



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Elm Church of England (controlled) Primary School

Main Road, Elm, Wisbech, Cambs. PE14 0AG

#### Diocese: Ely

Local authority: Cambridgeshire

Dates of inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> May 2009

Date of last inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> April 2006

School's unique reference number: 110800

Headteacher: Mr Chris Child

Inspector's name and number: Mr Stephen Cutts 495

#### School context

Elm Church of England School is an average size primary school serving primarily the local village and the surrounding rural area. Nearly all pupils are from white British families. There are a small number of children from Traveller families. The number of pupils with additional needs is above average. The school holds the Activemark award. The local church is within easy walking distance.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Elm as a Church of England school are satisfactory

Although there are no obvious signs to reflect the school's Christian status, the ethos of the school is firmly built on Christian values and all stakeholders try to promote these values. This is a happy school with lots of laughter and fun. Parents are supportive and express their satisfaction with the school's performance and outlook. Much of the documentation and paperwork does not reflect current practice and the evaluation and monitoring of issues relating to the church status is weak. However, governors are aware of these weaknesses and efforts to build up church/school links are developing.

#### Established strengths

- The teachers are good role models and there are good relationships throughout the school.
- Children have a good knowledge of Christianity and other faiths through excellent teaching.
- Parents and children are happy with the school.

#### Focus for development

- Ensure that the policy for collective worship reflects present practice, and develop a more

rigorous system of monitoring as a matter of urgency.

- Ensure that the school is more overtly Christian through displays, signs and symbols, notices and all documentation as required in the previous inspection report.
- Include plans to develop the school's links with the church in the School Improvement Plan.

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

Elm School is happy and welcoming and much emphasis is placed on good relationships. The teachers are good role models and children are encouraged to be kind and helpful. A playground buddy system is in place and older children help the younger pupils with reading. The school also supports a variety of charities each year that are chosen by the school council. The vast majority of pupils and parents say that school is enjoyable, and questionnaires reveal that 90% of parents feel that the school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on the children. However, the Christian basis for these is not always made explicit.

The strong reward system includes certificates, letters to parents and house points. Success is celebrated in a variety of ways and children point to the "proud of" assembly as the highlight of the week. Good behaviour is also rewarded. However, there is a small core of poor behaviour but this is dealt with effectively and children see the discipline system as fair and effective.

The needs of children with learning difficulties are well met, as are those of gifted and talented pupils. A residential visit is offered to children at the top end of the school and it is hoped to increase these opportunities next year. There are several out-of-school clubs and music tuition is available in school covering a wide range of instruments.

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

On the day of inspection, children entered quietly to music and were mostly attentive until towards the end. A hymn was sung enthusiastically and the talk was entertaining with a clear message. However, there was no display nor religious artefacts to focus attention and some pupils became fidgety.

Children said that they would like more involvement in collective worship and they would appreciate the opportunity to write prayers and read the Bible story. A few special services are held in the church each year at Harvest, Christmas and on Mothers' Day. The church's Christingle Service is advertised through the school and is well supported.

Staff regularly lead worship in school and clergy attend once every half term. Informal monitoring and evaluation is carried out by the school staff, but this is infrequent and lacks rigour. The school's collective worship policy does not fully reflect present practice. Most acts of worship are now related to the SEAL scheme of work with appropriate links made to the Christian teaching. The head teacher and governors recognise the elements needed in order to ensure that the good work assemblies and hymn singing assemblies remain acts of worship, though this is not consistently evident in practice. There is presently no record of past themes and programmes for worship, though this used to be kept up to date until recent years. The children I spoke to found it difficult to recite the Lord's Prayer.

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

Ethos is clearly built on Christian values, emphasised through worship and RE lessons, but the school is not overtly Christian in its signs, its symbols or in documentation. For example, no cross is to be found anywhere in school. However, Bibles are evident in the library and in some classrooms. Just one line in the school brochure refers to collective worship and the teaching of religious education. Little mention is made on the school's website that this is a centre of Christian learning, although there is a direct link to the local church.

The church is close to the school and is used as a teaching resource as well as a place for worship, and some good links have developed with the local community as seen in the joint Summer Fair and singing at the old people's home. Year One children were planning to visit

the church the following week as part of their work on Baptism.

Team work within school is very good and staff well-being is well-catered for. Governors are supportive, but need a clearer idea of their role and responsibilities within the context of the school's Christian status. Since the previous church school inspection the progress in implementing the points for development is unsatisfactory. The school has difficulty in finding foundation governors and there has not been a full complement of governors for several years.

Teaching of Christianity and other religions is very good, and this is reflected in bright displays and visits to different places of worship. Interviews and induction of new staff reflect the Christian foundation of the school. The school actively teaches children how to care for God's creation and there is good use of school grounds and educational visits.

SIAS report May 2009. Elm Church of England Primary School, Main Street, Elm, Wisbech, Cambs. PE14 0AG