

Arkholme Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Arkholme
Carnforth,
Lancashire
LA6 1AU

Diocese:	Blackburn
Local authority:	Lancashire
Dates of inspection:	30 th November 2012
Date of last inspection:	8 th February 2007
School's unique reference number:	119523
Headteacher	Mrs Joy Ingram
Inspector's name and number:	Mrs Ruth Wall 548

School Context

Arkholme C of E Primary School is a smaller than average rural primary school mainly drawing pupils from the combined parishes of Arkholme, Whittington and Gressingham. The percentage of free school meals is very low and the percentage of children with special educational needs is slightly lower than average. A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection. She divides her time between Arkholme and Yealand CE Primary School in a shared headship arrangement. The school holds the International School Award.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Arkholme as a Church of England school is good

There is strong emphasis on the Christian values of love and respect, which enables all children to reach their full potential in both personal and academic development. The children flourish within an atmosphere of care and support. They are proud of their school.

Established strengths

- The school's very welcoming community with happy, well-behaved children
- Children's broad learning experiences which contribute very effectively to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Children's positive attitudes to collective worship and religious education

Focus for development

- For the whole school community to be involved in a review of the school's mission statement
- Develop the role of governors to enable them to engage in self-evaluation, action planning and monitoring of the school as a church school
- Involving children in evaluation of worship to inform development planning
- Seek to resolve current differences between stakeholders

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

The headteacher has been appointed recently and parents and staff commented on how smooth the transition had been. Children agreed that 'She's really nice' and, from one child, 'Her Christian name is Joy and it really suits her.' Parents agreed that the headteacher and teachers were very approachable and that any issues were dealt with swiftly and effectively. Staff spoke about enjoying the 'family atmosphere' where the Christian message 'is put into practice.' Children are polite, friendly and very well behaved - they are self confident because they benefit from the many opportunities provided for them to take responsibility. They are often observed looking after each other without being prompted. Children are encouraged to

show care and respect for others through regular charity fundraising for both local and national initiatives. There is a whole school commitment to raising funds to sponsor two children in Gambia. Parents are appreciative of the Christian nature of the school. One parent was particularly pleased that the film of her daughter's baptism had been shown in class and that the child's decision to make this personal commitment to the Christian faith was recognised and celebrated by them all. Prayer is an important aspect of school life, not only in collective worship, but in class at various times during the school day. Prayer flags, with the children's own prayers, are displayed around the walls of one classroom. Children were observed throughout the day using the prayer pebbles in the entrance as a means of saying their own personal prayers. One child commented eloquently, 'It's a good example to the younger ones; it shows that prayer is normal and doesn't have to be solemn.' The school recognises that it does not represent a range of cultural groups. However the development of the international dimension, through links with children from other cultures together with the achievement of the International School Award has had a big impact on the children's understanding and appreciation of the diverse and rich heritage in the wider world. Christian symbols and displays throughout the school, together with discrete areas set aside for reflection and prayer in classrooms, reflect the fact that Christian values are promoted here, which addresses one issue raised at the previous inspection. The school now recognises the need for a review of the mission statement involving the whole school community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is an important feature of school life that is valued and enjoyed by children and staff. One teacher says that she feels she can use the time for personal reflection. The headteacher and the incumbent lead whole school worship and teachers lead class worship. Christian themes are well planned, developed and applied in all areas of school life. In the worship I observed, the headteacher prepared the school for Advent by talking with the children about the value of giving as well as receiving. Children were selected to write on gift tags, the gifts they would like for the world. The tags were hung on a Christmas tree and throughout the day children contributed their ideas. Referring to the message given of the circular Advent ring representing God's eternal love, one child's gift tag read: 'That the circle of love, light and life stay with us.' The incumbent remarked that he is 'constantly delighted with the spirituality of the children.' His weekly input into whole school worship is appreciated by the children who said, 'They are fun – he gets us involved.' The children are familiar with the Lord's prayer, the meaning of which has been explained in the incumbent's worship this term. Children explained that there were three key words in the prayer: 'Kingdom, Father and Forgive'. The children clearly enjoy singing, which was demonstrated in the worship and in a discussion group later in the day. Signing is used effectively to emphasise the meanings of the words. Services are held in church to celebrate two Christian festivals and when Year 6 children are leaving. The incumbent feels that children's experience of Anglican traditions and practice needs to be developed. The school recognises the need to involve the children and governors in the evaluation of worship as a means of assessing the impact that worship is having, and also to inform development planning.

