

Culgaith Church of England School

Culgaith
Penrith
Cumbria
CA10 1QL



Diocese of Carlisle
Growing Disciples

Diocese: Carlisle
Local authority: Cumbria
Dates of inspection: 10th May 2012
Date of last inspection: 21st October 2008
School's unique reference number: 112302
Headteacher: Mrs Lynn Harrison
Inspector's name & number: Stephen Wilfrid Mott 733

School context

Until July 2011, Culgaith was a first school. It is now a primary school which currently provides for children up to age 9. There are 42 on roll including the Nursery. The economic background of the children is mixed, including those from long established farming backgrounds and the ethnic mix is mainly white. In addition to the village itself, the school serves the farming area around the village and some children from fellside villages travel in on school transport.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Culgaith as a Church of England school are outstanding

Culgaith School has a vibrant, welcoming ethos where mutual support and encouragement for learning is highly valued. Pupils take responsibility for their learning and both worship and religious education directly influence their lives both within school and in the wider community. The school has an important role in the life of the village.

Established strengths

- The quality of the relationships in the school;
- The breadth and scope of worship in the school;
- The very strong dynamic relationships between church, school and the wider community.

Focus for development

- To ensure that the provision and impact of the school as a church school is embedded in the action plan of the school to meet its expansion to full Primary;
- To strengthen the impact of RE by looking at its potential for older pupils.

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

The school has a clear and identifiable Christian character which upholds and nurtures the whole school. Children understand and relate to the Golden rules and say that these come from the teachings of Jesus. Children know about religious belief as a skill for life. Children are well mannered and behaviour is outstanding. They offer support and encouragement to each other and relationships with adults are positive and trusting. Parents say that the school's christian character "nourishes" the whole child. Parents are kept informed about activities related to the local church and other partnership events through a monthly newsletter. Children are well prepared to become responsible citizens. There is a link with a school in Morocco and a link with Namibia is being explored. Children and teachers decide on which charities to support and fund-raising activities take place within the community and beyond, such as the North Air Ambulance. Children assessed whether or not a Fair Trade

enterprise could be established in the community. During the winter months, the church meets in school on Sundays. The children nominated the parish priest to be the Olympic torch-bearer as their "hero". The school environment encourages reflection. There is a wooden prayer tree in the Hall and children of all ages add thoughts to it. An outdoor "stilling" area is included in the school's action plan. The christian character of the school is integrated in all aspects of the school and serves as a driver for continued development and resourcefulness in pupil development. The school is looking forward optimistically to reaching the full age range for a Primary School.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

In the collective worship observed, the pupils were fully engaged in worship and took an active part through answering questions, suggesting subjects for prayer and choosing a setting of Psalm 139 to sing. The older children regularly take responsibility for collective worship, both in school and in church, such as at the Harvest Festival. In school the older children develop and deliver worship for whole school assemblies. Pupils say that they enjoy this and would like to help the younger ones develop worship too. Worship responds to and shapes the life of the school. The school council suggested that the younger pupils were not as aware of the "Four R's" (Resilience, Reflection, Resourcefulness and Relationships) as the older ones, and collective worship was chosen as the way to develop and remind pupils of the nature of these. Pupils are experiencing an increasing range of different types of worship. Daily worship in school opens with a liturgical response. Prayers are said at other times during the day and children are encouraged to use the focus for prayer and reflection in the hall at other times. Prayers written by the pupils at these times are often used in subsequent worship. Links with the local churches are strong. The parish priest is a weekly visitor and clergy from other churches and faiths also visit. The parish priest and the new curate are both actively involved in the life of the school including the evaluation and development of worship. Mutual support between church and school is very strong. Planning of school worship takes into account planning of church worship and the school choir sings regularly in church. This has led in turn to a new church children's choir which rehearses weekly in church under the direction of a parent. Parents have led the development of all-age worship which is held in the local church on Sundays. The school has begun to look at the provision and nature of worship in response to the school's expansion to full primary status, such as the development of classroom based worship. Worship is evaluated and monitored by the children through questionnaires and verbal feedback. Pupils' prayers and reflections are used in worship and drawn from a prayer book held in the school hall. The pupils are invited to bring objects to worship to help reflection.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious Education (RE) is taught throughout the school by one teacher. The subject is well resourced with books, artefacts and Godly Play materials. RE displays are found in many areas of the school. Tracking and planning reflect good evaluation and monitoring of the subject. Pupils make good progress in RE and a significant number of pupils make very good progress. Children generally achieve well above the expected average. Skills grids based on the local syllabus are in place for every child and teacher monitoring allows for easy identification of pupils who are achieving more or less than the expected target. However, pupils are not as fully involved in choosing their next steps to learning in RE when compared to other subjects. In the lessons observed, children were mostly fully engaged and the work was differentiated well. Difficult aspects of the Passover were handled sensitively and involved discussion with the children. Tasks were varied and good use is made of drama and discussion. Children are articulate about RE. They responded knowledgably and thoughtfully to images of religious themes. They speak with respect and enthusiasm about religious and spiritual matters. They understand how RE impacts on the wider life of the school. They suggested that conflict in the playground would be handled by listening and not jumping to conclusions. Children are exploring links with the wider community through an internet link with a school in Morocco. Understanding and experiencing other religions is made through visits to a Buddhist monastery where the children reflected quietly beside the river and a visitor from the Jewish faith comes to the school to share her experiences. Embedded within RE are examples of the world wide community which is resourced by models of people from

differing ethnic groups. The subject leader has begun to work on how religious education might develop as the school expands with the introduction of further work on Islam and a deeper exploration of christianity. RE is monitored by a link governor and this task is to be shared with a new governor as the school extends its age range.

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

The Christian values that underpin the school are fully understood by the school leadership and are communicated clearly. Children wrote the “statement of purpose” which expressly includes reference to the life and example of Jesus Christ upon which the Golden Rules are based. These are reviewed regularly by the pupils who invite the governors to contribute ideas for consideration. Governors regularly review the school’s ethos and its impact on the community. Parents express articulately their understanding of the school’s Christian values and value the distinctiveness of the school. The governors have established a thorough process of self-evaluation and developing the action plan for growth of the school. They are seeking to obtain the Governor Mark. They are engaged with reviewing the school as a church school through the issues raised in the National Society document “Church Schools for the Future”. The headteacher would like to support leaders of church schools. Initial teacher training (ITT) students are helped to understand the influence of the church school character on the life of Culgaith school and that respect and understanding for people of faith is a skill for life. Regular staff are offered opportunities to develop skills specifically related to the ethos of the school. This includes taking children to share and lead collective worship in other schools. The partnership with other village organisations, including the church, is outstanding. Children help to at the community café. The school choir sings at events in the village and further afield. Villagers and parents can book lunch with the pupils in school on any school day. Planning for the pupils as they get older includes looking at possible enterprise activities within the community. As the school grows, the development plan includes increased sharing of responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of both impact and provision for which a sound protocol is in place. This includes looking at adopting the National Society Christian Values through their website.

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