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The personal, social and spiritual development of young people in an inner-city area: Christ the King College

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Brief description

This example shows how Christ the King College supports the effective personal, social and spiritual development of young people in an inner-city area.

Overview – the provider’s message

‘Christ the King College is located in an inner-city area where the social and economic challenges faced by many young people are well documented. In meeting the needs of our students, the college aims to be a beacon of aspiration, achievement and progression. With examination success above national benchmarks and very high progression rates to university and employment, the college successfully supports students from all backgrounds to realise their potential.

Our ethos and culture of high attainment have been established incrementally over a period of time. In moving from a position where social and economic disadvantage was having a disproportionately adverse impact upon opportunities for students, the college needed to create a clear vision for how this could be addressed. By recognising the need for a safe, stable environment characterised by excellent teaching and learning, and where expectations in terms of student behaviour, work output and attendance are consistently enforced, the college was able to lay the foundations for the implementation of its vision with both students and staff.

A combination of academic, pastoral and bespoke support has ensured that our vision for high aspiration and achievement, which takes place despite social and economic disadvantage, has become a reality.’

Dr Jane Overbury, Principal

The good practice in detail

Christ the King College's grades at inspection were almost all outstanding. These included the grades awarded for care, guidance and support and how well students improved their economic and social well-being through learning and development. The main [inspection report](#) notes that the enrichment programme includes outstanding provision for personal, moral and spiritual development. Information, advice, guidance and support for students are outstanding. The report also says that: 'Students are articulate about their own journey of faith while at college and are given space to develop their individual values and vision while respecting differences of culture and belief among their peers and the wider community.'

The journey

A working party was set up five years ago to research excellent practice in tutorial support. Members visited other colleges with exceptional practice and the findings stimulated well-focused actions for improvement. Since then, the college has continued to strengthen the support for students incrementally. The tutorial curriculum was redesigned to add new units on for example, independent living; budgeting; legalities; how rights and responsibilities change at ages 16, 17, 18; and how to live with others.

Imparting the vision

The Roman Catholic faith frames the attitudes and values of the college. Senior leaders set the vision for the achievement of high academic standards and their ambition for students to develop into mature, capable, happy, fulfilled and successful individuals. Social and economic deprivation is not used as an excuse for low standards; rather it is a challenge which must be overcome through meeting students' academic, spiritual and pastoral needs. Significant work has been undertaken to ensure that students from all backgrounds have opportunities to develop to their full potential. The college recognises the many external pressures experienced by students including from peer groups and negative aspects of youth culture. Norms that are acceptable outside college are not always acceptable in college. Staff nurture students' self-belief and high expectations and they help students to attain their goals. Robust systems are implemented to support students' pastoral and spiritual needs.

The environmental context

The college is situated in a deprived area where the potential for violence involving young people is a constant concern and a reality of life. An oasis of calm, friendliness and safety, the college provides outstanding pastoral support for all students and particularly for those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, irrespective of their religion or ethnic heritage. Not all students are able to rely on nurturing support at home and the college strives to bridge gaps and take a holistic approach to the development of young people. Staff are conscious of the dangers posed to students by street gangs. The principal, vice principal and senior management team often escort students to the college gate at the end of the day and see them safely on to buses. Security guards are highly



supportive and popular with students. They are alert to people who occasionally try to gain unauthorised access to the college and they monitor loitering near the college to stop difficult or confrontational situations from arising.

Setting expectations for acceptable behaviour

Poor behaviour is not tolerated. Staff contribute to the highly supportive nature of the college by reflecting its values in their dealings with students. They care about their students and monitor them closely to ensure that they behave in a way that nurtures responsibility and accountability. Clear performance monitoring systems evaluate students' academic progress and highlight pastoral care needs. Lateness in lessons is not acceptable and precise processes are followed to address poor punctuality. Failing to hand in homework is also not acceptable and highly focused support is provided to develop study skills, personal organisation and other essential skills which students need for their future success. A structured approach, which is caring, fair and without ambiguity, is implemented consistently. Senior leaders set expectations in assemblies. Students comment on the positive atmosphere at college which is harmonious and friendly. They know that slang, bad language, argumentative, intransigent or disrespectful behaviour is not acceptable. Hats and hoods are not worn on site. All incidents, no matter how small, are investigated and resolved systematically.

Tutorials



Tutorial lessons follow the same structure as academic lessons and they are monitored as part of the lesson observation process. Students' learning in tutorials is evaluated regularly and feedback from students is used to refine the curriculum. In response to student feedback, a unit on driving was developed with the police. The college ensures that the curriculum is broad, relevant and worthwhile for students. Attendance at tutorials is currently over 90%.

Personal development

Students from different backgrounds speak highly of the general religious education lessons. They find the debates about a wide range of topics such as world issues, morality and suicide intellectually stimulating. Students are encouraged to develop freedom of thought and expression. One student said, 'I wouldn't otherwise have had an opportunity to really think about and discuss these issues.' Another said that, 'The exchange of views with other students is excellent and enjoyable'. Students are keen to engage in enrichment activities such as debating, charitable works and musical productions and they recognise that the college encourages them to have enjoyable social lives as well as working hard at college. One student said: 'At first I didn't fit in as I'd fallen in with the wrong types outside college. Counselling helped me to build my self-esteem. I am doing well now and I have made new friends.'



The chaplaincy is available for students of all faiths or no faith. They sit in quiet contemplation, discuss issues or take part in services. Students' involvement is regularly encouraged in composing a prayer for tutorials and the 'thought for the week' which is read out in tutorials. Spiritual as well as personal support provided by the chaplaincy is highly valued by students. Masses are occasionally held for individual student's recently deceased close relatives, if it is in accordance with the student's wishes.



Students engage in voluntary work, fundraising activities, and actions to address poverty and promote justice and social change in the local and wider community. There are further opportunities for participation in World Youth Day, residential retreats within the diocese and international pilgrimages for students and staff.

As well as having a face-to-face counselling service at college, students are able to obtain advice through email. Counsellors mediate supportively on immigration issues and deal with issues such as self-harm, eating disorders and behavioural problems. Tutors know their students very well and formal systems are in place to support potentially vulnerable students.

Provider background

[Christ the King College](#) is a Catholic Sixth Form College situated in Lewisham, south-east London and Sidcup in Kent. 76% of the college's students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 55% of students are Catholic. Lewisham is one of the most socially deprived local authorities in the country. 50% of the college's students are classified as disadvantaged learners and 68% of students at Lewisham are from disadvantaged backgrounds. In 2009/10 the college enrolled about 2,000 students including 400 students at Sidcup. The college provides courses in 11 subject areas. The college's vision and values are articulated in its mission statement which is: 'a Catholic college dedicated to the education and development of the whole person, so that learners can reach their full potential'.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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