

Lees Hill Church of England School

Lees Hill
Brampton
CA8 2BB

Diocese: Carlisle

Local authority: Cumbria
Date of inspection: 11th December, 2007
Dates of last inspection: 30th September, 2003
and 3rd October, 2003
School's unique reference number: 112256
Headteacher: Mrs Jill Simpson
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Carol Berry NS324



**Diocese of
Carlisle**

Board of Education

"Every Child Matters To God."

School context

Lees Hill Church of England School is a smaller than average school drawing pupils from a rural area. Five per cent of pupils are from ethnic minorities. Nearly one third of pupils have special needs. The headteacher has been in post for one year and has a significant teaching commitment.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Lees Hill School as a Church of England school are good

The life of this school is founded on Christian values. These are put into practice in relationships by pupils and teachers with the result that this school is a happy learning community where achievement is good. Worship is imaginative and is enriched by the Christian faith of the teachers leading worship.

Established strengths

- The headteacher's excellent leadership.
- Committed teachers, who are happy to share their own beliefs whilst demonstrating respect for the beliefs of pupils.
- Excellent planning for worship and support for teachers leading worship.
- Outstanding use of creative arts activities in worship.

Focus for development

- Provide opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for leadership of worship.
- Develop understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural faith through the use of performing arts in worship.
- Involve all stakeholders in the process of developing school policies to ensure that they clearly articulate the school's Christian vision.

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

In this caring school, which is described by many parents as a 'small family', pupils' achievement and personal development are good. Older pupils care for younger ones, looking after them in the playground and helping them at lunchtime. The life of the school is founded on Christian values. Pupils themselves identified their own collection of 'golden rules' which have now replaced the list of school rules. They reflected on the Bible stories they had been studying in RE, selecting the most important values to emerge from these stories. As a result, pupils are able to apply these principles to their own behaviour, using them to make decisions about right and wrong. Teachers are quick to praise pupils and to make them realise that they matter. In a KS1 lesson, pupils realised that they all shared responsibility for caring for a pupil who was upset, because the teacher encouraged the class

to look after the pupil for the rest of day and gave time for pupils to share silly jokes in order to make her laugh. There is currently no School Council but in this small school all pupils are regularly consulted and their views contribute to the school development plan. Most pupils feel that there is little bullying and that when it does occur it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils commented on the concern that is shown by teachers, not only for the victim, but also to help the person doing the bullying. The emphasis on pupils taking responsibility for their own behaviour and the relationships being built with pupils by teachers are resulting in a changing climate within the school which has been noted by parents. Many parents commented that their children's attitudes to school had become more positive during the last year. Although a number of pupils still say that they do not enjoy school, even those pupils are able to identify aspects of school about which they are enthusiastic. All members of the school community know that they have a valued role within the school. Teachers and support staff said that this was 'a lovely place to work'. An NQT teacher praised the support that had been offered to her during her first year of teaching and the dinner ladies were delighted that they had been invited to share in an RE Church trail. Multi-cultural education is outstanding. RE makes a significant contribution to this through effective teaching about other religions, for example, KS2 pupils visited the Samye-Ling Buddhist Centre. Involvement in the local consortium for the performing arts has provided pupils with experience of Caribbean dance. The landing area, through which pupils pass to gain access to all parts of the school, is a focal point for displays which challenge pupils to think about Christian issues. The nativity scene displayed there includes cards with many thought provoking questions, for example, 'Why is Jesus special?' These were discussed by pupils on their way to play at break time.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils are developing a good understanding of the Christian faith through worship. This is because teachers are willing to share their own beliefs and are committed to providing enjoyable worship. Teachers are supported in their preparation for worship by detailed planning and inspiring resources. The use of evaluative 'post-its' placed in worship resource books provides feedback and is a quick and effective way to ensure that worship leaders build on previous experience. Informal evaluation of worship takes place through conversations and evaluation forms completed by pupils about worship are included in a pictorial record of special worship events. This record provides a reminder of some of the ideas covered in worship and by celebrating good practice provides inspiration for leaders of worship. As a result, enthusiasm for worship is growing as pupils realise that worship is relevant to their lives. Teachers are careful to respect the beliefs of pupils and worship provides all pupils with time for reflection. One pupil said, "I am not a very Christian person but worship gives me things to think about". Pupils' understanding of Anglican worship is developed through the visits of Canon Morris who leads worship every week and through the use of Walton church for worship once each term. Last year the school shared with the local church in the Mexican practice of Posada, passing nativity figures around homes in the local villages. However, there has been little other use of resources from the world church in order to develop understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. Pupils have sometimes used performing arts in worship and have sometimes participated in worship in other ways, for example by reading. They have not had opportunities to assume responsibility for leadership of some parts of worship.

The use of creative arts in worship is outstanding. This imaginative way to involve pupils in worship results in memorable worship which is an effective expression of pupils' thoughts and feelings. Activities used include making a dove to represent peace; recording ways to help others on a picture of a hand; making prayer leaves for the prayer tree.

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

Excellent strategic planning by the new head teacher during her first year in this post has laid foundations to ensure that the school is a happy and effective Church school. The full impact of these changes is not yet evident, although parents say that their children are more relaxed and are happier at school. The headteacher's commitment to involving all stakeholders in

producing the school's vision statement means that there is a good understanding of what it means to be a Church school. This vision is shared with new parents in the school prospectus. Following a detailed analysis of school policies, it was realised that some policies do not explain the Christian values on which they are based. As a result, many members of the school have not yet made links between the school's good practice and Christian values. The school development plan now includes the need to review these policies in order that understanding of the Christian vision for the school is further developed. The views of all stakeholders are valued by the leadership of this school. The views of pupils are collected regularly and the most recent questionnaire sent to parents included a question on the school's spiritual dimension. The governors now have a clearer understanding of their role as the result of attending training courses. As a result of this training, monitoring visits by governors now have a precise focus and make a contribution to the school development plan. Regular visits from foundation governors are planned to monitor worship and RE. However, the last monitoring visit by foundation governors was before this training had taken place and therefore the governors have not yet carried out effective evaluation of the school's Christian character. The close partnership with the local church makes an important contribution to pupils' understanding of what it means to live the Christian faith. Canon Morris is a regular visitor and has made a contribution to planning for worship. A member of the congregation serves as a foundation governor and gave her time to support the school on an RE trip. Members of the local church offer support by attending special services and taking part in fund-raising events.

SIAS report December 2007 Lees Hill Church of England School Brampton CA8 2BB