



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Almondbury Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Infant School

Longcroft
Almondbury
Huddersfield
West Yorkshire
HD5 8XW

Diocese: Wakefield

Local authority: Kirklees
Dates of inspection: 15 June 2007
Date of last inspection: 21 and 25 January 2002
School's unique reference number: 107727
Headteacher: Miss Jane Sargent
Inspector's name and number: Jeffery Plumb 248

School context

This is a small school (147 children), with a falling roll, in which most children are from White British backgrounds. The proportion from minority ethnic heritages exceeds that typical for schools nationally. Many of these children are at an early stage in learning English as an additional language. There is also a small group of refugees and asylum seekers. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, but an above average proportion has a statement of special educational need. The school has been awarded Investors in People and Active Mark awards. Links with schools in five European countries have been built up over a number of years.

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

Almondbury Church of England (VC) Infant School is a good church school with some outstanding features. The headteacher's vision of what it means to be a church school is outstanding. However, recent constraints and changes in the parish have meant that she has not been able to bring about the improvements to the distinctiveness of the school as a church school at the brisk pace she would have liked. With a new incumbent in the parish church and supportive foundation governors the time is now right to drive that change at the cracking pace desired by the headteacher.

Established strengths

- Achievement of all children in this inclusive school is outstanding.
- The Christian love and care is greatly appreciated by the children and their parents.
- Those within the school community with a Christian faith are nurtured and valued, but those with a different faith or no faith at all are treated with equal dignity and respect.

Focus for development

- Improve the link with the parish church and increase the involvement of the rector or a member of his team in the life of the school.
- Increase foundation governor involvement in supporting and challenging the headteacher's quest to make this an even more distinctive church school.
- Involve the children in the evaluation of collective worship and use what they have to say to plan to improve its quality.

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

This outstandingly inclusive school meets the needs of all children exceptionally well. All children, including the most vulnerable with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress. Rich, lively and well planned the curriculum makes a very valuable contribution to children's spiritual development. The beautiful grounds within the school are used to good effect to fire children's imagination and create those deep magical spiritual moments; described by the children as that *wow factor*, for example when writing about the sun beams in the woods. Children from Christian families are nurtured in their faith; those from other faith backgrounds and of no faith at all are treated with equal dignity and given opportunities to grow spiritually. Cultural diversity is celebrated exceptionally well. Children's outstanding personal development reflects the Christian atmosphere. They are enthusiastic about school and love coming. Behaviour is very good. Dedicated care is appreciated by the children and their parents. From Nursery, children are equipped with the skills and knowledge to learn, stay safe, keep healthy and join in activities. Their community activity enables them to care for others less fortunate than themselves. However, there is no school council to enable them to discuss their views about collective worship in the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship lies at the heart of this school. Well planned around the church liturgical calendar it meets statutory requirements. Children say, 'We enjoy worship'. They particularly like the opportunities given to them to join in role play activities. Through planning class acts of worship children write powerful prayers themselves. Good use is made of visitors, such as the '*Hand to Mouth Puppet Group*', to make worship lively and interesting for the children. Bible stories told by the local Methodist minister who takes worship regularly in the school stick in the memory of the children. The rector from the local parish church is new and has not yet got involved in planning and leading worship in school, but he is keen to do so. The school does not formally seek the views of the children in respect of what is good and what could be better about the acts of worship. Thus it cannot, yet, use ideas from the children to improve its provision for worship.

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

The headteacher's leadership has created a distinctive Christian character within this church school. The Christian character drives the whole staff to constantly improve the quality of education for all children. Leadership is dynamic; that is why the school's distinctiveness as a church school is so strong. Parents speak highly of the Christian love and care evident within the school. However, certain constraints have hindered the headteacher in moving things forward at the pace she would like. The time for improvement is now absolutely perfect. Links with the local parish church are satisfactory and improving. Following a difficult period the new rector in post has clear thinking about how the church can become more involved in school life. He, wisely, wanted to take his time to understand what needs to be done in the parish and so did not rush in. Now though, he and the head teacher, recognise that the time is right for him to be in school more regularly so that he becomes a good friend to the whole school community. Foundation governors are supportive, but they have not regularly questioned at governor body meetings about what it means to be a church school. There is not a formal system for monitoring the quality of worship, and this is an area of school life where the foundation governors could become more actively involved.