

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Altham St James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Burnley Road,
Altham,
Accrington,
Lancashire,
BB5 5UH

Diocese: Blackburn

Local authority: Lancashire

Dates of inspection: 02/03/07

Date of last inspection: 15/03/01

School's unique reference number: 119577

Headteacher: Mr P Williams

Inspector's name and number: Mr G Yates 430

School context

The school is a well below average sized primary school with 59 pupils aged from 4 to 11 years. Pupils, besides coming from the local village, also come from other areas. The Parish Church is reasonably close to the school. During the inspection major building works were taking place.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Altham St. James' as a Church of England school are good

Altham St. James' CE Primary School is a good Church School. Leadership is very firmly and sincerely based on Christian values. The school successfully meets the needs of all its children within a distinctly Christian environment. Both parents and pupils are very happy with all the school provides.

Established strengths

- The Christian worship is of a very high quality.
- The school has a welcoming ethos with happy, polite and friendly children within a very caring Christian community.
- Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of Christianity.
- The headteacher provides strong Christian leadership.
- The school has good links with the parish church and local Vicar.

Focus for development

- Ensure that, when teachers ask children to write in religious education lessons, the quality of writing consistently reflects children's capabilities.
- Extend pupils' understanding of world faiths.

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

This is because all pupils feel valued and special and are treated with respect. Pupils' progress is closely tracked and pupils of all abilities make good progress. Pupils are secure, happy and confident and display high levels of self-esteem. In this school every child has the chance to be themselves. For example, the individual achievement of every older child is celebrated rather than the school just having a list of gifted and talented pupils. The school enjoys excellent support from its parents, who are appreciative of its ethos and provision; one parent commented, "In my opinion the school is like one big happy family and has high Christian values." Pupils' spiritual, moral and social education is very well supported and there are many opportunities during the school day for spiritual reflection and understanding.

For example, in one classroom the wonders of nature could be seen in the display of different types of flowering bulbs. Pupils demonstrate strong moral values and they appreciate the need to relate sensitively to the beliefs of others and other cultures. However, while cultural provision is good their knowledge of world faiths, other than Christianity is limited. Relationships in this small village community are outstanding and the School Council provides a strong basis for ensuring that pupils' views are taken seriously. As a result pupils really feel part of the school and are proud of their ideas coming into fruition. For example, new playground equipment has been provided. The major building work taking place at the time of the inspection has severely limited the school's ability to use displays of work to promote the school's Christian ethos. Nevertheless symbols of the Christian faith are displayed in many parts of the school including communal corridors. For example a large cardboard structure contains the telling message, "The cross is like a great big hug and is Jesus' sign of love."

The impact of collective worship on the community is outstanding.

Worship is central to the school's life and underpins its Christian character. Pupils are actively involved in worship and enjoy it. The children respond positively to opportunities for reflection and this contributes to their spiritual growth. The act of worship seen during the inspection was stimulating and used well to promote key Christian values. Worship is well planned and during Lent includes a weekly celebration in Church. Behaviour during worship is exemplary and an atmosphere of calm respect is promoted, through thoughtful use of music and prayer. For example, on a wet Friday afternoon pupils entered and left the hall in a very orderly way. The vicar leads regular acts of worship. Worship is distinctively Christian in nature and reflects the Anglican tradition. For example, pupils who have been confirmed play a full part in a Eucharist service held in the school. The headteacher leads Sunday worship in the Parish Church on a regular basis thus extending the school's link with the local community. Children who attend church are proud that 'their' headteacher is actively involved in their local church.

The effectiveness of religious education is good.

Good use is made of the Diocesan syllabus. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of Christianity but less so of other world faiths. The headteacher, who acts as subject co-ordinator, leads the subject well. Pupils are keen to offer their opinions yet also listen to others and as a result pupils work both co-operatively and collaboratively together. One child commented, "My wish is that if someone gets something special that others do too." Younger children have a good knowledge of Bible stories and express their views well about what the stories mean to them. In one lesson seen during the inspection, pupils really enjoyed playing a traditional game associated with the Jewish feast of Hanukkah and developed their knowledge well of the importance to the Jewish people of this festival. Older pupils articulated clearly their ideas about what they had learned after working with the Vicar on ways of improving the quality of Family Sunday worship. Pupils have a good knowledge for their age of Anglican practice and understand, for example, the importance of Confirmation to practising Christians. There are some good examples of pupils using their writing skills well. However opportunities are sometimes missed in ensuring that when pupils do write the quality of their writing reflects what they are capable of achieving.

The leadership and management of the school as a Christian school are of an outstanding quality.

The leadership and management of the school as a church school are outstanding. The headteacher and his small hard-working staff are an excellent team who value and support the school's Christian foundation and partnership with the church. The Christian principles and beliefs contained in the Aims and Mission Statement are being lived out in the life of the school. The school is very effective in maintaining close links with parents, the local community and the church. The church makes regular use of the building. Pupils' personal

development is enriched by their involvement in a wide range of activities including support for local and national charities for which, despite its small size, the school raises large amounts of money. Both parents and children think highly of the school. One parent commented, 'The school has a real feel good factor.' The headteacher leads by Christian example and takes every opportunity to promote the Christian ethos of the school. Governors are highly supportive of the school and as such know what the school's strengths and weakness are. Some very good steps have been and still are being taken to improve the quality of the school building and grounds. As such the headteacher and governors demonstrate their desire to ensure that the pupils work in the best possible learning environment. The vicar plays a key part in ensuring the school's continuing success in promoting its Anglican foundation. Since the previous inspection the school has improved and strengthened further its strong Christian foundation.

SIAS report March 2007 Altham St James' Church of England Primary school Burnley Road, Altham, Accrington, Lancashire, BB5 5UH