

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Secondary School

Warrington Road,
Croydon
Surrey,
CR0 4BH.

Diocese: Southwark

School's Unique reference number: 101813

Date of inspection: 10 and 11 December 2007

Date of last inspection: January 2004

Headteacher: David Matthews

Chair of Governors: Susan Wheeler

Inspector's name with National Society inspector's number: Pamela Draycott (161)

School context

St Andrew's is a smaller than average, heavily oversubscribed Church of England secondary school serving students from Croydon and beyond. The vast majority of students gain a place through Anglican or other Christian denominational affiliation. Nearly half come from minority ethnic backgrounds with very few having English as an additional language. The proportion with special educational needs or with disabilities is in line with the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Andrew's CE Secondary School as a Church of England school are satisfactory

St Andrew's is a long established church school and Christian values satisfactorily underpin its work. It builds from a firm foundation. It recognises the need to refresh and redefine its nature as a church school in order to meet the needs of all its current and future students.

Established strengths

- the good progress made within the Religious Education (RE) department in most areas identified for development by the previous denominational inspection report (2004) which means that RE results at GCSE are high when compared with other subjects in the school
- the students' very good response to the range of opportunities for spiritual development provided by the school

Focus for development

- improve the way in which the school's distinctively Christian character (summarised through its mission statement) explicitly guides and drives all aspects of school life and work
- improve the range and style of worship in school so that it reflects key Anglican aspects of worship complemented by other approaches and styles
- improve standards in RE further, especially across Key Stage 3, by setting challenging targets for students to work towards and by expanding the range of activities and approaches used to assess how effectively students are learning

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

The school's mission statement 'providing every student with opportunities to succeed' is not distinctively Christian in its nature but it is underpinned by Christian values. The school has not sufficiently considered how the distinctive Christian character of St Andrew's applies to and meets the needs of all students. It is beginning to do so through, for example, the recent use of a self-evaluation framework which addresses this and related questions. This is not yet widely shared or embedded in school policies and practice. However, students know they are part of a church school identifying objects like crosses, pictures of Jesus and the school badge as being explicit Christian symbols in some parts of the buildings. They also refer to the quality of relationships and the way in which people try to respect each other as showing Christian concern for others. They appreciate the mixed-aged tutor groups and the 'buddy system' linked to it. Younger students say it helps them to get to know people and to feel part of the school. Older students think it is good for them and helps them to take responsibility for others. They think it helps to make the school more like a Christian family.

Students' spiritual development is good. It is promoted well through RE where opportunities are taken to encourage reflection on and response to spiritual questions such as for example the importance and impact of prayer on their own and other's lives.

A positive development introduced by the headteacher is 'reconciliation time' which takes place at the end of the school day. This is where a student and their teacher can discuss any issues that may have arisen in a lesson during that day in a non-confrontational way. This is a practical way of focusing on forgiveness rather than punishment. It is one of the ways in which the school is exploring how to refine its distinctive character as a Church school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

The school provides a satisfactory range of opportunities to meet the statutory daily act of worship entitlement for all students. Worship happens in house or tutor groupings complemented by attendance at a termly Eucharist and other special services periodically. The daily worship programme is focused around appropriate themes based on Christian teachings and values. The quality of the acts of worship is satisfactory. Readings from the Bible and opportunities for prayer are rightly built into the school's worship and are well planned into the programme. The vast majority of students are respectful during worship and some take an active role through, for example, reading or through using their musical talents to lead worship. A few students say that tutor group worship is not taken seriously by some and that occasionally it is 'missed out'. Worship, provision and quality, is not routinely monitored by governors and school leaders. The impact of worship on the school community is not kept to the fore by being part of the school improvement plan. However, the headteacher, with support from an assistant headteacher has recently completed some self-evaluation questions with regards to worship which provides an accurate platform for further improvement.

