

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Holm Cultram Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Abbeytown

Wigton

Cumbria

CA7 4RU

Diocese: Carlisle

Local authority: Cumbria

Dates of inspection: 22nd September 2006

Date of last inspection: 19th September 2002

School's unique reference number: 112249

Headteacher: Linda Macdonald

Inspector's name and number: Mrs C.M.Bartlett 444

School context

Holm Cultram Abbey is a small school of 78 pupils. The catchment area is mixed, consisting mainly of farming and associated industries, there is some unemployment and social deprivation and several parents commute to neighbouring towns. The pupils reflect a wide range of special needs and abilities. The school has been through a difficult period due to the ill health of the previous headteacher. The current headteacher has been appointed very recently, as have a number of the teaching staff.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Holm Cultram Abbey School as a Church of England school are satisfactory

The school family works well as a team and the involvement of all members is valued. The new headteacher has identified areas for development and improvement both to raise standards and increase involvement with the Church. The Christian vision for the school is shared by the enthusiastic and committed governing body and the new staff team and strengthened by the supportive and effective role of the vicar.

Established strengths

- The role of the school in the life of the church and community
- The individual caring shown by children and staff alike
- The supportive and enthusiastic 'Friends of Abbey School'

Focus for development

- Increase the participation of the children in preparing and leading Collective Worship
- Develop the records of worship to include evaluation and involve all participants
- Develop the role of the RE co-ordinator through appropriate training
- Improve the monitoring and evaluation role of the governors through training

The school through its distinctive Christian character is satisfactory at meeting the needs of all learners

A sign outside the entrance to Holm Cultram Abbey School rightly declares it to be a place where all individuals are valued. The children demonstrate confidence and self-esteem and there is a happy and purposeful atmosphere in the school. A good inclusive ethos ensures that all children are able to participate in all aspects of school life. Individual needs are well supported, not least by the care and concern of the children themselves, as observed in a School Council meeting when matters of safety in the playground were discussed. The spontaneous response of the children to the recent destruction of the Abbey Church by fire showed their feeling of ownership of the Church and affection for the vicar. Their generous and ongoing fundraising initiatives are a testament to the very strong relationship between the Church and School. One child reflected on a remembered occasion in the Abbey as 'a

special ceremony, in a special Church by a special vicar'. New initiatives for individual tracking, developing the profile of the subject leaders and clarifying progression through the Key Stages are contributing to a satisfactory quality of education. There is an enthusiastic new RE co-ordinator who needs appropriate training to establish her role. Good involvement of parents includes serving on the governing body, helping in the classrooms and after school activities, and running a very supportive 'Friends of Abbeytown School'. Communication between school and parents is good and recent changes to the organisation of Parent's Evenings and content of reports have been in response to this dialogue. A recent new garden initiative sponsored by the parents offers many opportunities for aspects of the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is good

Members of the school council speak enthusiastically about the daily act of worship, appreciating the 'opportunity to get to know different members of staff' as they lead worship and enjoying 'being the whole school together'. The varied leadership and the committed involvement of the staff contribute well to the spiritual development of the children. Children give practical help in the organisation of daily worship and, on occasions, will participate in the preparation and conduct of worship on a class basis. It is recommended that the children become more closely involved in conduct of daily worship. A good atmosphere for worship is created in spite of the size of the hall. The inclusive policy of the school was evident when the children showed tolerance and understanding of a restive Reception child with special needs. Children enjoy the occasions when parents and friends attend worship such as a special 'Christian Aid' assembly and annually at Harvest, Christmas and the end of the Year. The contribution of the vicar to Collective Worship is effective and greatly appreciated. New methods of recording acts of collective worship are being introduced including opportunities for evaluation and involving all participants.

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

The head and governors share a positive Christian vision for the school, which is permeating all aspects of school life. The working partnership between chair and head is developing well and the financial expertise of the vicar assists the governors in prioritising budget decisions. A collaborative approach involving staff and governors was used in drawing up the development plan. The headteacher is showing effective leadership in raising the standards of the school and promoting the Christian vision of the school. The new initiative of a whole school visit to the Church and grounds on Ascension Day was well supported by members of the church. As the staff is substantially new, responsibilities are changing and the effectiveness of this vision has yet to be manifest but already results are improving. The staff provide good role models and are already working well as a team. The management of different subjects is being developed and appropriate training sought, for example in the role of the RE co-ordinator. Governors are seeking training appropriate to their roles and there is a projected training for the whole body in monitoring and evaluating. This area of management is in its infancy under the new team and, whilst informally happening, has yet to be structured and recorded. The vicar sees his relationship with the school as central to his ministry in the parish and is therefore closely involved in many aspects of school life. The views of the parents are sought and acted upon and a very imaginative and effective School Council successfully promotes the ideas and opinions of the children. The school is already demonstrating the capacity to improve through the commitment and drive of the headteacher supported by the enthusiasm of the staff and governors.