



Southwark Diocesan Board
of Education

**STATUTORY
INSPECTION OF
ANGLICAN SCHOOLS**



The National Society

Bacon's College

Timber Pond Road
Rotherhithe
London
SE16 6AT

Type of school: Sponsored academy

Diocese: Southwark

School's unique reference number: 135401

Date of inspection: 16&17 December 2009

Date of last inspection: November 2006

Headteacher: Tony Perry

Chair of Governors: Eugene O'Keeffe

Chair of Trustees: Revd David Peacock

Inspector's name with National Society inspector's number : Lyn Field 151

School context

Bacon's College became an academy in 2007 and is sponsored by the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education and The Philip and Pauline Harris Charitable Trust. In 2009 the school achieved the full International Schools Award. Half of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a fifth speak English as an additional language. A quarter of students have special educational needs or disabilities and towards half are eligible for free school meals. These are above the proportions found nationally. The college does not operate any faith criteria for admission.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bacon's College as a Church of England school are outstanding

Bacon's students develop strong personal values of their own because they are challenged and inspired by the open discussion of faith that deepens belief and challenges prejudice. They mature into compassionate young people motivated to serve the communities in which they find themselves. The Christian ethos has remained a constant factor through each stage of the college's development. Its current leaders ensure this explicitly shapes its approach to the nurture and education of its students.

Established strengths

- The commitment to Christian values that underpins leadership at all levels
- The outstanding pastoral care of students
- High standards of teaching in RE at GCSE and A level that result in students' above average attainment
- The interest all students show in understanding faith

Focus for development

- To build on current analysis of assessment data to identify the needs of potentially higher achieving students in RE
- To refine the college's self-evaluation by delving more deeply into students' perceptions

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

At the core of the college's philosophy lies the love of God and a concern for your neighbour. The importance of serving others is taught explicitly and is modelled by leaders at all levels. Students as well as adults are empowered to develop their skills in mediation and leadership and this has a ripple effect beyond school into the community. There are many instances of reparation, reconciliation and forgiveness enabling students and parents to remain engaged in the life of the college and in creating networks that help them to nurture each other. Counselling is now at the forefront of pastoral care and this is one of the significant improvements since the last inspection. Its deeper holistic approach has been developed in close discussion with senior leaders and is a clear expression of the Christian ethos. There are direct links between emotional health and spirituality and students are unanimous in their praise for how they are not only supported but challenged to tackle issues they would not be able to face alone. The nature of the curriculum and the integrated approach between worship, citizenship and emotional literacy nurtures a genuine interest in how faith is relevant in today's society. Students of all persuasions support its high profile in the school. For some, it confirms their existing views but stimulates renewed interest. For others, it enables them to clarify or rethink their own beliefs and articulate them in greater depth. By the time they enter the sixth form, students are developing strong sets of personal values. They talk of a 'Bacon's identity' which does not label or divide them because of faith but is seen as an extra dimension to their personality. The annual Advent appeal for AIDS orphans in Swaziland is a highlight of the year and sharpens their focus on this identity and how they function as part of a Christian community reaching out to others.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The response of students to worship is impressive in the context of secondary schools nationally. This is because planning focuses precisely on matching topics to the spiritual needs of students in this community rather than imposing a standard framework. It is an area that has continued to improve since the last inspection. For example, the themes are constantly reviewed to align them with issues emerging in students' personal development and within the college. Curriculum departments are increasingly contributing to the delivery of worship and this has raised the intellectual credibility of worship with students. They believe that its capacity to stretch and challenge attitudes as well as stimulate spiritual reflection has removed many elements of prejudice in the college community. The tutor time that follows worship plays a critical role in students' spiritual growth as they share insights into the ideas raised. Students say that any variations in consistency across tutor groups are evened out by the quality of discussion prompted between students themselves. Although the senior staff are always available to support tutors there are missed opportunities for sharing existing good practice in how these sessions are led. All students feel that worship is highly inclusive despite any concerns they may have when they arrive at the college. They value the diverse experiences that the staff bring and Muslim students appreciate the regular space and time provided for their personal prayer. Where students come together to worship in large groups there is a tangible sense of reverence. They are able to see the relevance of key Christian beliefs in contemporary society because accurate theological interpretation is given to each theme. This is placed in the context of students' own experiences such as the links made between the 'waiting' of Advent and the response of children in Africa to the visit of sixth form students.

The effectiveness of Religious Education is good

Virtually all students regard RE as an essential part of the curriculum for teenagers. Strong teaching motivates them to achieve at least as well as they do in other core subjects and attainment is above average. The staff are never complacent and constantly strive to improve and reflect on the changes they make. However, not enough use is made of monitoring student attitudes to learning in setting priorities for development. RE is taught by a highly committed and capable team of three full time teachers. Their enthusiasm for their subject is infectious and students recount how debates regularly spill over into social gatherings out of school. The calibre and level of staffing demonstrates the support of the college's

leaders for the subject. The quality of teaching is consistently good and often outstanding especially where tasks are precisely matched to focusing students on the next steps in their learning. For sixth form students, the style of teaching is imaginatively adapted to their level of maturity. Teachers set challenging targets and their analysis of students' progress shows that on exam courses, those with special education needs do particularly well. There is more to be done in checking for possible underachievement of individual pupils, especially those with a deep interest in the subject but working in lower sets as defined by their literacy skills.

Students willingly share their opinions in an honest but sensitive manner. They say this avoids stereotyping because the culture in lessons is such that students of different faiths feel confident to challenge and correct others' perceptions of their own faith communities. The impact of RE on their spiritual and moral development is therefore outstanding.

In spite of students' strong support for RE being a compulsory subject, enjoyment varies in Years 7 to 9. This is reflected in the level of participation in lessons although behaviour is managed well. Once embarked on exam courses, their enthusiasm spirals and they apply themselves well. Plans are at an advanced stage in reshaping the Key Stage 3 curriculum and are addressing a broader range of issues than was identified in the previous report. Students clearly have a significant contribution to make to this but there is no forum in which their views can be sought to inform decisions.

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

The Christian ethos of the school plays an even more strategic role in the direction of the college than at the time of the previous inspection. At the heart of leadership is a group of like minded people who are confident to set the college's future direction in the context of Christian values. Changes of status have caused them to consider carefully the distinction between the college's profile and that of a traditional church secondary school. This has led to a broader relationship with Christian churches and faith groups in the community that mirrors students' own backgrounds whilst capturing their interest. The school keeps a watchful eye on the nature of its Anglican character through a committee to monitor this dimension and is now considering how the chaplaincy team might also reflect the school's cultural breadth. The senior leadership includes a high profile role for the oversight of worship, citizenship and RE. This sets down an explicit marker for the ethos of the college. The appointment of a chaplain into this team has been a particularly popular and successful development in response to the previous inspection. His ability to engage with students of all backgrounds has opened up another avenue for them to explore faith in their lives. A typical comment from an appreciative student was to describe him as 'a warm and textured human being'. Decisions at the highest level are clearly shaped by an understanding that espousing Christian values must be backed by a curriculum that gives students practical as well as emotional skills in leadership and service. It is interesting to note that when a group of students were asked to name the core values of the school, they spontaneously identified generosity, community, equality and care which exactly mirrors discussions with governors. Students are more familiar than is usually the case with the trustees and governors of the college. Members of these two groups take time to meet with students and follow up on the progress of some individuals. This ensures they remain in tune with college life and indicates, yet again, that previous issues have been addressed.