A large majority of students come from various types of evangelical Christian backgrounds and the parish church is high church Anglican. Whilst the variety and richness of different worship styles represented in the school community is recognised, it is not currently catered for adequately. This means that many students feel that they have little 'ownership' or active involvement in it. There is not enough emphasis on marking important events in the Christian calendar or on encouraging the more Anglican elements of worship. The school does not include sufficient elements from within the Anglican tradition, such as simple responses, nor does it draw sufficiently on the spontaneity of evangelical forms of worship with which many pupils could identify.

Worship and prayer are effectively extended in a number of ways by voluntary opportunities. There are weekly lunchtime Christian Union meetings and an annual away weekend both of which provide evangelical styles of worship to the students who attend. There is a regular prayer meeting for staff and also one which parents and others are involved in. A recent good addition to reflect the importance of prayer to the school community is the school's website 'prayer point'. This encourages students, parents and staff to bear the school's needs in mind in their prayers.

The school has largely been maintaining its worship rather than moving it forward. The main hall which is used for worship, as well as physical education and for productions, does not have

adequate facilities for making use of digital and other technical resources to enhance worship further. A suggestion made in the previous inspection report to initiate a worship group, made up of staff, governors and students, to consider the school's policy in order to improve practice has not yet been implemented.

Religious Education is good

Across Key Stage 3 most students make satisfactory progress. The quality and presentation of written work is below what is expected in RE for the age group, especially in Years 7 and 8. Their oral work is at or above what is expected. Students are keen to put forward their own viewpoints and beliefs, drawing appropriately on what they are learning in lessons. The vast majority listen respectfully to others and to their teacher. The department is beginning to make better use of levels of attainment statements to guide planning and focus students' learning across Key Stage 3 but this is not currently embedded in practice or impacting on assessment practices sufficiently. The previous inspection highlighted the need to improve the range and quality of assessment opportunities especially in Key Stage 3. This issue has only been partially addressed. Assessment policy and practice remains underdeveloped within the department in Key Stage 3. This has rightly been identified by the department as a focus for the next cycle of development. Recently the Year 9 curriculum has been a focus for development with the department considering ways to improve learning by using aspects of a technique known as 'accelerated learning' and this is beginning to impact positively on the quality of students' work.

Standards attained in Key Stage 4 examinations (both full- and short- course GCSE) are good. They are consistently high when compared with other subjects across the school. The vast majority of students make good and some very good progress over the key stage. Good teaching provides an appropriate range of activities and approaches targeted on the requirements of the examination specification and the positive response of students towards their work in RE are key reasons for this. The department is working well to target learning more effectively to meet the needs of those working at the higher grade levels to maintain high standards. The school is rightly considering moving to providing a full-course GCSE in Religious Studies for all students and how staffing within the RE department could be increased to enable this.

The quality of teaching is good as evidenced by the GCSE examination grades achieved (which are high), by the lessons observed during the inspection and by the positive responses of the vast majority of students to their learning in RE.

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

Slow progress has been made in the areas identified for improvement by the previous inspection namely, the further development of the strong Christian ethos, the wider use of Christian symbols around the school and forming a worship committee made up of representative groups to address policy and practice. This is due mainly to the budget deficit inherited by the headteacher which has taken a lot of his effort to reduce and the lack of senior leaders over the previous academic year which slowed developments considerably. Two assistant headteachers and a bursar have now been appointed. This means that a new senior leadership team is in place and the school's capacity to improve its leadership and management as a church school has been enhanced. The governing body fulfils its statutory obligations and provides good support overall. However, the governors and particularly the foundation governors have not asked sufficient questions about progress with regard to the the previous denominational inspection report.

The current school improvement plan has not taken sufficient attention of the school's Christian ethos and values. However, the headteacher has drawn up accurate responses to a self-evaluation document for church schools. This has been discussed with one of the assistant headteachers and shared with a governor but is not yet embedded in school practice. The headteacher has rightly decided that the evaluation document and this inspection report will form the basis for further consultation to contribute to the on-going development of a shared vision for the school as a Christian community.

A positive development, introduced at the beginning of this academic year, by the headteacher, is the appointment of 'Christian leaders'. These are Year 11 students (one from each of the four houses). The role is new and is not as yet sufficiently developed. However it represents a positive step in promoting and leading the school's Christian character.