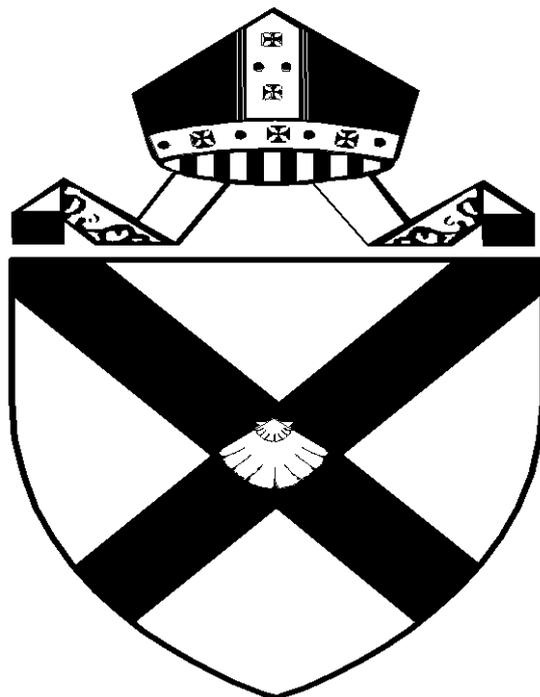


STATUTORY INSPECTION of ANGLICAN SCHOOLS

ROCHESTER DIOCESE

2012



Bennett Memorial Diocesan School

Culverden Down, Tunbridge Wells,

Kent TN4 9SH

Secondary Academy

Unique Reference No: 118841

Head Teacher: Ian Bauckham

Chair of Governors: Rev. Chris Dench

Inspector: Jan Thompson (No 92)

Inspection: 2 & 3 July 2012

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Bennett Memorial Diocesan School

Culverden Down
Tunbridge Wells
Kent
TN4 9SH

Diocese: Rochester

Dates of inspection: 2 - 3 July 2012
Date of last inspection: 24 – 25 May 2007
School's unique reference number: 118841
Headteacher: Ian Bauckham
Inspector's name and number: Jan Thompson (92)

School context

Bennett Memorial Diocesan School occupies an extensive site in Tunbridge Wells, donated by Lady Bennett sixty years ago. It became an Academy in 2011, having previously been Voluntary Aided. It is co-educational and non-selective with 1485 students, 337 of whom are in the Sixth Form. The school is a highly successful school and heavily oversubscribed. Ofsted recently judged it to be outstanding. The school's oversubscription criteria give preference to students from Christian families, both Anglican and non-Anglican. However, there is a small number of non-church reserved places both for children facing exceptional challenges and for members of other faiths. The school values the element of diversity that this brings.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bennett Memorial Diocesan School as a Church of England school are outstanding

Bennett Memorial is an exceptional Church of England school. It has continued to make very good progress since its last denominational inspection and has therefore maintained its status as an outstanding Church school. There is every indication that it will continue to improve.

Established strengths

- The strong Christian values that uphold all members of this school community.
- The knowledgeable and highly committed Christian leadership provided by the headteacher, senior leadership team and governing body.
- The impact of the chaplain on the spiritual life of students and staff in the school, particularly through Collective Worship.
- The very high standards in Religious Education (RE).

Focus for development

- Follow through to completion ideas to develop a spiritual garden when the new teaching block is built.

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

This school is built on Christian values that permeate every aspect of its life and are passionately articulated by representatives of all stakeholders. The school's motto 'Semper Tenax', chosen by the school's founder, expresses the hope that the school will always hold on to its Christian values. This emphasis on 'holding fast' encourages members of the school always to have hope because, as its prospectus says, 'God never gives up on us.' Equally, the school never gives up on any student, forgiving and giving them another chance when necessary. Consequently, exclusion rates are exceptionally low. Adults in the school work very hard and readily 'go the extra mile' for their students. The care and respect that they show

them is a reflection of the way in which they themselves are treated by the senior management team. The headteacher's vision for this school is based on the belief that everyone is unique and created by God for a special purpose and therefore the school helps every individual to find and achieve their vocation. The school also encourages responsible citizenship, living out the Gospel values of compassion and service. For example, it is a centre of excellence for the Duke of Edinburgh Award. A large proportion of Year 10 students achieve the Bronze award, which includes voluntary service in their local communities. Some Sixth Form students were recently inspired by a Global Awareness conference they attended to accept the challenge of raising £10,000 to make a difference in a world of poverty and disadvantage. The school's strong Christian values make it counter-cultural, promoting community spirit in an age of individualism, generosity in an age of personal gain and spirituality in an age of materialism. The school is supported by prayer and an awareness of our dependence upon God. The chapel in the new Palmer Building is well used by small groups and there is also a dedicated prayer space for the few Muslim students in the school. Other aspects of the school environment encourage spiritual development, such as the worship boards in each tutor-group room and the extensive, stimulating, displays in the RE rooms. Thought is beginning to be given to the creation of an outside spiritual garden as part of the next building phase in the school.

