

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Townsend Church of England Voluntary Aided Secondary School

High Oaks
St Albans
Hertfordshire
AL3 6DR

Diocese of St Albans

LA: Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 21st -22nd June 2011
Previous S23 Inspection: March 2008
URN: 117555
Headteacher: Mr A Wellbeloved
SIAS Inspector Name: Mr A Brown No 256

School Context

Townsend Church of England Secondary School is a co-educational 11-18 school with 867 students on roll. It is a very popular and oversubscribed school. The school is specialist Humanities school with English, Geography and Religious Education as its designated specialist subjects. The school serves its mission as one of only two Voluntary Aided Church of England secondary schools in Hertfordshire accepting students from a very wide area with over 60 primary schools sending students to Townsend.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Townsend School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

Townsend School is an outstanding school with excellent qualities of visionary Christian leadership and management at all levels. The provision for worship is exemplary and has the wholehearted support of the students. Students are intensely proud of their school and enthusiastic about the quality of all relationships: their endorsement of the distinctive Christian ethos of the school is fulsome. The quality of support for RE and the excellence of its teaching together with the worship and character of Townsend are key indicators of an outstanding school.

Established strengths

- The theological and educational vision of Head Teacher and his leadership qualities;
- The strong Christian values and relationships which define the School's character and ethos;
- The leadership of worship and Religious Education.

Focus for development

- To recognise the central role of the Head of RE and Worship in continuing whole school improvement;
- To develop and extend the excellent initiative of the Reflection/Prayer Room;
- To increase student participation and planning in worship.

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

The Christian character of Townsend School is clear from the moment of entry where the vision of *Respect for All* and illustrations of Christian values are on display. The Headteacher, governing body and staff share a personal and professional interest in, and deep commitment to, the continuing improvement of the Christian character of the school which is expressed through the overt but not oppressive Christian concern for each other and the wider community. Students give their full support to the school as a caring, happy Christian environment in which they can grow and mature. The *'Respect for All'* theme provides the bedrock for the manner in which all members of school treat each other and prepare for the world outside. Christian principles and values run throughout the school and underpin academic and pastoral concerns. These contribute to the school aim of providing the best possible Christian environment for all students and staff. The vibrant energy and positive enthusiasm of senior staff, rooted in a clear sense of the purpose of what a church school can and should offer the communities which it serves, is a powerful presence within the school. Townsend School is a welcoming, caring Christian educational community with Christian symbols and paintings around the school encouraging reflection and comment. Students recognise and are appreciative of and the pastoral care offered by staff and the opportunities and responsibilities they are given to enable them to grow and mature.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Worship plays a central role in the life of the school. It is inclusive and engages all students, who worship daily, regardless of religion or culture. The themes selected for worship are well supported by a range of stimulating resources giving students and staff greater confidence to lead and participate in worship. All students interviewed were very appreciative of worship in school, finding it interesting and helpful in their spiritual journey. They also liked the Cathedral services which help focus their understanding of what it means to be educated at a church school and the school welcomes the support it receives from the Cathedral staff. Other initiatives such as using external Christian youth workers were welcomed as offering variety to the range of worship in the school. The development in the opportunities offered in worship over the last few years was commented on by several students including the Prayer Room/Reflective area. Students have the opportunity to write prayers, read them out in class worship and offer their own private concerns.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.

The expectations and standards in Religious Education are high and all students interviewed said how much they liked and enjoyed RE and felt challenged by the work. Students appreciated the importance of learning about the place of religion in contemporary society in a lively and challenging way. The RE department has good teachers who teach to the highest level and the teaching observed ranged between outstanding and good. Students are given clear direction on their levels of attainment and what they need to do to improve which is particularly appreciated as it helps them to recognise and achieve their full potential. The school has supported the department by providing a significant allocation of money to develop and promote RE in the school. The imaginative creation of RE Ambassadors to support and enhance RE has been a great success. The Head of Religious Education and Worship has worked with great energy and imagination to ensure that the quality of religious education, in the broadest sense, is valued throughout the school and students make good progress in their spiritual and academic development. The review of RE in school has led to a marked improvement in student attainment.

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

The Headteacher has a clear vision of what a Christian educational institution should be and there is an overt sense of dynamic purpose and enthusiasm throughout the school. Townsend is a welcoming and supportive school where the leadership and management have made clear the Christian rationale on which the school stands. Students recognise and appreciate the vibrant purpose and energy within the school that emanates from the staff and are enthused by it. This finds expression in the growing maturity of the students themselves. Townsend School challenges its students academically and spiritually while remaining open, receptive and inclusive to different persuasions, opinions and beliefs. The response of the parents to the Ofsted questionnaire indicated how they value the way in which the school respects their views and opinions. The practical application in the daily life of the school of loving God, one's neighbour and oneself is paramount in Townsend School which makes a significant contribution to the ideals of social justice and concern for others exemplified in the school's charitable activities. The outreach of the school into the community is a practical expression of the way in which the Church in education responds to the needs of the societies it serves. Students and staff provide a practical example of the importance of community cohesion, as do all the charitable works of the school together with its international links. Pupils, staff and the governing body promote, share and participate in, a Christian vision of a more equitable, just and respectful society.