



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Elveden Church of England Academy

London Road
Elveden, Suffolk
IP24 3TN

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Local authority: N/A

Date of inspection: 05 October 2015

Date of last inspection: 05 May 2011

School's unique reference number: 124765

Headteachers: Lorna Rourke and April Grimes

Inspector's name and number: Judith Ruff 528

School context

The school converted to academy status in January 2013 and works in a partnership with Forest Academy in Brandon. There are now two joint headteachers in place. The 80 pupils on roll are mostly from White British backgrounds. The school serves the Elveden estate, but also draws pupils from the nearby towns of Thetford and Brandon. An interregnum has just begun at the parish church of St Andrew and St Patrick. The church is a short walking distance from the school.

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

- The passion, drive and commitment shown by senior leaders to achieving excellence as a church school communicates to all stakeholders an ethos of optimism, hope and high aspirations within the school
- The determined commitment to the inclusivity of all, regardless of levels of need, results in deeply caring and loving Christian family relationships being established
- The close working partnership built over many years with the local church community, results in families being able to experience worship together and to build positive relationships with the local church leaders and members of the congregation
- The strong effective partnership established with the diocese has transformed practice within the school, particularly in the area of religious education

Areas to improve

- Enable pupils to experience planning and leading collective worship so that they may more fully understand the importance and impact of worship for Christians
- Develop effective systems for pupils to evaluate collective worship so they become

