



SOUTHWARK DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION
SUBJECT: Inclusive ethos and culture
REPORT BY: Dr Rachael Norman
PURPOSE OF REPORT: For information for Southwark Council Education and Business Scrutiny Commission

All Church of England dioceses and the Methodist Church use the Church of England Education Office's framework for the **Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS)** under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005. SIAMS inspection focuses on the impact of the Church school's Christian vision on pupils and adults. This involves looking at the school's Christian vision, the provision the school makes because of this vision and how effective this provision is in enabling all pupils to flourish.

Strand 4 concerns "Community and Living Well Together". This strand explores how well the school's Christian vision promotes social and cultural development through the practice of forgiveness and reconciliation that encourages good mental health, and enables all to flourish and live well together. In creating a community where all live well together, schools must evaluate the extent to which their Christian vision and associated values underpin relationships at all levels in the school community, enabling pupils to disagree well and to practice forgiveness and reconciliation and how this is reflected in the school's behaviour, exclusion and attendance policies. Schools must also evaluate how well leaders ensure there is support for good mental health in children and adults and a sense of belonging that embraces and celebrates difference.

Diocesan schools are often recognised by the wider community as centres of reconciliation and support, they are places where pupils are given and take second chances. For example, St Saviour's and St Olave's behaviour policy states:

"At St Saviour's & St Olave's School, we value our school and each other and work hard to create a cohesive community. As an Anglican school we seek to ensure that each of us has the maximum opportunity to fulfil our God given potential. We aim to develop the characters of those in our community to reflect the fruits of the Spirit, such as kindness and self-control. Emphasis is placed on developing self-discipline, respect for other members of the community, taking responsibility for one's own actions, and the creation of an orderly working environment".

Powerful examples of the development of an inclusive ethos and culture in all our Diocesan schools include:

- Following the example of Jesus – the approach is distinctly rooted in the New Testament and is non-punitive wherever possible, with the key value of Forgiveness at the heart of decision-making. Several schools use restorative practices where all members of the community are focused on putting things right where harm has been done, rather than seek to apportion blame.
- Strong moral leadership – the headteacher is faced with difficult decisions resting on their shoulders alone and they often hold an 'unofficial' no-PEX policy in their hearts and minds, determined to exhaust all potential avenues rather than PEX.

- Stable leadership – our headteachers look for alternatives and have the resilience to face their critics when some parties ‘push’ for a PEX to be used. Governors find it easier to place this trust in them the longer their decision making has been proven right.
- Succession planning and smooth transitions – where leadership does inevitably change, succession planning secures the ethos and the culture is ‘held’ by the governing body, especially at transition points.
- ‘Acid tests’ – leaders set themselves challenging acid tests when taking tough decisions, e.g. ‘if a child is ever subject to a managed move or PEX from this school, we need to know they will still want to say hello when they pass the school, with no negative feelings.’
- Turning challenge into strength – rather than be anxious about working with the most challenging students, some headteachers send a message of inclusion and ambition by ‘opening the doors’ of the school and asking staff to be judged first and foremost by the successes they secure for the most vulnerable.
- Chaplaincy – some schools give their chaplains a wide range of responsibilities, the scope to take action and have a high presence in the school, including access to or membership of the leadership team. Chaplains can take a crucial lead in developing a harmonious, tolerant Christian school. Their contact with the wider community also helps them to regularly ‘take the temperature’ of morale and cohesion in the school.

Concrete strategies which have helped to reduce exclusions in our Diocesan schools include:

- Internal alternatives to fixed term exclusion, often of varying types within one school, e.g. cooling off areas, therapeutic bases, where the school and specialist practitioners can work with the student to work through the issues.
- Co-operation with neighbouring schools, e.g. having a system of placing a student in another school’s isolation room for a period of time, which prevents the student from potentially having the freedom of being at home or out in the community during a FEX. Work is provided for students to complete during this time.
- Managed moves between schools, rather than use of PEX, so that the student has no time to ‘drift’ between placements or have very low part-time hours in a referral unit, all of which gives time and space for someone to fall into the ‘wrong crowd’. This also helps students to receive continuous specialist support.
- Pro-active use of alternative curricula and guided pathways to prevent disaffection ahead of serious problems emerging.
- Very regular parent contact with students of concern and any troubled families. Where exclusions are necessary they are rarely a surprise and have parent backing, reducing harmful conflicts between schools and families, providing a ‘united front’.
- Specialist staffing around safeguarding and welfare, with the latitude to take appropriate action swiftly. Such staff are often non-teachers to give them the time and freedom to act.
- Wrap-around provision, especially given reductions in youth services, including pre and post school activities, holiday clubs, staff patrols operating well after the end of school to provide a safe point of contact.
- Very clear, unambiguous messages about knife carrying and the dangers, leading to amnesties and avoided PEX.
- Tracking of ‘hot spot’ weeks within the year and days within the week (often Mondays and Fridays) where vigilance and senior staff presence in lessons and social time is increased.
- Advanced and ambitious use of ‘student voice’ activities which ensure that students have real responsibility and a genuine series of opportunities to be heard. When in place this often leads to stronger relationships in school and problems being raised where they exist.