

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Mary Redcliffe & Temple Church of England Voluntary Aided Secondary School

Somerset Square
Bristol
BS1 6RT

Diocese: Bristol

Local authority: City of Bristol
Dates of inspection: 12th September 2007
Date of last inspection: March 2004
School's unique reference number: 109327
Headteacher: Mrs Elisabeth Gilpin
Inspector's name and number: Mr Andrew Rickett 201

School context

St Mary Redcliffe & Temple is much larger than the national average. It is the only Aided secondary school in the Diocese. Students come from a wide variety of socio-economic backgrounds with a significant minority from disadvantaged backgrounds. The majority of students are white British with an increasing and significant number of BME students (23% in September 2007). Students are drawn from across the city and some neighbouring authorities. Since September 2004 the school has held specialist humanities status with Religious Education as an additional subject. The number of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is below the national average. A high proportion of students have been identified as gifted or talented.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary Redcliffe & Temple as a Church of England school are outstanding

This is a Christian community, which joyously lives out its faith and celebrates at every opportunity the wonder of life and the uniqueness of each individual in the eyes of God. This has a profound effect on the spiritual growth of the students which is a vital part of their personal development and makes a significant contribution to the progress they make in their learning.

Established strengths

- An exceptionally clear vision of the impact that the school's Christian character can make on the lives of all those in the school community.
- The creation of a community in which students acquire a great sense of optimism for the future.
- A very high level of care and respect for the individual.

Focus for development

- To employ the good range of teaching strategies throughout the whole RE department and effect an even greater impact on student learning.
- Develop the role of the newly appointed school chaplain.

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

The school has a wonderful way of making all of its students feel that they are special. This is rooted in the belief that everyone has unique value in the eyes of God, a belief that is

explicitly shared with the students and is integral to all the policies and practices of school life. The sense that their potential can be fulfilled has a profound impact on the students' learning and personal development. Every opportunity is taken to emphasise how the school's vision and ethos is relevant to the lives of the students. Students say that they appreciate and value this because it helps them to have a greater consideration of others as well as an understanding of what is really important in life. New students express their views that the school has a very distinctive character, which means that they are treated as individuals, and their individual needs are noticed. Students speak highly of the ease and comfort in their relationships with adults, which gives them the confidence to express their beliefs and opinions openly in the knowledge that they will be listened to with respect. This has created an environment in which students have very positive attitudes towards their learning. Standards are impressive and achievement is beyond national expectations. Students of all abilities have the opportunity to flourish. Great care is given to those individuals with special difficulties or disabilities who are supported by careful planning and by teaching assistants who help them to make good progress. The truly inspirational work that the school pursues is in building a sense of hope in students by helping them to have the resilience to face the future with confidence. This aim is being realised through the carefully devised Alive programme which equips students with skills to empower their own learning and to develop their social and emotional intelligence. As one of the students summed it up, "the huge emphasis on the virtue of hope gives us tremendous optimism for the future." The school can confidently celebrate the fact that its Christian vision is known and shared and is having a positive and significant effect on the lives of so many young people.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is an integral part of school life and it makes an impact throughout the whole community. Through worship the school shares its core belief that God is at the heart of their lives. This was expressed by one student who said "the hall becomes church when the school worships together". Students have a strong sense that worship has a special place in school and speak very positively of the influence of collective worship on different aspects of their shared life. It is this broader impact that makes worship exceptional. Students recognise that worship can draw them closer to God and also can be used to support them in their daily lives. A group of KS3 students agreed that through worship their eyes have been opened to God and it has given them a deeper understanding of their own beliefs as well as an appreciation of other expressions of faith. For example, one student explained how things discussed in worship "can give you a belief in yourself and can give you the extra push to make you do something that you might have been unsure of". The Worship Co-ordinator has a deep passion for making worship meaningful to the lives of the students and believes strongly that their involvement is a vital element in the positive impact of worship. A Worship Committee, made up of students and staff, is very active in setting very high standards. Great care is taken to ensure that there is a wide range of worship styles and plenty of opportunities for prayer especially in informal moments throughout the school day. Themes are chosen which are relevant to the everyday lives of the students and there are times when important issues raised in worship can be explored in more intimate tutor groups. St Mary Redcliffe Church has historical links with the school and is regarded as a close part of the life of the school. Music is an important part of the worship experience and a wide range of styles, from a Gospel Choir to traditional anthems, are used. Students are given time to reflect on the meaning of the words.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The Religious Education at St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School goes from strength to strength. Over the last four years there has been significant success in raising the quality of achievement at all levels. At the end of KS3, students attain levels above expectations with attainment at higher levels increased by an impressive 16% over the past four years. Compulsory RE at GCSE is a reflection of the school's philosophy that it offers students something worthwhile to their personal development. Good results at GCSE with over 87% attaining C+ indicate that students take the subject seriously. Take-up of RE at A level is

high compared with other schools and studies show that the quality of the results is improving each year. The quality of teaching overall is good. In lessons where teaching is effective, students become stimulated and passionate because they are given opportunities to discuss questions of faith with their peers. Their views show a high level of maturity, carefully nurtured through the skilled questioning of the teachers. They have the confidence to tackle difficult questions and appreciate that some of them do not have clear answers. Students work very well with each other and listen with respect to opposing opinions. Attitudes towards RE are very good and as a result, students' standards are impressive and all abilities achieve well in advance of expectations. Teachers provide very good role models for the students. They are skilful at drawing opinions out of the students and in good lessons this was done in such a way that pupils did not feel uneasy. Assessment is very thorough with a good balance between knowledge and the ability to articulate the impact of that knowledge on how students perceive their own faith. Differentiation within lessons is excellent with carefully thought through challenges for different levels of abilities. Support for students with learning difficulties or disabilities is very good. For example, the rapport one teaching assistant has with their student enabled this individual to have the confidence to express a very personal example of how the concept of sacrifice had relevance in his life. This was a powerful moment. The school recognises that it is well placed to raise the quality of teaching to higher standards by experimenting with innovative teaching strategies across the RE department to increase further the impact on learning.

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

The head teacher has very successfully communicated to the whole school community her clear vision for unlocking the potential of each student. She is passionate about bringing hope into the lives of the students. All of this is clearly rooted in Christian teaching and is the cornerstone of the school's ethos. She is supported by involved and able governors who work with her to bring the vision alive in practical ways. The commitment of foundation governors to the school's Christian status is reflected in regular meetings during which they monitor and evaluate RE and worship as well as testing out the impact of the school vision. The RE Co-ordinator is outstanding. The subject is making significant strides forwards both in terms of the standards which students achieve and in its contribution to whole school development through its work in developing innovative teaching and learning strategies as part of the team involved in the specialist humanities status of the school. This advance is complemented very well by the Values in Practice Co-ordinator who leads the PSHE and Citizenship curriculum through a set of nine values which are explicitly rooted in Christianity. With excellent leadership from the assistant head teacher with responsibility for worship and the community, this creates a dynamic team, which makes a huge contribution towards realising the school vision. The recent appointment of a school chaplain to join the existing lay chaplain, with the task of developing spiritual growth as a crucial element of the learning experience, is the final exciting part of the jigsaw. This key appointment gives the school the potential to take its vision to greater heights. Links with St Mary Redcliffe Church are historic and are very important to the school. Current initiatives to look at the way the school and church can work together to interact with the local community will mean the bond can be made even more purposeful in the future. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's Christian character and speak highly of how the school equips students with a strong resilience to support their future success.