

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St James' Church of England School
Wellington Row
Whitehaven
Cumbria
CA28 7HG



**Diocese of
Carlisle**

Board of Education

"Every Child Matters To God."

Diocese: Carlisle
Local authority: Cumbria
Date of inspection: 22/02/08
URN: 112298
Headteacher: Mrs Catherine Winzor
Inspector's name and number: Penny Hollander 526

School context

The school is situated in one of the older parts of Whitehaven on the west coast of Cumbria in an area of mixed housing. Almost all pupils are of white ethnicity although there are a few children from other religious and ethnic backgrounds. There is some geographical and cultural isolation. The majority of pupils transfer to the school from the nearby infant school and a large proportion of children come from out of catchment area. The headteacher has been in post since May 2007.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St James CE Junior School as a Church of England school are good.

The school has a clear Christian ethos which permeates all of school life. Christian values of love, care, compassion, respect and responsibility are demonstrated on a daily basis between members of the school community. The links between the school, church and local community are close.

Established strengths

- The personal development of all pupils in an inclusive environment where individual needs are well met.
- The close links with the church through which the school and church support each other.
- Parental support and active involvement in the many school activities and events.

Focus for development

- Pupils leading and evaluating acts of collective worship.
- Strengthen Christian Church global links.

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

This is a very happy school to be in. The personal development of all pupils is a key priority and has many outstanding aspects. The differing abilities and needs of pupils are very well catered for within the Christian ethos. Children and parents alike describe the love, care, and compassion that staff in school show to all pupils on a daily basis. The children know that they are appreciated within an inclusive and safe environment. They feel valued and special and self-esteem is high. They speak warmly of the trust they feel and the mutual respect that exists between them and all adults in school. They take seriously the responsibility they are given for one another particularly through the buddy system in which older pupils look after younger ones at break and lunchtimes. They appreciate the Friendship Garden which provides a focal point for this as well as giving a space for reflection and quiet. Any disputes are dealt with quickly and fairly in a spirit of forgiveness and compassion. Pupils' achievements both in and out of school are recognised through weekly celebration assemblies. This is reinforced on the achievements board display. Children are proud of their school and enjoy being involved in reflecting on its distinctive Christian vision as the recent school competition for designing a new school logo illustrates. Pupils are encouraged to become independent and reflective thinkers. Religious Education lessons provide good examples of this in encouraging a personal response and understanding the perspective of others, particularly those of a different faith or culture. This helps to support the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all learners. Concern for others is another key feature in this development at a local and more global level. Carol singing locally for older people is one example of this, whilst Lent and Harvest appeals enable the children to appreciate the needs of those at a more global level. Participation in Fairtrade activities particularly, enhances children's understanding of this. The range of appropriate Christian symbols in both classrooms and public areas of the school promotes an awareness of the Christian foundation of the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Children are positive about these times and say they particularly enjoy being actively involved in these occasions as in having talk partners and responding to questions. This is clear in the reflective answers they give and in the prayers they write. Prayers at lunchtime and at the end of the school day underline the commitment of the school to ensure that the Christian nature of the school is actively promoted. This is reinforced by the weekly visits to the Church for collective worship which are led by a member of the clergy. School services held in the church at important times in the church year, such as Christmas and Harvest are well supported by parents and members of the church community and are further evidence of the close links between church and school for collective worship. These occasions ensure that the children learn about Anglican traditions. Planning and evaluation of acts of collective worship by adults in the school show how seriously the school takes this aspect of school life. Children express a wish to take a more leading and evaluative role at these times. This is recognised and appreciated by the school as an area for development. In the action plan to develop the school's distinctiveness as a church school there is a clear commitment to increase children's awareness of the wider church through collective worship. This is also an area for development.

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

The headteacher and governing body work closely and effectively together to ensure a distinctive Christian vision for the school. The vicar, as chair of the governing body is

particularly instrumental in this. Staff are fully included and have worked closely with the management team to produce a vision statement. This is actively promoted by all. Everyone appreciates the clear Christian commitment and focus that the new headteacher brings to the school. Teamwork is a clear feature of the leadership and management of the school. Decision making is a joint enterprise and everyone knows that their views are received and acted upon where appropriate. Staff welcome training opportunities given in both RE leadership and collective worship. This has been put into practice effectively. The children's views about the development and the progress of the school are actively sought through regular classroom discussion and the school council. Children appreciate the many ways that they are given to be involved in school life. They are confident in expressing their opinions and explaining the reasons for their requests. One example is the new bike sheds which are being installed. Parents' involvement with, and enthusiasm for, the school is also clear. They fully support all school events, including church services. Their regular fundraising on behalf of the school is another example of their commitment. Parents express their strong satisfaction with the school in their responses to questionnaires about different aspects of school life. They clearly appreciate the informal daily contact with the staff about their children. Links with the infant school are good with a variety of joint events including some church services. Older pupils like taking responsibility for infant pupils who are about to join the school and this helps to ensure that the transition is as smooth as possible. The bi-monthly contribution the headteacher makes to the parish magazine ensures that members of the local church and community are kept well-informed of school activities and in their turn they offer support to the school in a variety of ways, including one member becoming a foundation governor. The school is involved in many local events and is seen as an important part of the community.

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