

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Elton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Main Street,
Elton.
Matlock
DE4 2BW

Diocese: Derby

Local authority: Derbyshire
Dates of inspection: May 21st 2007
Date of last inspection: March 2002
School's unique reference number: 112815
Headteacher: Mr Paul Hunter
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Kate Gough 257

School context

Elton School is a very small rural school with 32 on roll, the majority of the children come from the village. They are all from white British backgrounds. The Head Teacher, who has only been in post since April, has a 0.7 teaching commitment. The school is adjacent to the Parish church which is part of a large United Benefice.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Elton School as a Church of England school are good.

The close bond between church, community and school creates a tangible atmosphere of mutual trust and support and a real sense of family. Committed support from the clergy and from members of the local church ensures that the school's Christian foundation is maintained and celebrated. The school is at the forefront of the mission of the local church. The Head teacher, a practicing Christian, has a clear vision for the school.

Established strengths

- A seamless partnership between school, church and community
- A loving, accepting working environment underpinned by Christian principles in which learners feel secure and valued
- Collective Worship is valued by the school family and provides opportunity for sharing and reflection.
- A well-developed awareness of other cultures and faiths and of the world-wide church

Focus for development

- In the school Prospectus celebrate the distinctive and unique qualities of Collective Worship and RE in separate sections.
- Explore ways of furthering the partnership between church and school.
- Ensure that learners are aware of the Anglican heritage of the school and appreciate the variety of other Christian denominations.

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

Learners are nurtured, valued as individuals and encouraged to value and respect others. This is reflected in the practical care and concern they show for each other within the school family, their awareness of world issues and their charitable giving. Learners are open minded and showed considerable maturity when discussing cultural differences. The Mission Statement and relevant policies are firmly rooted in Christian values, especially those recently revised by the new Head teacher. He is an experienced Collective Worship and RE co-ordinator and is committed to their ongoing development. School rules are based on the great commandment of, "Love God and love your neighbour as yourself". Ofsted described

behaviour throughout school as “exemplary”. School and church are working co-operatively to ensure continuity and consistency in sharing the Christian message and provide opportunities for learners to develop spiritually, for example, through the monthly “T-time” Family Service and “Alfie,” an after-school Christian club. Parents speak of their appreciation of the contribution that the school/church partnership makes to the life and distinctive ethos of the school, even though they may not regard themselves as “religious.” Although accommodation and display space in school is very limited, there is a commitment to create a quiet corner for prayer and reflection.

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is good

Collective Worship is undoubtedly regarded as an important and special time when the school gather together. All children interviewed commented enthusiastically about worship and agreed “It starts the day off well”. It has a sense of occasion and the children are responsive and respectful. They love to be involved in planning and leading worship. They greatly value the opportunity for reflection and prayer for both personal and world issues. Prayers during SATs week helped them to feel calm. They feel that the candle helps them to focus. An attractive display helps to create a sense of “sacred space” in the multi-purpose area used. They know the Lord’s Prayer and are familiar with some Anglican traditions but could not identify the local church as Anglican (or Church of England) or name any other Christian denominations. Support from the local church and the benefice is encouraged and valued. Recent re-organisation of clergy deployment will enable more regular participation in worship. There are no active links with other denominational representatives or Assembly Team leaders at present. The church is used for worship on special occasions and this may become a weekly event in the summer months. As accommodation in the school building is so limited this enables parents and the wider community to attend, which they appreciate. Resources for worship are limited; this is an area identified for development, however good use is made of those borrowed from the Diocese. Effective planning is now in place for Collective Worship and the need for staff/pupil evaluation is being addressed. Foundation governors visit regularly and formally monitor worship

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

In the short time that the Head Teacher has been in post he has made some significant changes in areas which impact on the distinctive ethos. He has a clear Christian vision and a commitment to the wider school family, appreciating the centrality of school and church in the life of the village. Exceptionally close and mutually-supportive relationships exist within the community and the school fully involves itself in village activities and initiates others. Ofsted identified the school staff as “good role models” and the culture of respect between individuals is tangible. Governors are well informed and are supportive; Foundation Governors take their role as Church representatives seriously, liaising between church and school and ensuring that the school maintains its Christian ethos. Parents’ views are actively sought and listened to and those interviewed felt fully involved in decision making. The Head Teacher is appreciative of Diocesan training opportunities and support. School news is regularly included in village newsletters and is discussed, as appropriate, at PCC meetings although not on a regular basis. There is no provision at present for displaying church notices at school or vice versa. Areas raised in the last inspection have been addressed.