

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **The Venerable Bede Church of England Voluntary Aided Secondary School**

Tunstall Bank  
Sunderland  
SR2 0SX

#### **Diocese: Durham**

Local authority: Sunderland  
Dates of inspection: 21st, 22nd January 2008  
Date of last inspection: October 13th -17th 2003  
School's unique reference number: 133391  
Headteacher: Dr. Edward J Yeates  
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Carole Snelling 519

#### **School context**

The Venerable Bede school was established in 2002 to serve the communities of Ryhope and New Silksworth. Numbers of students entitled to free school meals and those with special educational needs, learning difficulties and/or disabilities are below the national average. A small minority of students are looked after by the council. The school now has its full compliment of students and is oversubscribed. The first group of 16 year olds sat GCSE examinations in summer 2007.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of the Venerable Bede VA Secondary school as a Church of England school are good**

Venerable Bede school provides a warm, caring Christian ethos in which each child is valued. Opportunities created in RE and collective worship promote spiritual development, which enhances the daily life of students. This is an inclusive school, students of faith and no faith feel respected and listened to, they value the opportunities presented to them. The school is successful in presenting Christianity as 'a joyful and viable message'

#### **Established strengths**

- The very good relationships that exist between staff and students and the caring and nurturing Christian ethos.
- The care and direction provided by the chaplaincy team and staff.
- Excellent links with local parishes, the community, other providers and the very good provision of 'wrap around' care for students.

#### **Focus for development**

- Governor involvement in the monitoring and further development of the Christian ethos.
- Consistency of teaching and learning across the RE department in order to raise standards of attainment at KS4 and the learning experience for students.
- Implementation of existing plans to provide innovative and varied worship experiences for and with students.

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

The school is successful in its aim to create a strong, caring Christian ethos. Students speak warmly of their school as a place where they feel safe, respected, listened to and valued. Students' enjoyment of school is evident in excellent attendance, low exclusion rates and involvement in after school activities. Students develop a good sense of their self worth. Vertical tutoring allows opportunities for developing self esteem and peer tutoring. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Classroom expectations, behaviour and anti bullying policies are framed by gospel values. One student commented on the value placed on 'the chance to correct themselves if they get it wrong' Displays of work value the talents of students and recognise and celebrate achievement. Every classroom has a Celtic cross and

a copy of the Lord's prayer, visual reminders of the Christian faith. A member of staff described the place of religion in the school as 'not low key neither is it highbrow, but we do it properly'. The opportunities for the spiritual development of the school community would be enhanced by the provision of quiet areas for reflection.

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

Collective worship plays a central role in the life of the school and impacts on the spiritual development of students, underpinning the school's Christian character. The Chaplain provides a clearly structured worship schedule mirroring key Christian festivals, seasons and the Anglican tradition. A variety of people contribute to the delivery of worship, the chaplaincy team, tutor groups and staff. The chaplain as co-ordinator is working hard to ensure that a variety of worship styles are adopted; an innovative live worship broadcast at exam times, has been well received by students. Evaluating an Advent broadcast, a student responded to 'has this worship made you think, by saying 'I now know how important hope and love and joy are' For the most part there is willing participation from students. A parent commented positively 'Children take worship for granted because it is so much part of their school day.' Students particularly value and enjoy tutor worship which they produce, supplemented by follow up power point presentations. Eucharistic services take place through out the year and careful preparation allows all students to feel included. Frequent use of prayers, Bible readings and quiet reflection times are opportunities for spiritual awakening. Further development of evaluation, consideration of the timing of worship in the school day, CPD for tutors and cross curricular opportunities for SMCS would enhance provision.

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

The department is well led by an experienced specialist. Strategies are in place in order to further raise standards including individual target setting. The department is looking for a rapid rise in achievement, and a new entry policy for GCSE will allow students to realise their true potential. Resources are good with shared lesson plans. The KS3 syllabus follows the Diocesan scheme. A programme of staff development is increasing subject confidence. In the best lessons students enjoy a variety of learning styles. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. In a Y7 lesson, Looking for God, students demonstrated a very good understanding of key vocabulary. Students have a good understanding of Anglican faith, other faiths and moral issues. Opportunities for spiritual development are good and a work scrutiny showed examples of thoughtful creative writing in response to the topics Incarnation, euthanasia and abortion. Students express their views openly, knowing that their opinions are respected and taken seriously. Displays of students' work, key words and quotations enhance opportunities for learning. Consistency of good practice across the department would raise student achievement. Assessment for learning needs further development as does the use of student Learning Journals. The head of department contributes to the life of the school in a variety of ways and works hard to maintain the profile of the department.

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

The head teacher articulates a strong Christian vision for the school. There are clear strategies to bring about improvement in standards and teaching and learning. The chaplaincy team work collaboratively with the head to enhance the spiritual dimension of the school. Very good links exist between the parishes, local community and the school. The well led extended school provision gives wrap around care, additional nurturing and fun learning opportunities. International links with Lesotho, through the Diocese give an opportunity for Christian stewardship and responsible caring. Parents speak of pupils feeling safe, cared for and able to approach anyone for support. The governing body is supportive, however, Christian distinctiveness would be enhanced by a proactive involvement of governors in monitoring the Christian ethos, RE and collective worship. The Student Council is developing and plans are in place to afford greater opportunities for the student voice to be heard regarding the development of their school.