



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Elsworth Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Broad End  
Elsworth  
Cambridge  
CB23 4JD

#### **Diocese: Ely**

Local authority: Cambridgeshire  
Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> January 2009  
Date of last inspection: 27<sup>th</sup> June 2005  
School's unique reference number: 110830  
Headteacher: Ms. Theresa Thornton  
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Kathryn Wright 436

#### **School context**

This is a smaller than average primary school that serves Elsworth and surrounding villages. A significant number of children from outside the catchment area attend the school through parental choice. Nearly all pupils are of white British heritage, and the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low. The headteacher has been in post for one year, and the team rector was newly appointed in September. The school is a short walk from the parish church.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Elsworth Voluntary Aided Primary School as a Church of England school are good**

The mission statement 'Loving, Trusting, Sharing' is at the heart of the school ethos. This is firmly based on Christian values and teachings and permeates all aspects of school life. The relationships between all members of the school community exemplify these values and the opportunities to reflect upon them are very good. The school's self evaluation is accurate, with a clear understanding of the areas of development required to promote further the school's church status.

#### **Established strengths**

- The vision and leadership of the headteacher
- The teaching and learning in religious education
- The outstanding opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- The relationships between all members of the school community

#### **Focus for development**

- To provide more opportunities for children to lead worship and write their own prayers
- To involve the whole school community, particularly parents and children, in the evaluation of the school as a church school
- To formalise the monitoring of collective worship and religious education by the foundation governors

- To create a more effective partnership between the church and school particularly through the input of the foundation governors

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

Elsworth Voluntary Aided Primary school is a welcoming, caring and friendly place with a calm and inclusive atmosphere. One child said 'everyone is included and we make sure they are'. The children are responsive and open. They have a clear sense of purpose and know they are valued and special. This was demonstrated through the active school council and their understanding of what it means to be in a church school. Children talked about the importance of the Christian faith and had a good understanding of their motto 'Loving, Trusting, Sharing'. For example one child said it was important to say sorry, and another child said that new children to the school would find it easy to settle in as everyone is friendly.

The children understand their responsibilities and have high levels of self esteem. Reception and Key Stage 1 children are supported and helped by 'Young Leaders' in the playground. The positive behaviour policy is rooted in the values of the school, and enables children to resolve conflicts calmly and through discussion.

Opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) are outstanding. The school environment is utilised well to support the children's understanding of the Christian faith and teachings. Displays about the church and its community are prominent throughout the school. The comprehensive SMSC policy supports the school in its endeavour to ensure that all aspects of school life contribute positively to children's understanding of the world around them, how they can help others and the importance of quiet times and reflection. Children take part in a range of cultural activities, including events for Diwali. In addition, they plan fund raising such as a 'Bring and Buy' sale and organised a 'Shoe Box' appeal.

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

Collective worship has an important place within the school day. All staff and pupils attend worship, and all value it as an opportunity for reflection and stillness. Worship is well planned and organised based on the core values of 'loving, trusting and sharing. The policy reflects clearly the school's Christian foundation. Anglican faith and practice are promoted through the regular use of the Lord's prayer and celebration of festivals. The parish church is used regularly for worship, and local clergy lead acts of worship at least once a week.

The acts of worship observed were good, with opportunities for spiritual development. Both acts of worship included pupil participation through role play and singing. The children were respectful and there was an atmosphere of reverence. This was enhanced by the use of a lit candle and the use of the words 'Jesus is the light of the world, the light no darkness can quench'. Both acts of worship were based on biblical teaching and provided a clear message to the children about the importance of love, sharing and caring.

The impact of collective worship is good. Children commented on what they had learned through previous stories, such as 'it is OK to make mistakes' and 'how to care for others'. The children talked about the importance of worship in terms of it enabling them to learn and think about Jesus. At the current time there are few opportunities for the children to lead worship and their understanding of the nature of prayer was limited.

**The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

Religious education is highly regarded in the school. The entire curriculum has been rewritten and enhanced over the last four years with support from the Diocesan Adviser. It is based on the Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus with additional units on specific aspects of Christianity. The result is outstanding provision which has a significant impact on the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The schemes of work are detailed with clear learning

objectives, teaching and learning activities and assessment opportunities.

Teaching and learning is outstanding. In the two lessons observed the teachers' subject knowledge was excellent, and a range of different activities were used to stimulate thinking about and understanding of the topics. Children in Key Stage 2 were able to use their preferred learning style to explore the meaning of Jewish artefacts. The teacher's questioning enabled the children to develop new and creative ideas. In Key Stage 1, children used improvisation to understand life in Jesus' time and were able to reflect on this in a personal way.

Children's attainment is good or better in all year groups, with many achieving very highly. Assessment for, and of, learning is well established and a portfolio of work provides evidence of progress. Children understand at what level they are working and how to make progress. The children enjoy learning about Christianity and other faiths, saying that it helps them to understand people better.

The use of local places of worship, including the cathedral, and visitors is well established. Children had interviewed the new rector and found out more about her role. The subject co-ordinator provides excellent support to her colleagues. She regularly monitors the subject and evaluates its effectiveness; including taking into account the views of the children.

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

The headteacher and foundation governors have a clear Christian vision for the school. The website and public documentation make explicit the church status of the school. New staff are made aware of the importance of the Christian ethos to the school prior to appointment.

The foundation governors participated in the self evaluation process and the issues from the previous Section 23 inspection have largely been addressed. Church school issues are clearly identified in the school improvement plan, where it is stated that 'Love of God and Love of neighbour' are at the heart of the school. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship and religious education by foundation governors has taken place, however this has not been formalised.

The new rector and headteacher have begun to establish closer links between the school and church, although the foundation governors are not currently proactive in developing these links. The school is regularly prayed for in the local churches and the children decorate the parish church for festivals.

Parents value the school and its Christian ethos. One parent spoke about the practical outworking of the mission statement 'loving, trusting, sharing' when her child received an award in assembly. However, some parents' were uncertain about what it means for Elsworth to be a Church school in terms of its distinctiveness.

The rector has an important pastoral role within the school community and regularly visits the school for meetings and to lead worship. The Bishop's Visitor is highly valued and the school are nurturing his role within the school community.

SIAS report January 2009 Elsworth Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Broad End, Elsworth, Cambridge CB23 4JD