



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Abbots Ripton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Wennington Road
Abbots Ripton
Cambridgeshire
PE28 2LT

Diocese: Ely

Local authority: Cambridgeshire
Dates of inspection: 29th – 30th June 2010
Date of last inspection: 25th – 26th April 2007
School's unique reference number: 110850
Headteacher: Miss Helen Wilman
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Jenny Daniels (664)

School context

Abbots Ripton is a smaller than average primary school with 110 pupils, serving the village of Abbots Ripton and the surrounding area. Currently 48% of children are from out of catchment. All bar one pupil is of White British heritage. Numbers for SEN are above average at 15% with a large majority being statemented. Over the past five years there has been considerable turnover of staff with the arrival of the head and subsequently four deputies. The school has a strong relationship with the local church and is developing links with a school on the outskirts of Huntingdon to support community cohesion.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Abbots Ripton (VA) as a Church of England school is satisfactory.

Since the last inspection the school has worked hard to review its mission statement and develop the Christian vision. There have been significant improvements in the overtly Christian signage and developments in collective worship. The school's understanding of its uniqueness and distinctiveness and how this should impact on its learners needs further embedding. The school is actively seeking new opportunities to enhance the Christian ethos and these are to be commended.

Established strengths

- The passion and fervour of the headteacher to embed Christian values.
- The vicar and curate play a significant role in the spiritual dimension of the school.
- The school has a very caring, welcoming and supportive environment.
- Christian values are beginning to impact on the personal development of the children.

Focus for development

- To prioritise introducing the monitoring and evaluation of RE (Religious Education) and Collective Worship.
- To incorporate further intrinsic Christian values into collective worship and the teaching of

RE for greater impact upon the children.

- To strengthen and build on the links with the local church.
- To further nourish, encourage and challenge the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children.

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

The school is characterised by its family atmosphere and sense of belonging based on Christian values. The children talk positively about their school demonstrating how they feel special and valued. The children could articulate the benefits of attending a small school. One pupil expressed it succinctly when she commented upon the 'big family ethos'. Children look after one another across all year groups and within. The children choose to sit in family groups for lunch with the older children taking the responsibility to serve the younger ones. There is a friendship bench on the playground and many quiet areas within the grounds for reflection. A 'worry' box is positioned in the main hall and any concerns addressed promptly. The school building is well cared for and displays of children's work demonstrate the respect and value placed on all children. Accommodation and resources are sufficient to support spiritual reflection. The 'prayer chair' in the main corridor and Christian displays in each classroom support Christian values. The children were aware of these displays but could not articulate what impact they had. The school provides good support for children and families facing difficult times as evidenced at the time of the inspection. A parent, recently diagnosed with cancer, was receiving support from the Headteacher whilst her child wrote a particularly poignant prayer asking for God to look after her mother. This prayer was left on the prayer tree set up that afternoon by the visiting curate.

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

Collective worship is overtly Christian and takes place every day. The Headteacher plans for collective worship following the Ely Diocese guidelines. Several staff lead collective worship across the week. Themes mostly follow the church calendar and promote Christian values where possible. The children found it hard to recall recent themes covered and the associated Christian value, indicating that this format does not allow for the full impact of the message to become embedded. Worship sometimes informs children's thinking and they talked with enthusiasm of when visitors had led the worship and how they sometimes get involved. These are the times they remembered most. A small table, covered in an attractive cloth enhanced by children's sewing depicting symbols of the Christian faith; a cross, a candle, and Bibles formed the focus for collective worship. Most of the elements of collective worship were evident but a time for quiet reflection, when the Christian values would have their upmost impact, was missing. Children are involved by taking responsibility for the music and words. Children are mostly respectful during collective worship and know the Lord's Prayer. Currently there is no evaluation and monitoring of collective worship. This is an area that was identified during the last inspection and is seen as a priority. The school works alongside the local Church in the village and regularly holds collective worship in the Church. The children speak of making frequent visits at special times of the year, and of how they enjoy being able to invite their parents along to these services. The recently appointed Curate is beginning to have significant impact on the Christian ethos of the school and a quiet reflective time was set up in the school library for some pupils to engage with on the day of the inspection. This is something the school is hoping to repeat in the future.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory.

Most children are achieving the expected standard in RE, and progress in RE is secure. The curriculum is well resourced and well planned and predominately Christian biased. Planning documents show there is a balance between 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion. Some planning shows evidence of an opportunity to consider how the teaching affects the children and supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assessment is a regular feature, but it is hard to evidence how it is used to inform planning. A variety of approaches are incorporated into the teaching which includes the use of drama and role play. The children were able to recall a 'mock' wedding at the church to which parents were invited. Cross curricular links with the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning materials are

incorporated where possible. The two lessons observed in KS1 were satisfactory. Lessons moved at too slow a pace with children remaining passive for long periods of time. The children were exploring artefacts they would find in a Church. In both lessons, the opportunity to gain some spiritual and moral development and insight was not present. The majority of the children talked of how they enjoyed RE and of how it teaches them about Christ. The children have a satisfactory understanding of the Christian faith and Anglican tradition and see it as a priority of the school. There is currently no monitoring or evaluation of the teaching of RE. This is seen as a priority. The designated subject leader for RE benefits from regular CPD opportunities to maintain her expertise.

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

The majority of stakeholders, including staff and governors, speak confidently and accurately about the school's Christian distinctiveness. The school's vision is evident and set out clearly in most public documentation. The Headteacher articulates a clear vision for the school which is embedded in Christian values and refers to giving the children 'Pockets of Faith' as a tool kit for their futures and the need for children to know the intrinsic routines of Church. Since the last inspection the school has worked hard to update the collective worship and RE policies and to bring about improvements in collective worship. The school has received significant support from the Ely Diocese to address some of the areas identified in the last report. The Headteacher clearly acknowledges that there is still room for improvement. The school has clear recruitment and induction procedures in place, which are designed to ensure new employees are in sympathy with the school's Christian values. Governors are able to articulate their role in supporting the school. There are strong links with the village community and the school frequently supports village activities and in return, the whole village turns out to be involved in the annual school fete. Recently, the school council met with the Parish council to explore how the school could help save the village Post Office and discuss how they could work towards eradicating some of the inconsiderate parking around the village.

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