

Federation of Bedford Catholic Schools

Introduction - The Federation of Bedford Catholic Schools (FBCS) provides all-through Catholic education for the culturally-diverse Bedford community. Provision is based on 4 sites:

- St Joseph's for pupils from Early Years to Y4
- St John Rigby for pupils from Early Years to Y4
- St Gregory's for pupils from Y5 to Y8
- St Thomas More for pupils from Y9 to Y13

A single governing body, supported by an Executive Principal is responsible for the strategic direction and leadership of the FBCS. Each individual school possesses their own Headteacher, who leads on standards, learning and teaching pedagogy and nurturing the unique Catholic ethos.



David Bell visiting November 2009

Impact - The introduction of a Federated structure has provided a step-change in what people view as being possible. It has helped to introduce a passionate quest for collective excellence. The impact on the standards of schools within the FBCS has been transformational. Key stage results have never been higher, Ofsted 'outstanding' inspection grades have been gained and 18 national awards for excellence have been achieved. St Thomas More is currently the number one school nationally for Community Cohesion and the Achievement of Minority Ethnic groups (SSAT, 2010-2011) and all schools within the FBCS are significantly over-subscribed.

Philosophy - All-through provision places the child at the centre of all activity within the FBCS. Children have been empowered to access learning opportunities at the appropriate stage, rather than age. Staff who possess a contagious burning interest in various aspects of practice have acted as liberating examples to others to give full rein to

their own particular enthusiasms. An unshakeable belief in the capacity of all to succeed permeates all facets of the FBCS.

Learning and teaching combines the very best of both primary and secondary pedagogy. The FBCS facilitates cross-phase dialogue and collaboration on issues such as thematic approaches to learning, experiential learning and specialist teaching. During 2009-2010, for example a cross-phase 'Café Sci' programme has been introduced. Guest speakers from industry and academia have been invited into the schools to provide specialist input, following which students from all key stages have worked together to further their understanding. Other examples of cross-phase collaborations include, Modern Foreign Language Days, Performing Arts Productions and combined Sports Events.

Leadership is distributed, key stage based and student-driven. A leadership matrix is in place which gives both 'formal' and 'informal' leaders the opportunity and support to lead on a range of cross-phase initiatives. During 2009-2010, for instance, a NQT led a cross-phase Gifted and Talented Mathematics programme, in partnership with the University of Oxford. Leadership is predicated on removing the key stage barriers to success. Each key stage has a raising attainment leadership structure which addresses issues of pastoral continuity, curriculum progression and levels of attainment. The Student Voice is FBCS-wide, meets regularly in time-tabled slots and significantly influences strategic thinking and Federation policy. Student leaders deliver a range of activities, such as in sport, performing arts and chaplaincy across the schools.



School production of 'Godspell'

The Future - The FBCS is committed to the core values of the Catholic Faith. All act out daily their belief that all pupils can succeed in some area which will equip them for a fulfilling life. There are a number of projects in progress to ensure that relentless focus on improvement.

Emphasis is being placed on school improvement and self-evaluation. The FBCS has entered into a pioneering partnership with Bedford Borough to explore and develop best practice School Improvement Partner provision. A single SIP for each of primary and secondary provision will ensure coherence, consistency and transparency of practice. A single FBCS-wide self-evaluation system is being introduced for 2010-2011.

To enable teachers to focus of learning and teaching and leaders to focus on raising standards, a Director of Business Operations has been appointed for September, 2010. The intention is that this position will audit all support services and make recommendations to the governing body to achieve operational synergy and best value across the schools.

In partnership with the Training Development Agency (TDA) and Bedford Borough, the FBCS is developing an innovative school improvement planning protocol. This will ensure that strategy addresses and anticipates need, is rooted in stakeholder views and drives improvement. The protocol/tools developed will be promoted across Bedford and throughout the South-East.

Through National College for Leadership (NCL) sponsored research, the FBCS is exploring how leadership is enacted in the collaborative context. The nature and practice of such leadership is being investigated; as a style and a focus. Early findings suggest that leadership in the collaborative context does provide a composite and blended form of practice, which is both complementary and conflicted with existing models. Watch this space for published research in the coming months

Concluding Thoughts - The FBCS believes passionately in all-through education. The individual child is at the centre: the system is driven by the needs of children, not the wants of government. Pupil progress and attainment is tracked and enhanced through collaboration and organisational autonomy. This is education in the 21st Century.

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