

Bishop Wordsworth Academy

11 The Close, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 2EB

Diocese: Salisbury

Local authority: Wiltshire

Date of inspection: 6 July 2012

Date of last inspection: 14/15 December 2006

School's unique reference number: 126508

Headteacher: Dr S D Smallwood

Inspector's name and number: Mrs M Headon 761

School context

Bishop Wordsworth is a Church of England voluntary aided selective boys' school. It became an academy in March 2011. It has 906 boys on roll. Two thirds of the boys come from the Salisbury area but the remainder come from a wide area of South Wiltshire and West Hampshire. A significant number of girls attend the school in the sixth form for lessons. The level of ethnic diversity is very low as is the number of boys for whom English is an additional language.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bishop Wordsworth as a Church of England school are outstanding

The strong, well-articulated core values which permeate the whole school, and which guide its actions, help to make Bishop Wordsworth an outstanding church school. Boys feel confident in talking about matters of faith and have a highly developed sense of responsibility towards others. The school's very close association with Salisbury Cathedral and the highly principled leadership of the headmaster are important factors in its success.

Established strengths

- The commitment of the boys in applying Christian values to their lives, their relationships with others at school and beyond
- The very strong links which exist with the Cathedral
- The high level of academic success and the support given to pupils as a result of the ethos of Christian care which permeates the school.

Focus for development

- To enhance the Christian symbolism around the school
- To ensure a greater variety of teaching strategies is used within Religious Education (RE) lessons
- For the foundation governors to evaluate their own contribution to the distinctive nature of Bishop Wordsworth as a church school in order to inform their future succession planning.

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

Christian values are inherent in all that the school undertakes. The boys instantly identify that respect, care, truth, tolerance and being responsible are overriding principles which the school fosters. They spoke with pride of belonging to the 'Bishop Wordsworth family', of the school motto 'Veritas in Caritate', and one boy mentioned he felt privileged to be educated well in such an environment. The values are lived out in everyday life and a boy new to the school spoke of how welcome he had been made to feel and how his own sense of self-worth had been encouraged. Academic achievement is high, with boys being encouraged to set challenging

personal goals. However, through careful monitoring there is always help and encouragement for those needing support. The social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of the boys is outstanding. Relationships throughout the school are harmonious, behaviour is excellent and mutual respect is evident in all interactions. The boys are not afraid to ask questions and to explore faith. Their spiritual development is especially strong whether or not they are of Christian faith. In lessons and in worship boys are given opportunities and encouraged to reflect upon issues and in their responses to each other and teachers it is clear they are exploring deeper meanings of faith. The Chaplain was seen by the boys and staff as being a quiet presence who is always there: especially in times of need. The boys have a highly developed sense of responsibility especially to others less fortunate than themselves. They raise considerable sums of money through their charity committee. They have been supporting a school in Zambia and one in Tibet. Other charity raising events, such as non-uniform days and a Lenten appeal also generate large sums of money. Pupils come to the school Chapel when they need a space for quiet reflection. Displays in the Chapel, with a prayer board and candles, emphasise the Christian nature of the school, but otherwise there are relatively few Christian symbols around the building.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is very carefully planned by the Chaplain and the Head of RE. Together they devise a programme which is thoughtful and meaningful to the lives of the boys. The worship is enhanced by the liturgical input from the Chaplain and encompasses a range of Anglican tradition and practice. It is greatly enhanced by the services in the Cathedral and by the Eucharist services held in school. Boys particularly value the collective worship held in the Chapel, where, as one said, they feel challenged personally and spiritually by many of the people who lead worship. The boys play an important part in these services, often planning and leading them. They also write prayers for the monthly cathedral services, which they felt to be most important in the life of the school and all are rightly proud of the choir, which in their words 'adds the extra special something to the feeling of being as one when we all worship together'. The school has addressed the issue of allowing more spiritual reflection in tutorial time by providing 'themes for the week'. Sixth formers linked to tutor groups support this time and the training which is planned shows how carefully this has been considered. All members of the school community spoke of feeling included by worship and of the impact on their lives. The boys recounted an instance when an assembly on truth had impacted on an incident in school, and the current theme of the week of 'peace' has certainly engaged the boys in debate. The evaluation of collective worship is a real strength of the school. As well as evaluation by the coordinators, the link governor has held a number of focus groups with the boys to evaluate its impact. This has led to an increase in pupil led collective worship. Recently an external evaluator has been employed by the school to consider and his remit includes collective worship and prayer.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards in RE are high and comparable with other subjects in this high achieving school. Learners make good progress across the key stages and outstanding progress in the sixth form. Most boys enjoy their RE lessons, saying that they extend their vision on life. The long course GCSE and the sixth form Philosophy and Ethics course are particularly valued, and take up for RE at A level has increased considerably. However, attitudes to short course RE are more mixed. The content of RE is predominantly Christian but all boys demonstrate a good understanding of other faiths and are quickly and easily able to make comparisons with Christianity. At Key Stage 4 boys spoke with enthusiasm of the three annual RE development days, especially the multi-faith day. In an evaluation of this one boy wrote, 'it was a truly ethical and spiritually enriching experience'. Boys link their study of religion and belief to their own personal reflections and are confident in asking questions about meaning and purpose. In an A level lesson pupils were challenged at a very high level to refute a major theological argument. Both girls and boys responded by questioning in a very mature and thoughtful manner. The department is very well led. Staff have excellent subject knowledge and keep themselves up to date with regular training. Assessment of work is regular and thorough and therefore all boys know what level they are working at and what they need to do in order to improve their work. The department moderates its judgements internally and is considering how it can refine its assessment system even further to suit the needs of the high ability of the boys. Teaching

methods however are less varied and in the lessons seen there was not sufficient opportunity for the pupils to be actively engaged in a variety of learning activities linked to the lessons.

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

The headmaster, senior leaders and governors have a very clear vision of the school as a church school, its purpose and the values which are integral to it. The leadership they provide is outstanding. They are determined that all boys should succeed and reach their potential within an ethos of care. The parents are highly supportive of the school and the values which it develops, as are the boys who feel a sense of privilege in being pupils. Self-evaluation and continuous improvement are central to the school. The development plan is very thorough and far sighted and encompasses all departments. It sets a very clear agenda for the development of the school as a Church school. The change to academy status has strengthened the Christian character and mission of the school. The governors are even more determined to ensure the school acts for the benefit of the wider community and the headmaster sees this as important to its future development. The school has addressed the issues from the previous inspection well. The Chaplain's hours have been increased, her role has developed and she is much appreciated for her work with worship, her qualities of being a good listener and for her support for individual pupils and members of staff. The governors are planning carefully for the recruitment of future foundation governors. The link governor for RE performs a valuable role and is a very effective conduit between the Cathedral and the school. However, the foundation governors have not evaluated their own contribution to the distinctive nature of Bishop Wordsworth as a church school. Links with the Cathedral are very strong and pupils increasingly use its resources in their work. All boys visit the Cathedral as part of RE in Year 7, sixth form pupils use its library and language students are acting as Cathedral guides. There is a close and ongoing relationship with the Diocesan Board of Education with a representative serving on the Academy Board.

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