher over the past three years. It has the capacity to improve even further.