

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England Voluntary Aided High School**

Grammar School Road  
Latchford  
Warrington  
WA4 1JL

#### **Dioceses: Liverpool and Chester**

Local authority: Warrington  
Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2008  
Date of last inspection: 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2005  
School's unique reference number: 133672  
Headteacher: Mr John Sharples  
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Carol Berry: NS324

#### **School context**

Sir Thomas Boteler is a smaller than average secondary school in a deprived area of Warrington. It has been a Church school for six years, serving the Liverpool and Chester dioceses. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average, as is the number eligible for free school meals. Approximately 5% of pupils are of ethnic minority background. The school will become a specialist college in music in September 2008.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England High School as a Church of England school are outstanding**

This is a caring community which is creative in meeting the needs of all pupils, whatever their talents and whatever the challenges they are facing. Inspirational Christian leadership places Christian values such as concern for others and forgiveness at the centre of every aspect of the school's work. This is demonstrated by the use of the 'Good Samaritan Award'. Worship plays a central role in school life. As a result, personal development is good and spiritual development is outstanding. Standards and achievement are satisfactory.

#### **Established strengths**

- The outstanding care and concern demonstrated by the school for all pupils.
- Inspirational Christian leadership which demonstrates the love of Christ.
- Enthusiasm for worship which is welcoming and relevant to pupils' lives.
- Excellent personal development and spiritual education in religious education (RE).

#### **Focus for development**

- To increase curriculum time for RE in Years seven, eight, ten and eleven.
- To increase pupils' involvement in worship by providing more opportunities for pupils to lead worship and through the use of contemporary Christian music.
- To incorporate material from the world-wide Christian Church into worship.
- To provide opportunities for all pupils to encounter people from other faith communities.

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

This school demonstrates the love of Christ through its determination to provide all pupils with a happy and successful learning experience. One parent described the school as 'a very loving, giving and caring community'. Relationships are excellent and a culture of affirmation informs pastoral care and behaviour management. 'The Boiler Room', a youth club which provides a variety of activities for pupils after school, is one way in which pupils experience the school's care for them. Pupils also appreciate the care they receive before the Key Stage 3 tests, when concern is demonstrated for their spiritual and physical needs. Last year,

they were offered a period of reflection and prayer and were provided with water and a cereal bar. Pupils develop excellent leadership skills through the school council and involvement in the Hoby leadership course. 'Bully Buddies' from Year 10 provide effective support for younger pupils and there is very little bullying. Values which are important to the school are celebrated through the 'Good Samaritan Award'. Spiritual development is outstanding and pupils are offered excellent opportunities to reflect on spiritual issues in subjects across the curriculum. Medieval mystery plays have been a source of inspiration in drama, for instance, and beautiful symbolic hangings made for the chapel in technology have helped pupils to understand prayer. Pupils are able to explain Christian reasons for the school's support of charities. The school works alongside pupils who have faced personal and emotional difficulties and is creative in providing opportunities for pupils to experience success.

The 'Blooming Boteler' project provides a focus for worship and results in outstanding multi-cultural education. Some of the pupils involved find school particularly challenging and for them it provides a unique opportunity to experience achievement. Developing from the creation of a 'Peace Garden' as a place of remembrance, the project went on to create a 'Cultural Garden' which celebrates the beliefs and traditions of pupils with family connections in other countries. This resulted in a national award for cultural education. Pupils gain skills in gardening and sometimes a qualification in horticulture. They experience the satisfaction of seeing the fruit and vegetables they have planted grow. Some flowers grown as part of the project are sent to people for whom the school is praying.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Pupils enjoy worship and are able to see its relevance to their own lives. It is carefully prepared and worship leaders often share their own faith with pupils. Multi-media resources are used sensitively to prompt reflection and prayer. In a Year 7 worship led by the headteacher, pupils reflected on how they could make a difference during Lent as beautiful photographs, words and music prompted their thoughts and prayers. A group of drummers performed at the end of the worship, providing a stimulating end to the proceedings. Music and drama occasionally form an integral part of worship but the school has recognised that this is an area for development as it moves towards specialist college status. Local clergy, British Youth for Christ and the school chaplain make valuable contributions to worship. On occasions, the school has successfully used worship to present Christianity as a multicultural faith. The 'Blooming Boteler' project celebrates Christian traditions from a variety of countries. However, material from the world-wide Church does not form a regular part of worship. Pupils' planners have a record of the weekly worship themes. These themes help pupils to understand the school's mission statement and enrich pupils' understanding of Christian festivals and beliefs. Pupils sometimes lead worship, for example, members of the school council led worship on the theme of children's rights and responsibilities with the result that they thought deeply about these issues. Last year, some pupils in Year 7 organised and led worship in their forms, but at present there are few other opportunities for pupils to assume responsibility for worship leadership. Pupils understand that worship is important to the whole school community. This is supported by the fact that all form tutors deliver worship. Worship in form periods is always of a high standard. It is carefully prepared by the school chaplain and a series of multi-media presentations enrich pupils' experience. These presentations are excellent resources and one pupil said, 'I don't believe in God but there's lots to make me think'. Important events in the life of the school are celebrated in local churches. These are appreciated by the many parents who attend the services. Year 7 pupils are handed over to their new school with words of praise from their primary school teachers during a 'Service of Inauguration'. This not only boosts their self-esteem but shows clearly the importance of worship and prayer in the school's life. A school chapel has been created in a large room and is beautifully decorated with art work and textiles produced by pupils. The use of a prayer box in the chapel helps pupils to know that the school community will pray for their concerns. It is well-used and the prayers are incorporated into the 'Sharing of the Supper' and recorded as a focus for further prayer in the prayer book. One pupil spoke movingly of the school's prayerful and practical support for both her and her family during her auntie's illness.

