

Armitage Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Rostron Ave,
Ardwick,
Manchester
M12 5NP

Diocese: Manchester

Local authority: Manchester

Date of inspection: 31st January 2007

Dates of last inspection: 29th – 31st January 2002

School's unique reference number: 105502

Headteacher: Joe Johnson

Inspector's name and number: Graham H Nuttall 456

School context

The school is located in an ethnically diverse area of high social deprivation close to the city centre of Manchester. More than half of the pupils are of African and Caribbean heritage and 35 pupils are refugees or asylum seekers. Levels of unemployment and social migration are well above average and consequently a considerable number of pupils join or leave the school during the course of each academic year. Some children return to the school after a few years elsewhere. Almost half the pupils have English as a second language and there is an exceptionally high proportion of pupils with learning needs, particularly social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and speech problems.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Armitage as a Church of England school are good

Armitage C E School is a good church school which enables children from many different cultures and backgrounds to develop tolerance, care, respect and consideration for each other. Relationships between staff, parents and pupils are of a high order and every pupil is made to feel valued and special. Parents are welcomed and the school provides opportunities for them to develop their command of English and learn new skills. There is a sense of friendliness, energy and genuine care for each individual within the spirit of Christian love and as a result pupils rapidly gain confidence and self-esteem.

Established strengths

- The inclusive Christian ethos which is demonstrated through the outstanding and imaginative provision of pastoral care and support for pupils.
- An effective learning environment promoting spiritual, moral and cultural growth.
- A dedicated and collaborative staff team making a highly effective contribution to the school.
- The well-established links with parents and the local community.

Focus for development

- Maintain and strengthen relationships with the church and other faith communities.
- Develop effective strategies to enable foundation governors to monitor and evaluate the delivery of Collective Worship.
- Provide staff and governor training to further support spiritual development within the school.
- Provide a centre of focus within Acts of Worship.

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

The school makes good provision to meet the needs of all its learners and provide pupils with a secure learning environment. Children are generally happy to come to school and they express their views with increasing confidence and enthusiasm. Continuous hard work by the school in developing citizenship and inclusion impacts positively on pupils' social, moral and cultural development. Rules are applied consistently by staff and most pupils understand and accept the clear parameters set for them. The Christian ethos, whilst not always explicit, underpins the outstanding levels of pastoral care children receive and the high expectations for behaviour. Learners from all cultures feel secure in the school and they say that their beliefs are respected and their knowledge of other faiths is valued. Most parents value the school and feel comfortable approaching staff when they need to. The wide ethnic mix of pupils currently attending the school embraces more than twenty different "first" languages and there is some good support for bi-lingual learners. For example, a member of staff highly qualified in French communicates to parents and children recently arrived from Somalia in this language. Superb efforts are made to obtain additional support services from both the LEA and the local community. Parents are given opportunities to develop their command of English and learn new skills through school-initiated courses in cookery and parenting classes and this impacts positively on home school relationships. Parents are generally happy with the way the school helps children make progress and the way they develop their levels of confidence and self-esteem. One parent remarked, "The school is really welcoming and you know the teachers here will help you."

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship occupies an important part in the life of the school. Planning is consistent and is followed by all those who lead worship including the Vicar who is a regular visitor to school. Weekly themes are broad enough in scope to allow for a variety of music, art, drama and dance to be included as worship elements. Worship themes help pupils to focus upon Christian values and this impacts well on pupils' standards of behaviour and manners. Special services are held at major festivals such as Christmas, Easter and Harvest, but geographical constraints prevent these from being held in church. Pupils talk about how they enjoy and benefit from being involved and taking part in class-led assemblies. The standard of singing is good and pupils join in sung praise enthusiastically. Evaluation of worship is currently very informal and Governors need to develop effective strategies to monitor and evaluate the quality and impact of worship. The school has undertaken no in-service training in respect of school worship or RE since the last inspection and there is a need to develop this aspect in order to further enhance the spiritual development of pupils. Governors should also consider making a visual focal point with acts of worship.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the school as a church school is good

The happy working atmosphere and welcoming environment reflects the Headteacher's "people friendly approach". Strong leadership supported by a committed staff provides a clear vision for school development. All staff work hard to ensure pupils are given quality-learning experiences. Achievements are celebrated within school assemblies and the views of pupils are fully represented through the School Council. All adults within school provide positive role models and new arrivals to the school and to the country are quickly made to feel very welcome. The variety of ways the school celebrates diversity and promotes tolerance and care is impressive. There is not currently a full complement of foundation governors and this matter should be addressed, but a recently appointed diocesan governor stated that he was keen to support the school and its Christian ethos. The innovate use of peer massage and meditation coupled with the work of part-time psychotherapists and a massage therapist contribute to the calm atmosphere within the school. Lessons often commence with a short period of meditation and calm and staff have particular expertise in these areas. Through good leadership and management the school provides pupils with opportunities to grow and develop within an effective, caring and Christian ethos. There has been good progress with most key issues raised in the previous inspection report and leaders throughout the school demonstrate a firm commitment and a good capacity to improve.