

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Arkholme Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Arkholme,  
Carnforth,  
Lancashire  
LA6 1AU

#### **Diocese: Blackburn**

Local authority: Lancashire

Dates of inspection: February 8<sup>th</sup> 2007

Date of last inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> November 2003

School's unique reference number: 119523

Headteacher: Mrs L Gee

Inspector's name and number: Mr R H Hardwick

#### **School context**

Arkholme C of E Primary School is a smaller than average rural primary school mainly drawing pupils from the combined parishes of Arkholme, Whittington and Gressingham. Pupils' achievement on entry is broadly in line with the national average, but with a wide variation. Most pupils come to the school through attendance at the voluntary nursery on the site. Almost none of the pupils take a free school meal. The headteacher divides her time between Arkholme and Yealand Primary School in a shared headship arrangement.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Arkholme as a Church of England school are good**

Arkholme C of E Primary School is a good, inclusive church school with some outstanding features. The headteacher and staff are united in their aim of living out the Christian faith in their life and work and they are excellent models for the pupils who make good progress in all aspects of their development.

#### **Established strengths**

- The teamwork of teachers who model Christian values to the pupils
- The emphasis placed in religious education on pupils exploring the meaning of Christian faith for their own lives
- Worship is well planned, effectively covers the Church's Year and reinforces the Christian values evident in the daily life and work of the school community.
- The pupils have high self esteem and show respect for each other and the school environment

#### **Focus for development**

- To Introduce more formal self-evaluation of the Christian distinctiveness of the school in co-operation with the foundation governors
- To make the Christian foundation of the school more explicit in classrooms
- To introduce a formal system of assessment in religious education to ensure that standards are in line with national expectations and pupils are clearer about their achievements.
- To produce a portfolio of work in religious education which records the standard and variety of pupils' work over time

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

Pupils at Arkholme C of E Primary School are valued as individual members of God's creation by the headteacher and her staff, who are excellent models of the way Christians should behave in their daily lives. They are united in their high expectation that all pupils, whatever their talents, abilities or challenges will make the maximum progress possible in every aspect of their development. Pupils' social development is outstanding. Older pupils care for the

younger ones. A parent told of how her child dropped an apple outside, which was picked up by an older pupil, taken in, carefully washed and returned. Pupils play together happily and safely. Moral development is very good. Pupils respect and follow the code of conduct and can apply the teachings of Jesus to their situation. They behave well in class and respect each other and their teachers. There is little or no bullying. The school is relatively small but provides an impressive range of cultural and sporting activities. Pupils rehearsing for the Pied Piper production sang with enthusiasm in the rehearsals in progress during the inspection. Pupils are supporting a Muslim boy and a Christian girl in the Gambia, which raises their awareness of the religious and cultural diversity in the world beyond their villages. Other Christian visitors from overseas also widen the pupils' cultural horizons. Spiritual development is good. Pupils understand that God's world is a place of wonder. They respond very well to the modern hymns and songs used in worship and can talk about their meaning. A small group take responsibility for the database of hymns for worship. Mealtimes are begun with grace and they pray before they go home. They are encouraged to use quiet times during worship to reflect on the meaning of what they have heard. Each day is seen as a new beginning for each child, as they start on green in the traffic light behaviour code. They therefore experience the reconciliation, forgiveness and renewal at the heart of Christianity. Classrooms do not however fully exploit the opportunity to project Christian spirituality, either in display work or in quiet corners where pupils can reflect or express their own private prayers.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

