

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Holmer Church of England Academy

Holmer Road, Hereford HR4 9RX

Diocese:

Hereford

Local authority:

Previously Herefordshire, now Academy status

Dates of inspection:

23 March 2012

Date of last inspection:

5 February 2007

School's unique reference number:

137731

Headteacher:

Mrs Judith Cecil

Inspector's name and number:

John Chapman NS 006

School context

Holmer Academy, housed in traditional buildings, serves around 300 pupils from the northern side of Hereford. It converted from a voluntary controlled school to an academy in December 2011.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Holmer as a Church of England Academy are outstanding

Holmer is an effective church academy with many outstanding features. It is excellently led and pupils are happy, well-behaved and they achieve well. There are very many opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The issues identified in the last inspection have been fully addressed. Pupils are well served and prepared for their next steps in life.

Established strengths

- Effective and visionary leadership supporting a strong and united staff team
- High quality Religious Education (RE) which supports excellent spiritual and moral education
- Collective worship which integrates effectively with the rest of school life
- Sense of responsibility and mature behaviour of pupils who show pride in their school

Focus for development

- Reflect the academy's Christian character in the aims and objectives in the prospectus
- Update the worship policy to take account of current work in the Improvement Programme

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

The school is committed to providing a happy and attractive environment with caring and approachable staff which enables the fullest development of each pupil. Despite the school's relatively large size all pupils feel valued and special and feel they have a stake in the well-being of the community. *"No-one is ever left out here"* said a pupil, whilst a parent said *"every child with a need is noticed and action follows"*. Pupils develop sound moral attitudes. Teaching about respect *"made us think how we should treat others; also that Jesus respects and protects us"*. Pupils value the positive behaviour policy and feel it provides the framework for them to be happily safe and secure. There is pride in the part pupils play in the school's ongoing development: they have contributed to the achievement of awards for healthy living, for being an eco-school and for supporting fair trade. The School Council gives opportunities to reflect on and influence school practice, and notably develop further the excellent and imaginative outdoor features. The courtesy, respect and consideration for others shown by pupils come largely from the excellent role models provided by their teachers. Pupils can make the link between how they behave and the Christian values of the school. They sense a consistency in the promotion of these values across all school activity. As a result relationships between teachers and pupils are warm and trusting. *"They would do anything for each other"* was a comment made. High-quality and informative displays of work in every classroom and public areas provide an attractive learning environment and as one pupil said *"These all show we care about values and try to live by them"*. RE has long been a strength at Holmer and it makes an outstanding contribution to the school's Christian ethos and distinctiveness. It has high status and pupils show considerable knowledge and understanding of religion. Lessons are well-prepared and resourced and imaginatively taught. There is always a

variety of stimulating activity. Values celebrated in worship are then taught in class with a Christian dimension. In one lesson, the value of friendship was illustrated by teaching about how Jesus was a friend to others. In another, the value of forgiveness was related to the Easter story. In all lessons pupils show a depth of spiritual understanding. The school's Faith Days when pupils learn first hand about the teaching and practice of other faiths are widely valued by pupils from other schools who attend. Pupils develop empathy for other faiths and traditions. Prayer is seen as an activity which undergirds school life being part of the start, middle and end of each day. Each classroom has a compilation of prayers written by pupils which are regularly used. The distinctive Christian ethos of the school provides for excellent spiritual and moral education.

The impact of Collective Worship on the academy community is outstanding

Collective worship is outstanding because it is of high quality and sets the tone for the school. It is seen as the heartbeat of the work and worth of the school. It provides all pupils and staff with opportunities to share in Christian worship and to reflect on personal and community values. It features in the current Improvement Programme which will lead to the policy being updated. The importance and value of worship are clear to everyone. All staff attend daily, and on Fridays all pupils in turn can share in leading worship. The views of pupils and staff on worship are regularly canvassed, discussed and acted upon. There is variety in the pattern and content of worship which is characterised by reverence, whole-hearted participation, reflection and often a sense of fun. Pupils enter quietly into the hall transformed by music and lighted candles creating a special atmosphere. They are attentive and appreciative of the contributions of both their teachers and their peers. All worship is of a high quality. The vicar's regular assembly is much appreciated and the church's calendar is followed. Parents and local church members are invited for festivals and class assemblies. The impact of worship on pupils is considerable as the content is related to classroom activity during the day. Pupils understand its importance. They can articulate that the school is helping them to follow the teaching of Jesus. Staff too feel the impact of worship and most state that it deepens their own spiritual experience. The school is also outstanding at incorporating opportunities for pupils to consider the worship of other faiths which enables them to respect diversity and show tolerance.

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

The school benefits from stable and visionary leadership. It is crisply run and all members of the community play their part. The head teacher has provided first-class leadership over many years and she is well supported by staff, both teaching and ancillary, who all work hard for the best interests and achievements of pupils. There is also a continuous desire to develop and improve further. The team is united and committed to the school's Christian aims and objectives. These need to be more explicit in the prospectus. New staff are made aware of the vision and are expected to make an active and committed contribution towards its implementation. Pupils are able to offer their own views on the school's values and help shape good practice. Staff are strongly supportive of each other and their common bond and commitment helps to create the good atmosphere and drive the school forward. They meet regularly, for example, to share good practice in RE and help each other to improve. Holmer benefits from an active, well-led and supportive governing body. It is responding to changes in governance made necessary by the conversion to academy status. It provides challenge and careful monitoring in areas of worship, RE and the school's ethos. Meetings begin with prayers and all governors understand the nature of a church school. Parents are seen as partners in their children's education. They find the school accessible and appreciate the warm community atmosphere. Teachers readily respond to any concerns parents may have. Parents find that children are often able to speak easily at home about the Christian ideas and teaching they receive at school. Developing an awareness of cultures and traditions beyond the local environment is a core aim. All pupils in Year 2 have an exchange with a multi-ethnic school in Birmingham. The RE programme makes a major contribution to pupils' development of respect and tolerance. The enrichment programme involves large numbers and pupils raise considerable sums for good causes which widens their horizons. The pervasive atmosphere of purposeful, happy activity leads to good behaviour and academic achievement and are the fruits of outstanding leadership and management.