more confident in putting forward their ideas and suggestions for improvement

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

Stepping through the pupil designed stained glass doors, the explicit, distinctive Christian values are easily identified within the school. They are part of high quality displays, a bright and vibrant learning environment within which sit the symbols of the Christian faith. These are represented through striking crosses created by pupils using natural as well as man-made forms and pupil prayers added to the 'prayer tree' in the main hall. All members of the school community proudly own these values and can articulate the impact that these have on school life. For example, pupils spoke about the creation of their spiritual garden, where they can find a peaceful place to pray and reflect, away from the business of classrooms. Parents spoke glowingly of the caring, compassionate ethos to be found across the school, resulting in one pupil declaring, 'I never want to leave this school!' Attendance is exceptionally high, with no exclusions. Standards are rising across the school for all pupils, with 2015 attaining the highest outcomes to date. Pupils readily relate Bible stories to supporting their learning approaches – 'having the courage of Daniel, when you are finding things difficult'. Spiritual development is taken very seriously with the school encouraging reflection, discussion and debate, enabling pupils to grow in confidence and say 'I'm not sure that they got that right in the Bible'. Moral, social and cultural development are also very well developed through a carefully constructed curriculum and a clear set of 'Golden Rules' that are based on respect for each community member. Behaviour is exemplary with polite pupils keen to share their learning experiences. Pupils have a growing understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith through the Diocesan link with Kagera in Tanzania. They also appreciate the different Christian denominations through the visits of a local Baptist minister. Religious education makes a significant and highly valued contribution to the life of the school through the increased knowledge and respect that it brings of the Christian faith and other religions.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is an important part of the school day, attended by the whole school community. Christian 'Values for Life' form the themes of worship and pupils are encouraged to reflect on how these values affect their lives. Pupils, through interaction in dramatic sketches, which illustrate Bible stories, are supported to understand the key messages from these passages of scripture. Pupils were encouraged to think about Jesus' response to his disciples when stilling the storm. They could recognise both his power and his compassion for his friends. Worship has a clear structure. Pupils light candles and read a 'bidding prayer' to signal the start of worship. Pupils sing beautifully and are encouraged to put actions to the words to reinforce understanding and retention. Whilst pupils do participate in leading worship, including writing prayers and reading out Bible stories and key quotations, they have not yet had opportunities to prepare and lead a collective worship from start to finish. The pupils have a developing sense of the different types of prayer and the use of prayer within the school day is well embedded. The School Prayer and the Lord's Prayer are both used regularly within worship. Pupils know the three parts of God together with actions and symbols that are used to depict the Trinity. Reflection times are built into worship and pupils appreciate the opportunities to be quiet and still. The church is used very well for festivals and celebrations, with families being encouraged to attend family Sunday worship at these times. Collective worship is well planned. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on the worship through a 'Reflection Book'. These reflections are mainly a description of what has happened. Other opportunities for pupils to give their views and ideas on collective worship have been limited. Governors monitor collective worship well and as an outcome of their recommendations post-monitoring, there has been an increased use of visual signage within the worship to include pupils with special educational needs. The school has made good use of diocesan training and advice to move practice forward. This is evident in the clear structure that worship now has, with pupils encouraged to open and close worship through appropriate prayers and readings.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Standards of attainment of pupils are carefully tracked across the school and are at least in line with national expectations. The higher attaining pupils are challenged very well through differentiated activities, which enable them to think through and ponder on key questions such as 'If God is good, why is there evil in the world?' Scrutiny of books shows pupils making rapid progress through careful formative teacher marking which stimulates learners to take the next steps in their understanding of the area being studied. Pupils take a pride in their books and this is reflected in the standards of presentation and the quality of thought that they put into their illustrations and written work. Pupils clearly enjoy the imaginative, cross-curricular approaches used within the RE curriculum. They gain immensely from the 'Festivals and Celebration' week held by the school to enable them to develop a greater understanding of other faiths and the religious celebrations that are linked with these. The school visit to a gurdwara was greatly enjoyed by the pupils, as was a visit from a Jewish speaker. Pupils are interested and excited by learning about other religions. They showed great respect when describing the similarities and differences between these. Teaching is judged as at least 'good' with some examples of outstanding teaching being seen on the day of the inspection. Teachers' enthusiasm and passion for the subject is contagious and the excitement within the classrooms was palpable as Years 1 and 2 discussed what the 'Ziz' bird had done wrong by knocking over the teacher's favourite plant as part of a unit on the importance of repentance in the Jewish religion. Highly effective and imaginative use of assessment, often through the 'window and mirror' approach ensures that both learning about and learning from religions are covered. Pupils immediately relate the relevance of what they have learned to their own lives eg. 'Why should I forgive my friend, when they do something that I don't like?' Work on reinforcing the school's values happens seamlessly in RE, such as in pupils discussing why John the Baptist was such a close friend of Jesus. Monitoring and evaluation activities both by governors and the subject leader have supported particularly less experienced staff, leading to these gaining confidence and skill in teaching RE to their classes.

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

The school leaders exude passion and commitment to the school's church foundation. They demonstrate drive, energy, ambition and a consistent determination to ensure that the values and vision that the school has agreed are taken forward by all stakeholders. Christian values are the bedrock on which the school operates. Stakeholders are regularly consulted about their views on the distinctiveness of the school as a church school. Parents have responded with an overwhelming endorsement of the school's work, such as in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural questionnaire conducted earlier this year. Rising standards, exceptionally high attendance and no exclusions testify to pupils thriving within this nurturing and compassionate environment. Self-evaluation processes, inclusive of the whole school community, are thorough, detailed and largely accurate. School leaders have taken advice willingly, and with a significant positive impact, from the diocese in terms of improving provision, particularly in the area of RE. Effective networking with other local church school headteachers has brought good opportunities for ideas and initiatives to be discussed and trialled within the school. The Ethos Committee has been an excellent way in which governors have monitored the distinctive church school provision, resulting in significant improvements being made. Pupils feel a sense of ownership and involvement through the many contributions that they are making to enhance the church school dimension, in particular, through the planning and development of the spiritual garden. Church leaders support the school community very well, through services, an encouraging presence in school, leading worship and being part of the governing body. Training is utilised well to review practices. The high profile of both RE and collective worship has enabled less experienced staff to demonstrate their potential as future church leaders.

SIAMS report October 2015 Elveden Church of England Academy, IP24 3TN