Pupils' enthusiasm for worship is demonstrated by the regular attendance of approximately fifty to sixty pupils at the voluntary 'Sharing of the Supper'. This is an inclusive celebration of communion in form time which is attended by many pupils who have no previous experience of church. Pupils explain their enthusiasm for this service, saying "It's a chance to reflect and pray," and "It makes you feel better!" Many pupils contribute to the service and one pupil said, "Everyone can take part; that is crucial!" Pupils enjoy sharing the peace as part of the service saying "It makes you feel as if you are part of something!"

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

Pupils' great enthusiasm for RE is a result of the excellent relationships they have with their RE teachers and the rich opportunities provided for them to reflect on issues which affect their own lives. They enjoy time for meditation and are regularly challenged by RE to think about issues of life and faith. The chaplain has worked with some classes on the 'START Course' which provides a chance for pupils to question key Christian beliefs. Achievement in RE is good. Pupils know how to improve their work because the school makes effective use of levels to assess pupils' work. Pupils in Key Stage 3 are able to make progress because these levels are used to set targets for improvement. Many pupils are currently entered for the GCSE Short Course and this year pupils are being entered for the full GCSE course for the first time. Staff are committed to building pupils' confidence and in one innovative activity the teacher used lavender oil and relaxing music to help pupils approach the RE GCSE examination in a calm frame of mind. The standard of teaching is good and use of a wide variety of strategies means that lessons are inclusive of pupils who learn in different ways. Effective learning activities include drama, music, videos, group work, discussion and the use of 'stations' in the classroom to help pupils to explore different ideas. In one lesson, pupils identified the beliefs which mattered to them by playing a game and then thought about the link between belief and behaviour through an activity linked to different celebrities. However, sometimes learning objectives are not sufficiently precise for pupils to understand fully the progress they have made in a particular lesson. Appropriate curriculum time for RE is provided in Year 9 but is only 4% in Years 7 and 8 and at Key Stage 4. This is below the time recommended by the diocese and below national expectations. It is less than the time provided for other humanities subjects in the school. In Key Stage 4, the short time to prepare pupils for examinations means that there is less time available for pupils studying for the full GCSE to apply their learning to their own lives. The RE department makes an excellent contribution to multi-cultural education. However, there are currently no opportunities for all pupils to meet people from other faiths or to visit non-Christian places of worship.

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

Charismatic Christian leadership from the headteacher and the assistant headteacher responsible for the Christian ethos has resulted in the school placing Christ at the centre of every aspect of its work, both in words and actions. These leaders demonstrate Christian values of love and forgiveness through their relationships and by the way in which they deal with pupils. The headteacher's infectious enthusiasm for the school as a Church school has resulted in enthusiasm from pupils as well. As understanding of what it means to be a Church school has developed, so the staff have gained a wider understanding of the Christian vision and it has become appropriate for the school to explain the beliefs and values which underpin its mission statement more explicitly. The task of continually developing and enriching understanding of the Christian foundation for all the school does is ongoing and the school plans to incorporate more detailed explanations of the Christian vision into school policies as they are reviewed. Planning for aspects of the school's Christian development is incorporated into the school's development plan and the outstanding provision for spiritual development at the school is a result of this excellent planning. Records of conversations with subject leaders demonstrate that spiritual and cultural development has been carefully thought about by most curricular areas. Conversations with pupils demonstrate that this effective planning is resulting in teachers grasping opportunities for spiritual and cultural

development in a variety of subject areas. Contributions from all members of the school community are valued. The school council is a very effective student voice and members of the administrative and support staff work alongside teaching staff on the school's 'action teams'. Regular, effective evaluation of the school as a Church school and of its Christian distinctiveness is outstanding and involves teachers, support staff, parents, governors and pupils. The school development plan charts progress towards targets relating to the school's Christian character and rigorous evaluation of RE and worship is carried out regularly. The school benefits from the strong partnership with the church. Churches fund the school chaplain and youth worker and also make regular contributions to worship and the work of the governing body.

SIAS report February 2008: Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England High School, Latchford, Warrington. WA4 1JL