The effectiveness of religious education is outstanding

Religious education (RE) has a high profile in the curriculum and it fully supports the Christian ethos of the school. Issues raised at the last inspection have been successfully addressed. The subject leader displays outstanding commitment and dedication. Using his considerable expertise and experience he provides informed and valued support to teachers. One child commented, 'He understands how young children like to learn.' A wide variety of teaching and learning strategies are used in RE to take account of the different learning styles of the children. These include role play, puppets and multi-media resources. Lessons were observed in Key Stage 1 and 2 and, in each class, tasks set were carefully matched to children's abilities so that each child was motivated and challenged appropriately. Support staff were effective in guiding and supporting children's understanding and learning. Transition between activities was well managed and opportunities for assessing children's understanding were on-going, thorough and used effectively to inform planning. Children are actively involved in their learning and they demonstrate the ability to ask and answer profound questions. Skills learnt in the philosophy club, run by a teaching assistant have had a

significant impact in helping children achieve higher levels in RE. Schemes of work are of high quality and comply fully with the diocesan syllabus, reflecting the school's Christian foundation at the same time as giving due weight to other faiths. The school has benefited from training and support provided by a diocesan advisor. Planning, monitoring and assessment of the subject are rigorous. There is evidence from an external audit that standards in RE are at least comparable to standards in other core subjects. Areas for continued school development in RE have been correctly identified.

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

The headteacher has a vision for the school based on clear Christian principles and values. Governors are involved in the life of the school and are supportive of the headteacher and the Christian foundation of the school. They recognise that they now need to develop a more active role in the leadership and management of the school, as a church school. They recognise this as a key area for development in order that they can contribute fully to the school's self evaluation and inform development planning. Parents are enthusiastic about all that the school does for their children and the hard work done by the PTFA is appreciated by the whole school. Children value their role in decision making through the school council. A teaching assistant, who oversees committee meetings, explained, 'School council's remit is the welfare of the school and they take this responsibility seriously.' Council representatives spoke enthusiastically about the 'friendship bench' and playground signs which they have been instrumental in purchasing for the school. Children feel comfortable in expressing their views and are confident that their suggestions are valued. The incumbent commented on the quality of the school council's regular reports to the governors. The RE subject leader shares with the leadership team, including governors, the vision for RE that ensures the clear purpose and sense of direction needed. Staff have a shared commitment to improvement which is evident in levels of planning, support and positive relationships. Two members of staff spent time in India working with teachers there on a philosophy project, which continued in England with a return visit from the Indian teachers. This project has led to the school's very successful philosophy club where children develop their questioning and debating skills to good effect. The school is committed to the professional development of teachers to prepare them for future leadership of church schools. Links with the community are good and the school enjoys the input from other local churches. Year 6 children regularly help at the community luncheon club and contributions from the school choir and band have been appreciated at several venues, including a 'Help the Heroes' event. The new incumbent is keen for the school to utilise his skills and give the children more experience of Anglican worship to enhance the distinctiveness of the school as a church school. Currently there are some unresolved issues between the incumbent and others in the school community and there is recognition that this needs to be addressed by all parties including the Board of Education. The Leadership and management of the school is considered good and signs are there that it will improve further as the Headteacher and Governors focus on the developments suggested.

SIAS report November 2012 Arkholme Church of England Primary, Lancashire LA6 1AU