



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

King Edward VI Church of England Upper School

Grove Road
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
IP33 3BH

Diocese: St Edmundsbury & Ipswich

Local authority: Suffolk

Dates of inspection: 13th March 2014

Date of last inspection: 23rd April 2009

School's unique reference number: 124856

Headteacher: Geoff Barton

Inspector's name and number: Gill Hipwell 480

School context

This larger than average upper school currently has students from years 9-13. Students are grouped into 6 all-age 'colleges' for pastoral care and regular worship. Transition arrangements for becoming an 11-18 high school by 2016 are thorough and designed to secure the strong Church of England foundation. Links with the Cathedral are flourishing and are valued by both parties. The leadership team is well-established.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of King Edward VI as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Committed leadership at all levels embodies Christian values and defines the ethos of the school
- A culture of reflection, aspiration and inspiration ensures that the school's Christian values have an exceptional impact on learners
- Relationships founded on respect ensure that students of all abilities are both confident and competent in sharing their opinions, irrespective of personal faith or belief
- Opportunities to explore faith and belief are embedded across the curriculum
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences are developed as they are encouraged to lead and participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and inspiring cultural exchanges
- The programmes of study and approaches to learning in religious education and philosophy & ethics underpin the school's Christian vision and aims

Areas to improve

- Review existing practice for delivery of tutor group based worship and reflection to ensure greater consistency of provision and a clear link to the school's core Christian values
- Refine the monitoring protocol for foundation governors in order to secure a more robust written record of the effectiveness of strategies focused on ethos and distinctiveness

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

Students are overwhelmingly aspirational, confident and well-rounded. The clearly articulated Christian principles of valuing and celebrating the achievements of each individual ensure that students have a strong sense of self-worth and as a result progress for all groups is at least good and attendance is very good. A culture of respect for all and a strong focus on reflection and debate ensure that students engage in meaningful discussions, offering their own opinions and listening to those of others. Both in lessons and out pupils make the most of opportunities to debate 'the big questions'; the Christian group 'CAKE' and the school debating society are very well attended. The level of pastoral care is appreciated by students, who comment that staff and senior students are 'always ready to listen and help'. Year 9 students praised a peer mentoring scheme set up by a sixth form student; the student in question explained that he saw it as 'an act of Christian service and a desire to help'. Student leadership is outstanding; there are many opportunities to contribute to the life of the school in a meaningful way, including presenting the student view in senior leadership meetings and running clubs and societies. Strong links with eleven countries as diverse as Canada and Iraq provide excellent opportunities for students to experience a range of cultures first hand, and every opportunity is taken to ensure that all students can benefit from visits and exchanges through a carefully planned programme of events. Issues around faith and belief are explored in the wider curriculum. Religious Education makes a strong contribution to the Christian character of the school. The profile of RE and philosophy & ethics has risen significantly over the past few years with the result that it is now a respected and successful GCSE and A level subject. Year 9 students are overwhelmingly positive about RE; they appreciate opportunities to discuss moral and ethical issues in their own and others' contexts and understand how the skills they learn are valuable in other subjects. The school's values and expectations have a big impact on students' self-respect and general behaviour, seen in the purposeful atmosphere around the building and the almost total absence of litter around the site. The inspector was told that 'If we see it we pick it up. Staff as well'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Constraints on space mean that collective worship takes place weekly in 6 vertically grouped 'colleges' and on other days in tutor groups. Themes are set centrally and there is a weekly 'Media Watch' resource for tutors to use as a starting point which often, although not always, has a Christian focus. Leadership is wide and varied; members of staff, students and visitors all contribute to whole school, college and tutor group worship. Christian festivals are celebrated in the Cathedral for the whole school, parents and the community. At other times of the year smaller groups worship in the Cathedral, for example a Remembrance Day service for Year 9, and groups of students, such as the choir, take part in other non-school services on a regular basis. Students consider collective worship to be one of a range of opportunities to reflect on Christian values, all of which have an impact on how they perceive their role as members of the community. They identify opportunities for prayer as important for those who wish to pray and say that everyone else respects that by remaining silent. Both those

with a personal faith and those without said that they felt it was important to share worship and said that sensitive delivery allows everyone to maintain their integrity. Although student opinions on worship are sought on a regular basis, as yet there is no consistent formal monitoring of collective worship by governors and in particular no robust system in place for monitoring the consistency of tutor group worship. The leadership team has identified collective worship as a key target for development and is working through a comprehensive action plan; the Dean of the Cathedral is working with the school to secure the Christian distinctiveness of worship and is committed to taking a personal lead in its delivery, also ways forward for adjusting worship to accommodate the needs of years 7 & 8 are under consideration.

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

Strong and inspiring leadership is a key factor in the development of the school's distinctively Christian ethos. The head-teacher leads by example, actively ensuring that the school's values are embedded in policy and practice. Other members of the senior leadership team take care to ensure that programmes and initiatives include distinctively Christian outcomes amongst their objectives. The way the school's programme of international links is planned is an excellent example of this; visitors and hosts routinely experience each-others' religious festivals, for example those who went to Iraq were privileged to visit the Christian church of one of their teenage hosts. Where they are available, academic departments choose to follow modules which encourage religious or moral debate and, where possible, outcomes are shared with the school and wider community. Good examples of this are seen in dance and art, where students take their faith-based work to the Cathedral. Religious Education is well led and resourced and has become a high-status subject in the school. Senior and middle leaders are given opportunities and training to develop their skills in Christian leadership and governors ensure that high standards are maintained when the head-teacher is not on site. Governors are committed to the continuing development of the Christian ethos and challenge the head-teacher and his team to set and maintain aspirational expectations. Issues raised at the last inspection have all been addressed. An action plan to raise the Anglican profile of the school as the town goes through the school reorganisation process has been successful in securing closer partnerships with church schools in the area and also the Cathedral. . General discussion around the impact of the school's ethos and values is a regular feature of governing body meetings but governors have identified a need both for better recording of their monitoring and a closer focus on the provision and outcomes of collective worship. Excellent links with the Cathedral and with other diocesan schools bring a wider dimension to the school community's understanding of faith. Leaders and managers take the opinions of students, staff and parents very seriously; surveys are frequent and consultation is a key strength. Sixth form students are encouraged to take a lead in areas such as teaching and learning and environmental awareness; they work on a practical level with fellow students and are invited to be part of the monitoring and evaluation process. The inspector was assured that 'they really listen to us and we do make a difference'. Communication within and beyond the school is excellent; a range of media are used to celebrate progress, effort and achievement in a wide range of activities which affirms and encourages students and staff.

SIAMS report March 2014 King Edward VI Upper School Bury St Edmunds IP33 3BH