



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| St Bede's Inter-Church School (Catholic / Church of England) | |
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| Address | Birdwood Road, Cambridge, CB1 3TD |

School vision

To create and sustain, with God's help, a learning, caring and serving community where all people are valued for who they are and who they may become in the light of Jesus Christ.

We are inspired by this verse from the Bible,

'I (Jesus) have come that they might have life and have it to the full.' (John 10: 10)

Our school motto is, 'Cum Deo - With God'.

School strengths

- The centrality of the Mass indicates the importance of unity and of reliance on God's guidance. These emanate tangibly and powerfully from the Christian vision of St Bede's.
- Students and adults have enormous respect and consideration for each other, for their mutual wellbeing and for their school. This is another major effect of the vision.
- The fullness of life that Jesus offers is evidenced in the engagement of chaplaincy throughout the school. It is also seen in the extensive range of extra-curricular activities and in the service given by student leaders.
- Inspirational collective worship is fundamental to the identity of the school. Daily prayer is fundamental and is a major contributory factor to the harmonious atmosphere in the school.
- The religious education (RE) programme is very carefully planned and taught by specialist staff. They foster the best learning and deep reflection from students. Theologically literate students respond enthusiastically and make extremely good progress.

Areas for development

- Identify and enact intentional opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum. This is so students benefit from more occasions for spiritual reflection.
- Extend partnership working with other Inter-Church and Church schools to share the school's excellent practice and to ensure mutual flourishing.
- Develop an outdoor reflection area so that students benefit from quiet, spiritual contemplation.

Inspection findings

St Bede's exudes confidence, compassion and commitment. This is the impact of its longstanding, inclusive Christian vision. Staff, students and governors consistently model the behaviours and attitudes that are fundamental to mutual flourishing. The school is confident in its Christian foundation. It is equally passionate about the worth of each individual, whatever their beliefs or background, to the community. Nurture of both students and staff is a hallmark of the school. Leaders use the lens of the vision to monitor and to evaluate their decision-making and their

priorities. For example, the vision informs and helps the priorities in the annual school development plan.

The fullness of life imagined by the vision is enacted powerfully through the curriculum and through the extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities. Leaders encourage staff to be excellent subject teachers and to help aspirational students to develop their key skills and knowledge. This is also the approach for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They respond readily to the message of fulfilling potential that is so key to the vision. Staff effectively use assessment to monitor progress and to suggest next steps in learning. Student spiritual development is abundantly evident in RE and in collective worship. There is good stimulus material on display in many areas linking subjects with biblical and spiritual themes. These are not consistently in curriculum plans or practice.

Extra-curricular activities are truly enriching. The library sees avid readers. Public performances enhance student assuredness and the range of trips and visits afford experiences that live long in students' minds. Many visits deepen understanding of the vision, for instance the annual St Bede's trail/pilgrimage. Record keeping ensures that participation is noted and staff encourage disadvantaged students to benefit from being involved.

Inclusive and uplifting collective worship speaks into the souls of students and adults and into the soul of the school. The skilled chaplaincy team meticulously plans the content of the various forms of collective worship. This is based on the liturgical year and the lectionary, which is highly appropriate to this Inter-Church School. Students are theologically literate, able to talk confidently about the Bible, saints and the rhythm of the church year. They readily and regularly consider how faith is relevant to living in today's society. Collective worship thus helps them and adults to flourish spiritually. Student chaplaincy representatives in each tutor group are experienced, very capable leaders. They talk with passion about their involvement with the continuous evaluation of collective worship. There are regular Masses and Eucharists, both voluntary and for whole groups. These reinforce the importance of members of the school worshipping together. There are sensitive and well understood arrangements for communion distribution. These services also symbolise the importance of everything in the school being done 'with God'. Prayer is fundamental to students and adults. They speak of the prayer used at the start of examinations as both calming and inspiring. There are many physical places in the school that aid spiritual reflection, but there is not a quiet outdoor space for contemplation.

St Bede's is an exceptionally harmonious community. The Christian vision is a unifying one for all involved with the school. Highly articulate students are very proud of their school and take a lead in promoting care and service. Humble leaders prioritise the wellbeing of both students and adults through formal means but also through modelling compassion and encouragement. On the rare occasions when things go wrong, reconciliation and restoration are rightly emphasised. There has not been a permanent exclusion for a good number of years.

School leaders create a culture of advocacy. Student leaders are empowered to be agents of change through large, delegated funds. Students respond by taking the opportunity to serve their community assiduously. They understand this to be one way of living out the Christian vision. They also extend their horizons by taking a keen interest in matters of justice and injustice in their local area and further afield. Students represent many cultures and they embody the worldwide nature of Christianity. There is a tangible sense of care for and service to the church, the body of Christ. Student leaders often take the initiative in both awareness and fund raising for local and international causes. The vigorous work of the fairtrade group is a good example of this.

The school benefits from many partnerships that enhance the Christian vision. The Dioceses of Ely

and East Anglia provide theological and practical support. Local clergy give unstintingly of their time and skills. Staff share good practice through, for example, participating secular and Church school representative bodies. As the only Church secondary school in Cambridgeshire, opportunities to share locally the excellent practice of St Bede's are limited. An academy in another diocese speaks movingly of the difference that support from St Bede's has made. There is growing involvement with Church of England Education nationally. Sharing good practice further gives greater impetus to mutual flourishing for St Bede's, other Inter-Church and Church schools.

Theology, the term used by the school for RE, is characterised by academic rigour and deep reflection. The subject has the highest profile. Evidence for this includes its team of specialist staff, its crucial role in spiritual development and a full GCSE entry. Leaders, including governors, evaluate the teaching and learning to ensure that the curriculum is appropriately wide-ranging and fitting for this Inter-Church School. Teachers ensure that lessons are rigorous in content. They model an open, questioning approach. This is an essential characteristic of Theology and of the school's approach to faiths and worldviews. Students respond well, both verbally and in their written work. Teachers challenge SEND students appropriately to do their best and provide suitable resources and individual support. Students routinely display profound understanding of theological concepts and their discussion and debating skills are remarkably developed. They acquire responsibility through, for example, being Theology ambassadors. Year 9 ambassadors have created a well-crafted guide to the stations of the cross in the hall. Teachers organise visits, such as to religious places of worship in Cambridge, and visitors that enhance the subject. Year 11 students are inspired, for instance, by the stimulating day on Science and Christianity, facilitated by the Faraday Institute.

Theology homework often requires students to prepare for the next lesson. This works well as it helps familiarity with specialist terms in advance. It also means students often take the lead in lessons and thus deepen their understanding. Teachers help students to know how well they are doing through an effective assessment system. This has challenge and practical support at its centre. Imaginative end of unit tasks, such as on confirmation and ordination, help younger learners improve their literary skills. They also help students to reflect in a modern setting on some critical religious themes. Assessments for older students help to develop the skills necessary for GCSE success. The consistently very high results show this process is indeed effective and are testament to the hard work of teachers and students.

The inspection findings indicate that St Bede's Inter-Church School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

| Information | | | |
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| Inspection date | 26 June 2024 - 27 June 2024 | URN | 137924 |
| VC/VA/Academy | Academy | Pupils on roll | 925 |
| Diocese | Ely (Church of England) East Anglia (Catholic) | | |
| MAT/Federation | Single | | |
| Headteacher | Alistair Day | | |
| Chair | Geoff Cook | | |
| Inspector | Simon Stevens | No. | 953 |