

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Dean Church of England Voluntary Aided School

Workington

Cumbria

CA14 4TH

Diocese of Carlisle

Local Authority: Cumbria

Headteacher: Mr. N. Fish

Inspection date: 15h February 2006

Date of previous inspection: November 2000

Inspector: Mrs C.M.Bartlett

School Context

Dean is a small village in West Cumbria, surrounded by farms and small hamlets and with some recent new housing. A new sports hall, with excellent facilities for use by the community, is a very welcome, recent addition to the school. The previous headteacher had been unwell for two years and the new head was appointed in September 2005. Local industry is mainly related to farming and the tourist trade and Dean is near enough for commuters to the industries and businesses of the West Coast. The children are predominantly white British.

Summary Judgement

A good Church school with outstanding features particularly the happy, caring relationships within the school.

Established strengths

- The vision and enthusiasm of the head
- The teamwork and support of the staff
- The behaviour and attitudes of the children
- The strength of the school values maintained over a long period
- The very good links with the community and church
- The vision of the governors and staff in the development of the new sports hall

Focus for development

- Continue to promote the Christian ethos through revisiting the mission and aims of the school
- Continue in the endeavour to extend the children's cultural awareness
- Complete an audit of RE in relation to the New Cumbria Agreed Syllabus and the resources needed to support it.

How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners?

The distinctive Christian character of Dean school is outstanding. It was the chief support of the school through difficult times and is now the central component of school life. Children feel valued and special because they are known well by the staff, their achievements are recognised and celebrated and their difficulties are met with sensitivity and perseverance. In the last unsettled few years, there was an emphasis on maintaining the 'spirit' of Dean school through teamwork. Thus older children are well aware of their role in the care and nurture of the younger ones, as is obvious in the behaviour in the playground. *'Even if you don't speak to them very much, if someone is hurt in the playground you go to help them'* School Council member. Teachers and children have very good relationships based on mutual respect and concern for the school family as a whole. This is also reflected in their approach to visitors. *'You should let them go first and you should show them where to go'* Y4 pupil

Children enjoy school and their behaviour is outstanding. This contributes to effective learning; for example discussions are enhanced because they listen sensitively to each other, confident that they too will be heard. They are aware of the consequence of poor behaviour and the Christian understanding of forgiveness. *'We would get told off, we might miss some playtime and we write a letter to say sorry.'* School Council member

The standard of display in the school, the inclusion of Christian symbols and the open welcoming atmosphere all effectively contribute to spiritual development. Children use the recent additions to the playground, including friendship benches and a gazebo, in memory of a previous Chair of Governors who died suddenly, for quiet games or chat at playtime. There was a 'buzz' in the school on the afternoon of the inspection, when the after school club organised a Bring and Buy in aid of OXFAM. *'We want to buy a goat this time'*. Children organised competitions, bring and buy stalls and cakes, parents supported, the new hall was appreciated and the atmosphere was one of excitement and achievement.

What is the impact of Collective Worship on the school community?

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is outstanding. Daily Collective worship takes various forms, either singing together, worshipping in individual classes or as a whole school. All staff are involved in leading worship, whether with the whole school or in their classes and all reflect the theme of worship in various classroom activities. Children are actively involved, presenting their own work, reading their own prayers in class and responding as required in whole school occasions. For example, when the headteacher leads worship: *'He asks you to go up and help – he makes them dead fun – you sing songs and there is always a message as well.'* Council member.

The behaviour of the children promotes a positive atmosphere for reflection and participation. Records indicate a wide variety of themes and activities offering the opportunity for pupils of all faiths and none to experience different situations within the context of Christian worship. Children enjoyed the recent visit from NISCU, when the subject of bullying and solving problems was addressed by involving the children in drama and role-play. Records show that the vicar and lay reader were regularly involved in worship both in school and in church. More recently this has become less regular, but the commitment of both school and church to work together for the benefit of the children is being strengthened, as new ways are being sought to express this partnership. Ways of using the new hall are being explored while still enabling the children to experience worship in church on a regular basis.

There is currently a picture in the foyer carrying the message. 'Love your neighbour'. The children explained that this was painted by Donovan from Faith Missions, during a recent act of worship. *"He paints a story, he adds to it and then there is a massive message – last time it was 'Love your neighbour.'*" School Council member.

How effective is the Religious Education in the school?

Teaching and learning in RE is good. Children speak with confidence and enthusiasm of their work in RE. They are able to empathise, to relate their learning to their own lives and to compare with other religions. The children are very co-operative, work well together and are able to participate effectively in discussion. The development of PHSE, Circle Time and, more recently, Philosophy has enhanced the children's attitudes and approach to RE without undermining the unique nature of RE. Together they contribute well to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. Very good cross-curricular links are made, notably in literacy, art, history and science. Whilst opportunities to develop multi-cultural awareness are limited, the school is addressing this in many ways, for example through experiences gained during residential trips. Although the

current syllabus is working well, the school recognises that there is a need to evaluate their scheme of work in relation to the New Cumbria Agreed Syllabus. The current School Improvement Plan incorporates this need, coupled with a necessary audit of resources to support the new syllabus. Full use is made of visits to the Church to support RE syllabus and also local environmental studies in Geography, wildlife observation in Science and sketching in Art. Children benefit from this well-rounded use of the Church as a resource.

How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school?

The Leadership and Management of the school is good and effective in promoting the Christian vision of the school. The headteacher has only been in post since September as has the Chair of Governors. Together they are very aware of the needs of the school and are driving it forward with vision and enthusiasm. They are supported by a strong team of staff and governors who have maintained the morale and spirit of the school through a prolonged period of uncertainty. The school is not undergoing a change of vision but there is a strengthening and development of the Christian foundation. As the vicar said *'The new Head and the new Chair together are refocusing the vision.'*

The Christian vision is promoted in many practical ways such as in the enhanced information sent to parents, the monthly visits of governors helping school improvement, the involvement of visitors supporting worship in the school and the increasing use of the new sports hall. This last is a tribute to the staff and governors whose vision in developing it is now bearing fruit.

Parent involvement is effectively encouraged and, through the Friends of Dean School, they offer very positive support in many of the school activities.

Members of the School Council are proud of their role and recognise their responsibility in the school. They know they have a voice and that it is heard. The new style newsletters, including colourful pictures of activities and significant moments in the life of the school, also include a prayer for the school, written by a pupil. Prayers from which the most recent was chosen, referred particularly to the joy of school, the need for self-control and care for others.

SIAS February 2006 Dean CE VA Workington Cumbria CA14 4TH