

Allithwaite Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Road,
Allithwaite,
Grange-over-Sands,
Cumbria,
LA11 7RD

Diocese:	Carlisle
Local authority:	Cumbria
Date of inspection:	Friday 23 rd November 2012
Date of last inspection:	28 th February 2008
School's unique reference number:	112282
Headteacher:	Mr. Brian Jones
Inspector's name & number:	Mrs. Anne B. Woodcock (445)

School context

Allithwaite Church of England Primary School serves the villages of Allithwaite and Kents Bank on the Cartmel Peninsular in west Cumbria. The 86 pupils are of white British heritage and come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. The headteacher has been in post since September 2011. The school's outdoor areas, though not extensive, are very effectively used to facilitate excellent outdoor learning for all pupils.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Allithwaite Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

Christian values are very well-established and understood by all members of the school community. The strong Christian leadership of the senior leaders and the excellent support of the governing body and local church, together with a dedicated staff, provide an explicitly Christian environment in which pupils' personal and spiritual development is effectively nurtured and grown.

Established strengths

- The caring and nurturing relationships, based on Christian love and trust, which effectively support pupils and their families.
- The excellent behaviour and attitude of pupils.
- The strong and mutually supportive links with the church which enhance pupils' spiritual development.
- The Christian vision and leadership of the headteacher, senior leaders and governors, who are well-supported by dedicated staff.

Focus for development

- Provide opportunities for pupils to be regularly engaged in planning, leading and evaluating acts of worship.

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

Pupils feel very safe and valued in school. They are confident and articulate, expressing their ideas and opinions within an atmosphere of trust and acceptance. Pupils have a very clear understanding of the school's 'purpose statement' which is firmly based on Christian values and gospel teaching. They explain that being happy, showing respect and caring for others and the environment is included in their school's purposes because they are important and that is the way Jesus wants everyone to live. Behaviour is excellent. "We're one big family where everyone counts and no-one ever leaves you out," explained one pupil, "so no-one ever fights." Pupils are highly motivated and they are eager to learn. The focus on outdoor

