



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The Methodist Church 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Ely Saint Mary's Church of England School

High Barns,
Ely,
Cambridgeshire.
CB7 4RB

Previous SIAMS grade : Outstanding

Current Inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Ely

Local authority: Cambridgeshire

Date of inspection: 11th June 2015

Date of last inspection: January 20th and 22nd 2010

School's unique reference number: 110842

Headteacher: Revd James Hickish

Inspector's name and number: Stephen Cutts 495

School context

Ely Saint Mary's School is a large junior school close to the city centre. It changed from voluntary aided to academy status on February 1st 2015. The school is growing, with four form entry already introduced in years 3 and 4. The headmaster has been in hospital for several months, so the academy is currently led by a head teacher working for the Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust. The parish church is some distance from the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ely St Mary's School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- A very strong Christian ethos underpinned by prayer and worship permeates the whole school and is thoroughly embraced by all staff and children.
- The enthusiastic school team is committed to the nurturing and education of each pupil as part of a caring school family, so many extra activities take place to enrich the curriculum and develop individual skills and talents.
- A wide variety of inspiring collective worship which is valued by the whole school community.

Areas to improve

- Look carefully at how the school will maintain its very high levels of pastoral care, communication, Christian ethos and standards when some of the directors' roles disappear later this year.
- Continue to establish regular and rigorous monitoring of all aspects of the school's Christian ethos, involving all stakeholders, which is clearly recorded and analysed in order to inform good practice and examine the impact on the school community.

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

All members of staff speak sincerely and warmly about their church school family, highlighting the support and strength this gives them during the current absence of the headteacher to whom they clearly attribute the legacy of shared spirituality. It is underpinned by regular use of prayer, good teaching and close links to the local church. Committed members of staff embrace Christian principles to lovingly nurture and encourage each individual child. This fosters excellent behaviour and contributes greatly to the moral, social and cultural development of children who clearly articulate the school's vision based on responsibility, excellence, spirituality, partnership, enjoyment, care and tolerance. Regular reference to these core values throughout the day, good teaching of religious education and high quality worship all help to maintain and reinforce the strong Christian ethos. Pupils learn to value and care for God's creation. They develop a sense of awe and wonder through carefully-selected educational visits, imaginative themed days, and by encouraging and studying wild life in their environmental forest school. Appropriate Bible quotations appear on newsletters, documents and the school's excellent website. Informative religious displays in classrooms and corridors also add to the overt spiritual ethos. Pupils gain a global knowledge of Christianity through their support for a variety of charities. Members of the school community clearly link pupil achievement to Christian values, highlighting children's respectful behaviour in a calm, enthusiastic and supportive atmosphere, which creates a good climate in which pupils may learn and thrive. Detailed analysis of test results shows that pupil premium children make accelerated progress to close gaps in attainment and all children make at least expected progress. The school celebrates and develops the children's individual talents through a wide range of extra activities and clubs, focusing mainly on the creative arts which are used to praise God in worship. Achievements are celebrated and there is much support and imaginative motivation for more-reluctant learners. Some children and their families have been brought to church, and to baptism, through their attendance at St Mary's School.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Daily collective worship is central to school life and highly valued by all stakeholders who talk enthusiastically about their involvement. It is kept fresh and inspirational by using a variety of forms including class worship, taize and music worship. Each follows an informal liturgical pattern, usually with opening sentence and response, reflective music, moral teaching, discussion and prayer. Bible stories and verses are used regularly and learners clearly relate these to the school's core values and to their own lives, challenging them to take responsibility for their own actions. Children told me that, "We learn to make others happy, have the right outlook on life and benefit all people, not just ourselves." Music is used to great effect both in meditation and joyful hymns which the children sing with gusto. Daily collective worship is central to school life, and all stakeholders talk enthusiastically about their involvement. The Lord's Prayer and Blessing are regularly sung. All worship follows weekly themes detailed in the long term plans. Special visitors, along with numerous members of staff, lead enthusiastically. The director of worship is supportive and effective in careful planning, monitoring and leading by example. Plans reflect the liturgical year and lessons for life. Major festivals are celebrated in church and these are well-attended by parents and church congregation. Children showed a clear understanding of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Prayer is used at key times of the school day and sometimes within class to respond to situations or events. In order to build on good practice, the coordinator ensures careful and constructive internal monitoring by staff, and this is discussed by pupil members of the "All Together Now Club" who also take an active role in choosing themes and planning. Each class leads the morning worship at least once every year.

The effectiveness of religious education is good

All stakeholders are positive about teaching and learning in religious education, and parents indicate that they value the way children are taught "a Christian way of life". Thorough lesson plans and records show that children learn about and learn from religion, whilst photographs indicate that this is often achieved in exciting and imaginative ways. Both lessons observed by the inspector were taught with enthusiasm and clear purpose, building on previous knowledge and comparing aspects of Christianity to other major faiths. Children respond readily and their discussions demonstrate understanding, deep thought, prior knowledge and empathy. The locally agreed syllabus is carefully adapted to draw up detailed lesson plans that contribute to the school's

distinctive character, including aim, input, necessary differentiation and plenary. The lessons are enriched by visits, environmental studies and activity days which have sometimes involved parents. Evidence of good links to other curriculum areas is seen in art, music and poetry. Work is constructively marked by teachers, and children are encouraged to add their own brief assessment comments telling the teacher what they have learnt and how it relates to their own life and circumstances. Standards of attainment are high. Teachers make good use of artefacts, including those borrowed from the diocesan resource centre. Learning objectives are clearly met and everyone's beliefs are respected and valued. The coordinator is well-informed and attends inset training which she shares with all teachers. Religious education has a high profile across the whole school. There is structured monitoring and assessment led by the coordinator and key members of staff.

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

Leaders value and share a clearly developed Christian vision and communicate their distinctiveness as a church school very well. This is evident in discussion, on the school's excellent website, in documentation and in the school environment. Governors, staff and church members are working hard to maintain the strong partnership between school and church during the long absence of the headteacher, who is also the church curate. His dual role has ensured an effective two way partnership, recognised and valued by the whole community, which is based on sharing, support and mutual celebration. The Academy's leadership team is committed to raising standards of attainment in the core subjects and has carried out robust assessment and analysis in these areas in order to inform planning for further improvement. However, the monitoring of religious education and collective worship by the previous governing body was not thorough despite this being an action point from the last SIAMS Inspection. Three governors are now members of a new SIAMS Ethos Group whose role is to report back to the full governing body and ensure that these vital areas continue to flourish and reach consistent standards across the whole school. Leaders have recently sought help from the diocesan team to monitor and further improve the teaching of religious education and the provision of worship with focus on the impact these activities have on relationships, progress and behaviour in school. These results are now being used to inform future practice and plan future development. Issues relating to the school's distinctiveness appear regularly on newsletters and in the school development plan. Governors clearly establish that new members of staff are sympathetic and supportive of the school's Christian ethos. Members of staff feel valued and their well-being is important to governors. Teachers work in close partnership and the academy employs a number of directors who head up key areas such as worship, pastoral care, communication and inclusion. These directors liaise with outside agencies to provide the best care and support for pupils and families in an area of high need. Some of these discrete roles, however, will disappear in the new academic year as personnel move back into the classroom situation. Recent surveys and questionnaires show very positive support for the school.

SIAMS report June 2015. Ely Saint Mary's CE School, High Barns, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB74RB