

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England High School

Grammar School Road,
Warrington
WA4 1JL

Diocese: Liverpool and Chester

Local authority: Warrington

Dates of inspection: 7th and 8th October 2010

Date of last inspection: 3rd and 4th March 2008

School's unique reference number: 133672

Headteacher: John Sharples

Inspector's name and number: John Wilson 99

School context

Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England High School serves the dioceses of Liverpool and Chester and has been a specialist music college since 2008. It has approximately 730 pupils and is smaller than the average secondary school. Few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals and with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sir Thomas Boteler as a Church of England school are outstanding

Pupils receive an outstanding Christian-based education at Sir Thomas Boteler because explicit Christian values are central to all the school does. Values such as creation, peace, trust and justice in turn become the focus of worship, curriculum and ethos. As a consequence, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school is at the forefront of several national developments in church schools, such as the National Society's work on Christian values for schools and the Archbishop of York's Award.

Established strengths

- The centrality of Christian values in all the school does.
- The striving for continual improvement.
- The excellent quality of relationships and care shown by all and for all.
- The very high quality of worship, its planning and impact.

Focus for development

- Enable pupils to take more ownership of and to give direction to their learning in RE.
- Enable pupils to plan independently and regularly the collective worship in tutor groups.

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

Christian values are very well embedded into school life with a focus on a different value each month. At the time of the inspection this was 'Hope', with 'Thanksgiving' the focus for the next month. This practice ensures that students, staff and parents are well aware of the school's Christian character and the expectations it makes on personal behaviour. They can all talk about this with confidence and understanding. The school values all its pupils. A strong philosophy of inclusion has given the school a reputation across the town of providing a good education for children with special educational needs. It is becoming the most popular school in Warrington as measured by oversubscription criterion. Students are enthusiastic about taking on responsibilities. Many take an active role on the school council and its related action groups. Their views are valued and regularly result in practical outcomes. Their moral awareness is exemplary. They care for everyone and for the

environment and relationships and behaviour are very good. Social development is strong. This is enhanced by pupils' keen involvement in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including the Boiler Room Youth Club, a joint school – church venture. The involvement of many pupils in the Archbishop of York's Award, devised by the school, is a major factor in strengthening pupils' social skills, spiritual development and their understanding of the links between the two. The introduction of vertical tutor groups, although in an early stage of development, is greatly appreciated by nearly all pupils because of the support it gives younger pupils and the responsibilities undertaken by older ones. Cultural awareness is excellent with a significant number of pupils involved in music across the school. They also benefit from experiencing a variety of multi-cultural experiences in several subjects, through visits, during interfaith week and through Blooming Boteler. Community cohesion is good, particularly as exemplified in work in the local community. Displays, gardens, installations and the prominence of posters displaying the identified Christian values throughout the school proclaim its Christian character and ensure that everyone is aware of it.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Pupils gain very good spiritual understanding from experiencing worship in a variety of forms and contexts. A sizeable and increasing number attend the voluntary Sharing of the Supper each week, including pupils who are not Christian but who welcome the reflective context. Worship is inclusive, whether it is in the formal context of the tutor or house group. As a result, pupils and staff are increasingly finding worship helpful both during the normal school day and in times of celebration, stress or tragedy. Pupils and staff of different Christian traditions and of other faiths say they benefit from worship. It helps them think through their own beliefs and their relationship with God and with other religions. They also recognize the importance and power of prayer and setting aside a quiet time for reflection. Pupils frequently write their own prayers and take an active part in worship. Acts of worship play a major part in enabling pupils to understand better the schools' Christian values and their knowledge of the Christian faith. They enjoy worship and the atmosphere and the creative approaches used. Worship is clearly very important in school life: as seen particularly through the involvement and leadership of senior staff and the care with which it is planned and monitored. Pupils contribute to organizing worship but do not have a prominent role in planning it independently.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

In a recent school survey pupils identified religious education as their most enjoyable lesson and as the one which they best remember. It also scores highly in all other survey questions, including being amongst the subjects with most challenge and support and where behaviour is at its best. Standards at Key Stage 4 rank amongst the highest in school, on a par with English and mathematics. Attainment overall is around the national average. Amongst the more able pupils, girls generally outperform boys. The Archbishop of York's Award benefits pupils immensely enabling them to have a deepened awareness of the relevance of religion to life. Stable and specialist teaching, specialist rooms, an increased proportion of curriculum time compared with three years ago and lessons on the intranet are leading to higher standards, better levels of achievement and enjoyment. Pupils also benefit from a variety of learning activities and the introduction of assessment for learning strategies. They still need to become more confident in deciding what they need to do to improve and thereby take greater ownership of their learning. The RE department is a leading subject in promoting pupils' spiritual and personal development and learning and thinking skills across the curriculum. Pupils gain a good understanding of a variety of religions. Muslim pupils especially appreciate the opportunity to deepen their understanding of their own religion. Religious education is a major vehicle for promoting the school's Christian character through its links with local churches and Youth for Christ, and visits by the Archbishop of York and Melanesian Brothers.

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

The headteacher, governors, senior managers and chaplain are strongly committed to and very effective in promoting the school's Christian vision and values. This is most evident in the initiatives surrounding the work with the National Society on Christian Values for Schools

and in devising the Archbishop of York's Award. As a result, staff, pupils and parents are very aware and supportive of the school's explicit Christian values. Christian education and its own future is further supported by sending the relatively new deputy head and a senior member of staff on a Christian leadership course which leads to a Masters in Education degree. Individual governors have also led initiatives in developing the school's Christian character. They were proactive in inviting Baptists who had worked in Uganda into school so pupils could experience something of the multi-cultural world wide aspect of the Christian faith. Such developments are encouraged by the Christian Ethos team. The school is nurtured very effectively by the varied, strong and mutually beneficial links with its community and the local, diocesan and national church.

SIAS report October 2010; Sir Thomas Boteler CE High School, Warrington WA4 1JL