

**Elveden Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

London Road,  
Elveden,  
Thetford,  
IP24 3TN

**Diocese: St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich**

Local authority: Suffolk  
Dates of inspection: 29<sup>th</sup> November 2007  
Date of last inspection: March 2004  
School's unique reference number: 124765  
Headteacher: Karen Rees  
Inspector's name and number: Marika Mears

**School Context**

Elveden Church of England VA Primary School serves the village of Elveden and a wide area of surrounding communities, including the towns of Thetford, Brandon and smaller villages. There is a high level of pupil mobility as many families are linked to the nearby United States Air Force Base. The majority of pupils are from white British backgrounds, with a small number who speak English as an additional language. The 51 pupils come from a broad range of social backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with Special Educational Needs or disabilities is broadly in line with national averages.

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

This is a good Church school, with some outstanding features, which offers a very high standard of care for its pupils, who are valued as individuals within a strong Christian ethos. There are good links between the school, Church, local community and the Elveden Estate, which owns the land where the school is located. The school's high expectations of both staff and pupils are celebrated throughout the school, allowing pupils to achieve their potential.

**Established Strengths**

- The clear vision of the Head Teacher and Governing Body, which includes a determination to provide a high quality education within a secure and caring Christian environment.
- The high standard of relationships pupils have with each other and with members of the school staff team.
- The commitment of the staff team to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment, in and around the school.
- The dedicated and collaborative staff team who make an effective contribution to the school and reflecting Christian values.

### **Focus for Development**

- Construct a policy for Spiritual Development that will encourage the consistent spiritual growth of all its learners.
- Work with local Church Wardens in developing linked school – parish projects to support the parish's role in the community.
- Continue to develop and embed the new Religious Education syllabus, ensuring Governor involvement through monitoring and evaluation.
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### **The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners.**

Pupils, parents and staff place high value upon the good relationships within the school. Pupils speak about the high quality of care shown by both teaching and non-teaching staff, and say that they feel well supported both personally and academically. The incumbent and Governors support the school well, including in times of bereavement and during family crises

The Head Teacher and staff team have created an extremely attractive and stimulating learning environment in very challenging premises. There is clear evidence of the school's Christian character in RE displays, Christian symbols, the school prospectus and in the many Christian quotations around the school. Classroom displays have a Christian message, such as a maths display in the form of a stained glass window, celebrating All Saints Day. There is a display in the Hall showing a Tree of Values.

Pupils are encouraged to get involved through the School Council, which meets to make suggestions about ways in which the school could develop. They are also involved in activities and fundraising events to support a variety of charities, including Sunsmart and World Vision.

Although the school does not have a policy for Spiritual Development, there are many opportunities for reflection and awe and wonder during daily lessons and activities such as Forest Schools. The school makes very good provision for moral and cultural development, for example through the strong links with schools overseas.

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

The daily act of worship is seen as a time for the whole school to be together for teaching, reflecting, singing and prayer. Pupils enter the hall with a sense of occasion and participate enthusiastically. Pupils' prayers from the Tree of Values are incorporated into the act of Worship, as they reflect the current issues, concerns and thoughts of individuals and are shared by the school. Pupils and parents talk about Bible stories that they hear in assemblies making a difference to their daily lives such as "looking after and helping each other."

Staff ensure that Collective Worship themes reflect and celebrate the backgrounds and cultures of pupils, such as Thanksgiving Day, Remembrance Day and Saint's Days. There is good evidence of clear planning for Collective Worship with opportunities to include current local and world events. The school has introduced the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) curriculum and uses this very effectively to highlight a Christian perspective. The Head Teacher and teaching staff all play a role in leading Collective Worship and children enjoy the variety of visitors who also lead Collective Worship in school, especially those from other cultures.

The incumbent leads Collective Worship weekly. Pupils feel that he tells stories about Jesus very clearly and this helps them to remember them and retell them to their families at home. The school celebrates all the main Christian festivals, particularly Easter, Christmas and Saint's Days. Families join the school at services in the local Church and many parents feel

that these services have inspired them to attend other services in Church. Pupils are involved with a variety of significant events in the Church such as celebrating its centenary, preparing visitor guides and participation in a project celebrating the famous Brangwyn Window.

The act of Collective Worship seen was good. The Head Teacher retold the story of the Good Samaritan with some pupil involvement and used appropriate language to engage the full age range of pupils. She linked the actions of the Good Samaritan to ways in which the school had helped others, both in the local and wider community abroad. Reference was made to the recent Bangladesh Flood crisis and to other charities that the school supported, ensuring that Christian values were highlighted through these actions.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good.**

The Head Teacher takes the lead as the co-ordinator for Religious Education and is supported by a Governor. There is a small budget allocated for RE resources and the school's PTA provides additional funding as required. There is evidence of a good variety of resources in school to teach all the major World Faiths. Pupils were able to use the resources to support their learning and use them respectfully in their play. The important role that the school places on RE teaching is highlighted in the school's prospectus, on the website and in the School Development Plan. The school has made a very good start in planning and implementing the new RE syllabus and the Head Teacher is clearly anticipating the positive impact this will have in RE teaching throughout the school.

RE is taught using music, drama, art and Reflective Storytelling providing many opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils. Pupils are given opportunities to think deeply about a variety of issues and are taught to respect and value the views of others. Lessons are well differentiated to ensure that pupils engage fully with the learning. For example, pupils were given the opportunity to reflect on the Church calendar and the season of Advent. The teacher read two versions of the Christmas story – the first a very modern version and the second a Biblical version. Pupils eagerly compared the two stories. The teacher encouraged the pupils to consider the values that Jesus taught 2000 years ago, such as truth, honesty, caring, love and peace, which are still held by Christians today. This made a powerful point showing the enduring nature of these core Christian values.

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good and there is a good balance of teaching between Christianity and other faiths. Standards are in line with the agreed syllabus.

The school organises visits to the local Church and Cathedral to enhance RE teaching. The pupils undertook a very successful pilgrimage to the Cathedral and the school plans to develop similar first hand opportunities to explore the Christian Faith. Pupils take part in a variety of multi-cultural events in school and welcome a number of visitors from other faiths. The school works very closely with the Diocese and other Church schools to develop the RE curriculum and provide greater opportunities to enhance RE teaching.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a Church School is good.**

There is a very strong working relationship between the local clergy, Governing Body, Head Teacher and staff. The Head Teacher provides a very clear vision for the school and takes a holistic view to school development, ensuring that pupils and families are at the heart of the school. Parents and pupils are well consulted, involved and informed about the work of the school. The Head Teacher prepares a regular "blue skies thinking" update for the Governing Body, in addition to her regular Head Teacher report. This gives considerable additional opportunities to involve the Governing Body in school development. The school's self evaluation is accurate and very perceptive.

The Governing Body are wholeheartedly supportive of the school's Christian Foundation and purpose, which are made clear in the school prospectus and aims of the school. They have taken part in training which has further enhanced their work and contribution to school development. They are involved in shaping this Christian direction by leading Collective Worship, starting a Bible Club and by expressing their willingness to be more involved in the development of the new RE curriculum and enhance their monitoring role. All prospective employees are made aware of the school's Christian values and ethos. New staff are made very welcome within the school community and feel that its small size enhances opportunities to develop Christian values. Staff say that well-being is a strong feature in the school. Staff talk about the support they receive from the Head Teacher and Governing Body, as well as from the wider local community and Elveden Estate.

Past members of the Governing Body still maintain a contact with the school and staff through visits. The local community and parishioners welcome the opportunity to come into school regularly for organised activities and school events. The school makes very good use of professional and local partnerships to support the needs of pupils.

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