The headteacher has planned an effective scheme of worship for the year, which reinforces the Christian values being lived out in the daily life of the school. These include love, forgiveness, truth, taking responsibility for one's actions, care for God's world and respect for those whose religious and cultural traditions are different. Worship therefore makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Worship time is made special by the use of a wide range of appropriate music and a prayer table. A candle is lit to signify the beginning of worship and put out at the end. In one act of worship the headteacher used sights on her journey to work to draw out some interesting contributions from pupils on the joy and excitement of God's world. Pupils sang a modern hymn with enthusiasm. In an act of worship to explore new beginnings, the Chinese New Year was used and related to pupils' lives in school with a very effective spontaneous prayer. Pupils know the traditional prayers such as the Lord's Prayer and can respond appropriately to the traditional phrases the vicar uses in his weekly act of worship. Visitors to worship, some from overseas, widen the pupils' experience of different traditions of worship. Pupils themselves have organised the database of hymns and manage the use of the electronic whiteboard. This is used as a focal point for worship time and compensates for the considerable obstacles the building poses to the creation of an ideal location for worship. Pupils pray before meals and at the end of the day, using a variety of prayers they have helped to collect. Opportunities to experience worship in church are limited. Two annual services are held in church. A harvest service at Arkholme and a Christmas act of worship at Whittington, which last year celebrated the diverse Christmas traditions around the world. Opportunities to worship in church on other major festivals are not taken. Pupils spoken to said they enjoyed worship and could recall some occasions which had made an impact on them. There is however no formal mechanism in school for gathering and considering their views of the impact of worship.

### **The effectiveness of Religious Education is good**

Religious Education is well led and managed by a well-qualified part time co-ordinator. Time allocated to the subject is appropriate and there are good resources available including artefacts relating to Judaism and Islam. Good use is made of the electronic whiteboards to broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of religious faith and practice that would otherwise be beyond their reach. Pupils saw a film of a Muslim washing before prayer, discussed the significance of the actions and then thought about how Christians also prepare to pray. Emphasis is placed on pupils learning from religion and developing their own insights into what Jesus's teaching means for Christians today. Pupils are told at the beginning of each lesson what the aims are and teachers spend a short time at the end of the lesson checking what progress pupils have made in knowledge and understanding. In a role play,

involving bullying, pupils acted out their initial response. They then discussed what Jesus might have done or said. They showed in their re-enactment that they could apply Christian values of love and forgiveness and reconciliation. Pupils make good responses to tasks that challenge them to imagine their thoughts and feelings as if they were characters in Bible stories. They write good modern versions of parables such as, "I need a Tenner" - a modern-day unforgiving debtor. These challenging activities make a major contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. The pupils' experience Christian material across the curriculum, for example the free readers for literacy work include books with Christian stories. The standard of work matches that achieved in other subjects in the school. Lessons are planned with the national standards in religious education in mind, but there is no indication to the pupils of the level of their achievements. Marking is conscientious but does not often indicate to pupils how they might improve their work.

### **The leadership and management of the school as a Church school are good**

The School Prospectus makes the nature of the school and its aim to provide education in a Christian context very clear. The wagtail logo on the cover was inspired by the initial letters of the ecclesiastical parishes related to the school. Parents hold the headteacher in very high regard for her outstanding leadership and the very high standards and personal progress made by the children. Under her leadership Christian values underpin the whole of school life resulting in the excellent atmosphere and relationships in school. The teachers are united in their support for her and work well as a team, running the school smoothly when the head is at Yealand School. Appropriate policies are in place for religious education and collective worship incorporating Diocesan guidance about their distinctiveness in a church school. Christian values underpin the emphasis on the respect for individuals. They contribute to the self-esteem and high quality of care for each other that the children and teachers show. An active School Council gives pupils a voice in improving their school. Religious Education is well led and managed. The school makes good use of Diocesan services to improve the quality of worship and teaching and learning in religious education. The headteacher and staff meet regularly to review the curriculum, including religious education. Opportunities are taken to deal with Christian material throughout the curriculum, for example in work on the planets and in the literacy scheme. The governing body is very supportive and has mechanisms for reviewing school performance in subject areas on a rolling programme. It is however too long since religious education was reviewed. The foundation governors take a keen interest in the school and support the head, but have not yet done any deeper critical analysis of church school distinctiveness using the Diocesan or National Society self-evaluation materials specific to the purpose. There are some indications of the Christian nature of the school to be seen in the building but they are not sufficient or prominent enough.

SIAS report February 2007 Arkholme Church of England Primary School Arkholme, Carnforth, Lancashire LA6 1AU