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

The headteacher describes Christian worship as 'the bedrock of our daily routine' and everyone accepts collective worship as 'what we do – we are a Church school'. The chaplain is very effective at co-ordinating and supporting collective worship throughout the school, which is based on well-advertised weekly themes and follows the seasons and festivals of the Church's year. Collective worship is of a very high quality, very well-planned, prepared and delivered. It is also creative, using PowerPoint presentations and stimuli to make it relevant and engaging. Students appreciate the variety of worship they experience. The worship in the two school halls is very well led by the chaplain, senior leaders or other members of staff. Students lead the Bible readings and prayers, and everyone is involved in activities, such as swapping seats with the person next to them in an act of worship that considered their attitudes to change. Students and teachers respond very well to the opportunities that worship gives them to praise God through modern worship songs, well supported by the school's two worship bands. They say that they have found visiting speakers inspiring. Tutor group worship is well supported and monitored, with a more informal approach that suits some students better than the more formal worship. Students enjoy planning and presenting their own acts of worship. Each tutor group does this once a year and smaller groups do this on a regular basis within their own tutor time. Students understand worship as 'honouring God', 'bringing you closer to God' and 'a chance to speak to God in prayer.' They say it is also a reminder to them 'that God walks with us in our daily routine', that it inspires them to do what is right and that 'worship is doing God's work in the world.' Worship reflects the broad range of Anglican tradition, with liturgy such as the Lord's Prayer used on a regular basis. Each year group also celebrates the Eucharist together three times a year, and confirmation services are held in school every two years. The Bishop of Rochester recently confirmed twelve students in school.

The effectiveness of the Religious Education is outstanding.

There is a highly successful, hard-working RE department of six specialists whose expertise ranges across Biblical Studies, Theology and Philosophy. The department is very well led, resulting in a consistency of approach in all lessons across the school. This is because teaching is monitored, work is moderated and best practice is shared. Assessment is particularly well done, tracking each student's progress and helping them to improve. RE is a very popular subject. Students particularly like the interactive approach in lessons, which often has them out of their seats, finding information around the room or forming 'opinion-lines' to express where they stand on an issue. Students work hard and are helped to use more and more difficult texts and to develop critical thinking. They are encouraged to come to their own conclusions on spiritual, moral, social and cultural matters and to give reasons for their views. They listen respectfully to others and enjoy engaging in debate. Consequently, very high standards of progress and attainment are achieved throughout the school. Of particular note is the fact that the whole cohort is entered for full-course GCSE one year early, and the school still achieves standards well above the national average. The syllabus covers a range of religions in Years 7 and 8, and students appreciate the importance of understanding and

respecting difference. The emphasis in RE, however, is on Christianity, thus promoting the distinctive Christian character of the school. GCSE focuses on philosophy and ethics, with Christianity as the main religion of reference. Advanced Level includes a New Testament paper as well as Philosophy of Religion, and students find both papers of interest. There are a range of RE opportunities in Year 11, which encourage about 25 students a year to study the subject at Advanced Level and a number regularly go on to read Theology at university. In response to the last inspection, Sixth Form students in Year 13 have RE days, as well as the timetabled RE for Year 12 students. These off-timetable sessions have focussed on faith in action and have proved very popular with the Sixth Formers. They have been well supported by senior management and Sixth Form tutors.

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

The school benefits from the visionary leadership of a committed Christian headteacher and a very supportive, professional governing body. This support is seen in a number of appointments made since the last inspection. The full time chaplain is given high status in the school. A new non-teaching Director of Music has brought a fresh approach to music in school worship. A full-time, non-teaching Duke of Edinburgh leader encourages team work amongst students and community service. An Assistant Headteacher with special responsibility for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development works alongside the headteacher. He has recently qualified as a denominational inspector, making him more fully aware of the high expectations for Church schools. This has led to leaders and middle managers being encouraged to consider the impact of Christian values on their areas of responsibility. They are spoken of as the future leaders of Church schools. A special committee of the governing body monitors and develops the Christian aspects of the school. They have produced a very thorough self-evaluation form, which has sound judgements and areas for further development. The governing body has dealt with the issues identified in the last report. The development of RE days for Year 13 students has been particularly successful. This is just one example of the school's 'absolute commitment to RE' voiced by the headteacher, despite this subject recently being left out of the new English Baccalaureate for Key Stage 4 students. The school played host to a large number of pupils from local Church primary schools, for the National RE Celebrations in 2011. Bennett Memorial fully embraced this day, with many of its own students involved in running activities and presenting the Easter drama. The school has also generously taken responsibility for some of the Diocesan RE resources for local primary schools. The school is held in high regard by the Diocese. The Archdeacon of Tonbridge is an ex-officio governor, alongside other diocesan staff on the governing body. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Dean of Westminster Abbey have been speakers at recent Founders' Days and a small group of students recently spent a day with the Archbishop at Lambeth Palace along with other students from Church secondary schools. At the time of the inspection, a group of teachers and students were packing for a visit to their link school in Tanzania, set up by the Bishop of Mpwapwa. This will help them to see at first hand the impact of the Church worldwide.

SIAS report July 2012 Bennett Memorial Diocesan School , Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9SH