learning within the rich, creative curriculum supports pupils' spiritual and personal development extremely well. Pupils of all ages collaborate and support each other to achieve agreed goals. They are actively involved in planning and decision-making, recognising the need to be safe whilst using tools and resources. Working with natural materials such as the wood, stone and mud used to create pictures and models, provides pupils with increasing knowledge of God's world and the need to conserve what we have been given. The school's calm, purposeful working atmosphere encourages all pupils to achieve their potential. Pupils are very well-supported enabling all, including those with additional needs, to make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Standards of achievement are very high and all pupils make very good progress. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Pupils have great trust in and respect for their teachers. They say, "Our teachers make lessons fun and exciting, they always help you to sort out any problems and they're good at showing you how to make your work even better." Outstanding teaching and high expectations inspire pupils to achieve the goals set for them. Quality first hand learning experiences, such as visits to a Manchester Synagogue or the Houses of Parliament, make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Religious Education (RE) makes a very positive contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Through the study of Judaism, Islam and Hinduism, pupils have a growing knowledge and understanding of how other people worship God and live their lives. The partnership with a school in Whalley Range, Manchester effectively supports this aspect of learning. Reflection has a high profile in school. Pupils value and make good use of the reflection areas they have created in their classrooms and outdoors. They explain, "You use them to help you be quiet and think, especially about what you've been learning and how you can help others." Effective use is made of music and the arts. Displays reflect pupils' experiences and inspire further learning. Christian symbols such as ceramic crosses, prayer trees and wall hangings made by pupils make a very positive contribution to the school's Christian character. Pupils are fully aware of the need to work for others. This can be seen in the support they give to a school in Jammu, India and a pupil in Ethiopia as well as their community work in the local village care home and park. They are proud of their fund-raising for charities such as Children in Need.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Pupils demonstrate a very positive and enthusiastic attitude to worship. "It brings us all together to be calm and share the end of our day," explained one pupil. "It's important because it helps us to think about and do things differently and it inspires us to be better." Worship is central to the daily life of the school. It is firmly based on Christian values and Bible teaching and is very well-planned. It is led by staff and a variety of visitors from the local church and other faith communities such as the Methodist minister. All use the termly plan, ensuring that pupils experience the chosen themes consistently. The church is used every Monday, when parents and members of the community join with the school to worship. Parents value this opportunity and attend well, saying that it inspires their thinking as well as their understanding of the work undertaken in school. Pupils are actively engaged in worship. They open worship by lighting a candle, leading responses and signing the school prayer. They say that they particularly enjoy helping to act out or read a story, such as the one about Jacob and his brothers in the worship observed. Prayer and reflection are key features of the worship life of the school. Pupils know traditional prayers such as the Lord's Prayer and they write prayers for their own use in class. Their willingness and ability to extemporise prayers within normal daily worship is most impressive. It demonstrates pupils' developing knowledge of the purpose and nature of prayer, their personal understanding of God and the theme of the worship. The 'Prayer and Reflection' days introduced last year support and extend pupils' consideration of their response to faith themes. Music is also a key feature of worship. Pupils sing a range of songs and hymns with joy and enthusiasm. Links with the church are very strong and they make an outstanding contribution to the spiritual development of pupils, staff and parents. The vicar and lay members visit the school regularly to lead worship and support RE. Monthly 'Messy Church' events are very well-attended by pupils and their families. "I love Messy Church!" stated one pupil, "and I can't wait for it to be the Christmas one." The church is also used for special services at Christmas, Easter and Harvest. Church and school work together to provide an 'experience Christmas' event which is also used by other local schools. The evaluation of worship is rigorous, involving pupils, parents and governors as well as staff. Pupils are proud of the fact that their evaluations have led to an increased number of visitors leading their worship. They believe that different people of faith leading worship helps them to experience ideas and styles beyond those provided by the

teachers and the vicar. Although pupils are consistently engaged in and value worship, they have limited opportunities for taking a lead in worship and this is an area for development.

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

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have a very clear and distinctive Christian vision for the school. This is agreed and shared by staff who demonstrate the Christian values of love, hope and trust consistently. Relationships throughout the school are strong and mutually supportive and morale is very high. All members of the school family speak very positively about the significant changes and developments of the school as a church school introduced by the current headteacher. Although challenged by financial and other constraints, the school has developed an outstanding curriculum based on outdoor learning. Christian values and teaching are explicit within the study themes, ensuring that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is consistently enhanced and supported. The very significant changes have been brought about through the hard work and determination of dedicated teachers who say that they have been included 'every step of the way.' Governor support for ongoing improvement is excellent. Governors monitor and evaluate all aspects of the school's work very effectively. They provide practical support, acting as willing helpers and visiting the school regularly. Governors ensure that parental views and opinions are canvassed through regular meetings with parents. As one parent explained, "We know our governors, they're always around and they know about everything that's going on in school." Termly meetings with teachers ensure that governors are responsive to staff development needs and concerns. Church school issues feature strongly in the school's improvement planning. Governors ensure that collective worship and RE are well-managed and resourced and that evaluations lead to improvement. The pupil voice is strong and well-established. Pupils are very confident that their opinions are valued. This is demonstrated by the fact that governors attend some of their meetings. They are proud of their contribution to the school's decision-making processes, citing the new 'light tree' in the entrance hall as one of their most recent ideas. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They are confident that their children are happy, safe and nurtured within a distinctly Christian environment. They comment very positively about the way in which their children develop into confident, mature young people. Parents say that they are kept fully informed and that teachers are very approachable and always ready to listen should they have any concerns. Many parents act as willing helpers, supporting forest school and other learning in and out of school. Very effective use is made of a range of partnerships to enhance provision and provide additional learning opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

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