

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Holm Cultram Abbey Church of England School			
Address	Abbeytown, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 4RU		
Date of inspection	7 November 2019	Status of school	Voluntary controlled primary
Diocese	Carlisle	URN	112249

<b>Overall Judgement</b>	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Additional Judgement</b>	The impact of collective worship	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

### School context

Holm Cultram Abbey is a primary school with 56 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is above national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages. Before the appointment of the permanent headteacher in 2017, the school experienced an unsettled period with a succession of temporary leaders. A Methodist minister works with the school as the clergy representative of the local ecumenical mission community.

### The school's Christian vision

We want our children to flourish in the wider world, recognise their personal talents and live through their Christian values.

We listen to God. We learn together. We love ourselves. We laugh with joy.

*Our core values are Love, Trust, Respect Friendship, Courage and Truthfulness*

### Key findings

- Together with governors, the headteacher's inspirational leadership has developed an unmistakable Christian vision which shapes and enhances every aspect of school life.
- Pupils know that they are loved because they see the Christian vision lived out by happy, supportive staff and dedicated, focused governors. As a result, they love coming to this school and they say that 'God made us awesome!'
- Pupils approach religious education (RE) with curiosity and excitement. Current planning for RE does not always allow sufficient time for consolidation of deep learning about the different religions.
- Excellent teamwork between the headteacher and the Methodist minister has resulted in rich planning for collective worship which ensures that pupils develop a particularly deep understanding of the Bible and its relevance for their everyday lives.

### Area for development

- Review the school's long-term plan for religious education to enable pupils to consolidate their knowledge. Ensure that there are opportunities throughout the year for pupils to revisit, discuss and reflect further on their learning about the major world faiths and so deepen their very good knowledge.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

### **Inspection findings**

This is a joyful school. The deeply inclusive Christian vision permeates everything and is highly effective in enabling adults and pupils to flourish. Pupils say with confidence, 'God made us awesome!'

Inspirational leadership has led to rapid progress in the last two years. Together with governors, the headteacher has strengthened an earlier vision of 'listen, learn, love, laugh' and ensured that the school's Christian foundation is now unmistakable. Through involvement in the diocesan Christian leadership programme, the headteacher has gained a profound understanding of the Church of England Vision for Education. Her passion for Church school education is undeniable and infectious. Her expertise is shared across and beyond the diocese. Staff and governors have also been diligent in accessing relevant training. Consequently everyone is fully aware of their responsibilities in a Church school. Participation in the 'Thinking Governance' training has enabled governors to be even more strategic and effective in articulating and monitoring the vision.

High quality religious education (RE) is an outworking of the vision. From an early age, pupils know that RE lessons are safe places where they can explore what they believe. This links well with the emotionally-safe school culture where teachers value diversity and actively encourage pupils' individual opinions. Pupils enjoy the freedom to disagree and they do it well, saying, 'It's a bit boring if you all believe the same thing.'

Collective worship is at the heart of the school's Christian vision. Listening, learning, loving and laughing are strikingly evident as pupils and staff together experience times of reflective stillness, joyful singing and enthusiastic participation in Bible stories. Meticulous planning by the headteacher and the Methodist minister ensures that worship is relevant, biblical and highly engaging. Pupils speak with passion about their love of worship. They show an exceptionally deep understanding of Bible stories. In the Key Stage 1 classroom for example, pupils who show particular courage might be chosen as 'the David for today'. Even the very youngest children can explain what this means by making detailed reference to the David and Goliath narrative. Pupils in the worship crew are well trained by the headteacher and trusted to take a significant lead. Their perceptive and sensitive contributions, such as their innovative selection of music, help to deepen the spiritual experience of pupils and adults. Pupils have a rich understanding of prayer. They describe in matter-of-fact terms how they listen to God and tell him how they are feeling.

In living out its vision, this school blesses others. Community worship successfully engages parents and enables them to connect with one another. Staff and pupils alike speak movingly of the spiritual impact of pupil-led worship in a local care home. Families are inspired to follow-up curriculum themes at home. One family was motivated to organise a weekend litter-pick. Parents describe the most recent Easter project where pupils decorated eggs with Bible stories. They comment with pride that their children are able to teach the Bible to them.

The headteacher's servant leadership has been inspirational in embodying the vision and refreshing a previously unsettled school culture. Her investment in the wellbeing of staff as well as pupils has empowered all groups to take on responsibilities. Consequently, pupils and adults thrive. With skill and sensitivity the headteacher involves everyone in decision-making. Pupils are fully involved in and sometimes initiate the choice of charities to support, such as the foodbank or a cancer charity. This ensures that their understanding of inequality and deprivation is rooted in context. Pupils lead a range of teams, each of which has its own biblical vision. The eco team, for example, references Deuteronomy 10:14, whilst the school council quotes Exodus 18, where Moses chose 'a council of capable people'.

The school benefits from the strong and very dedicated support of the ecumenical partnership of churches in the Solway Plain Mission Community. Holme Cultram Abbey hosts Experience Christmas and Prayer Spaces as well as key festivals. This provides a valuable experience of worship for whole families. The outreach worker for the Methodist church and the local schools' worker run a successful after-school club and a very well-attended Messy Church. Careful liaison between the Methodist minister and his Anglican colleague ensures that

pupils encounter a range of worship experiences including appropriate liturgy. The minister, who is also a governor, is a very popular member of the school community. Pupils' evaluations of worship include requests for 'more of Rev Phil'.

Driven by the vision, the school nurtures each individual and develops their unique skills and talents. Cohorts of pupils are very small and so comparisons with national averages are not appropriate. Standards are rising. Vulnerable pupils make similar and sometimes better progress than that of their peers. Staff successfully include pupils with a range of needs. Parents are full of praise for the safe, welcoming culture which enables those joining the school to settle quickly and thrive. Love, trust, respect and friendship are evident in classrooms. The school's relentless improvement drive has succeeded in increasing the number of pupils with 100 per cent attendance.

Innovative curriculum planning reflects the vision. Teachers make creative and sensitive links to issues of injustice and environmental concerns, and opportunities for spiritual development are woven throughout. Examples include Year 5 and 6 pupils making their own videos highlighting the refugee crisis, or pupils being challenged to go beyond their comfort zone during healthy wellbeing week. Through the Heartsmart project pupils develop the language to evaluate their own character development. Exciting and creative 'experience days' enable pupils to explore big ideas collaboratively and in multi-sensory ways. Family groups tackle 'big questions' such as 'Should religious believers care about the environment? Why?' Exceptionally rigorous evaluation by governors includes monitoring of spiritual development.

The school enables pupils to develop a mature understanding of forgiveness. One pupil explained that, 'Forgiveness is Jesus'. Prayer is a very natural part of the everyday life of the school. Pupils in each year group enjoy having different opportunities to pray, such as praying in family groups at lunchtime or using the prayer tree in the hall.

Since her appointment, the headteacher has made it a priority to ensure that adults flourish as well as pupils by attending to their wellbeing. Staff value highly the way she consults and listens to them. Staff morale has improved significantly. One teacher described now feeling excited to come to school. Another teacher summarised the transforming impact of the vision in the last two years by saying, 'We make sure that God's at the centre'.

Headteacher	Jemma Nicholson
Inspector's name and number	Penny Burnside 772