



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Elham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Vicarage Lane, Elham CT4 6TT

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Canterbury

Local authority: Kent

Dates of inspection: 19 January 2016

Date of last inspection: 5 July 2011

School's unique reference number: 118741

Headteacher: Daniel File

Inspector's name and number: Virginia Corbyn 86

School context

Elham is a smaller than average sized primary school. The majority of pupils come from white British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special needs or disabilities is well below the national average. A small number of pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding. Some pupils are taught in mixed age classes. The headteacher has been in post since September 2014, bringing a period of much needed stability to the school. There has been a long interregnum in the parish with a new incumbent taking up post in February 2016.

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

- The leaders of this church school articulate a vision which puts the uniqueness of each pupil and the wellbeing of staff at the heart of all that they do.
- Pupils can articulate the ways in which they effectively apply the school's Christian values, based on stories from the Bible, to their learning and to their everyday living.
- All stakeholders describe a school community shaped by Christian values and characterised by Christian relationships.
- Collective worship supports the spiritual development of children creatively and thoughtfully.
- Religious education (RE) has been well led and managed with significant improvements made since the previous inspection.

Areas to improve

- Provide opportunities for pupils to lead collective worship on a regular basis so that they take ownership of and responsibility for this aspect of school life.
- Extend the teaching and learning in the higher levels for RE so that all evidence of higher order thinking is in line with the best practice identified within the school.

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

The headteacher articulates a clear Christian vision for Elham school. He is ably supported by a dedicated team, who put the children and their families first at all times. This Christian community is built around its core values of kindness, humility, forgiveness, perseverance, wisdom and faithfulness. These values were agreed by all stakeholders, including pupils, and they are made explicit on the website and in relevant school policies. They have been integral to the improvement in standards over the last three years. This means that relative to starting points the vast majority of pupils attain well due to the accelerated progress which they make. The school is currently in the top ten for attainment in Kent. Pupils articulate their Christian values clearly in relation to learning, behaviour and attitudes. They describe how perseverance means that they do not give up when their work is difficult. They know that they must display humility when helping those who need help in class. They are encouraged to share values at home, including some additional values recently highlighted by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Parents have sent emails to the school to thank the headteacher for their children's Christian hospitality at home. The quality of relationships in the school is outstanding. Parents, governors and pupils are appreciative of Christian relationships at all levels which are characterised by trust and openness. This means that the pupils feel safe at all times. They also develop as unique individuals with a clear sense of their value in the sight of God. Parents of different faiths and of none choose the school on the basis of the care offered and the clear Christian principles which underpin the community. The spiritual development of pupils is well supported. Opportunities for prayer are offered in worship, at lunchtime, for most classes at the end of the day and in class prayer areas. New willow domes outside have been created to provide quiet spaces for developing personal spirituality. Pupils demonstrate clear and confident understanding of Christian beliefs and teaching especially in relation to the biblical basis of the school's values. They know that RE helps them to value diversity by creating a culture of tolerance and acceptance.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Pupils know that worship is important and that it plays a significant part in their identity as a church school. They are able to apply what they hear to the benefit of the school community, treating others as they want to be treated. Worship is Christian and biblical. Exploration of Christian values lies at the heart of worship. There is a very high level of participation, for example using talking partners for sharing ideas and experiences. Pupils' responses are highly valued and they enhance the ways in which the application of Christian values is understood. There is some exploration of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in worship. The school has worked hard to find clergy support from Folkestone to ensure that the Anglican identity of the school has been well maintained during a long interregnum. This has provided creative ways to develop spirituality in worship. Pupils contribute to prayer during worship, with each class playing their part. Parents speak of their appreciation of the celebration of the major Christian festivals by the school. They are invited in to the weekly celebration of their children's achievements which is now framed within an act of worship. One parent described worship as 'inspirational'. Pupil leadership of worship is limited. Monitoring and evaluation of worship by pupils is currently being developed with staff sitting alongside pupils and supporting them in this role.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards of attainment in RE are broadly in line with schools nationally with some pupils attaining higher. Pupils understand the value of RE and they learn well. Teaching is at least good, with some outstanding as evidenced through book scrutiny and through lesson observations. Work is well presented showing the high expectations which teachers set for all pupils. During the inspection, the subject knowledge of teachers was seen to be strong, questioning was open-ended and high level thinking was promoted. This is not consistently captured in higher level outcomes at present. Pupils speak about a variety of tasks in their RE lessons which allows them to learn about and learn from religion. Most pupils speak about enjoying RE and being challenged by it. Since the previous

inspection, new materials from Canterbury Diocese have been introduced. These are being developed by the subject leader to ensure that they address the needs of mixed age classes and are appropriately differentiated. Formal assessment procedures are now in place as recommended in the previous inspection report. Developmental marking means that pupils respond to personalised questions and reflect upon their life experiences. Pupils display a secure knowledge of key Christian teachings with the curriculum placing a significant emphasis on Christianity. Their learning about other world faiths is well supported by visits to places of worship such as the gurdwara in Gravesend.

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

The headteacher, in partnership with all the leaders of the school, articulates a keen understanding of faith in practice especially in relation to ensuring that all pupils are fully catered for, both academically and personally. The wellbeing of staff is also underpinned by the school's values. Foundation governors speak of the importance of what a child will become at Elham and of their part in laying firm Christian foundations for this. Parents see the school as having a strong inclusive Christian ethos which respects and supports the faiths and the beliefs of others. The issues from the previous SIAS inspection have been fully addressed. The school's explicit Christian values are evident in documentation, on the website and throughout the school environment. As a result of this, stakeholders are able to talk about the impact of the values of the school and their pivotal role in driving the community forward. There are also effective and mutually supportive partnerships with other local church primary schools. RE has been well led and managed. The subject leader sets high expectations for her own class and there is a clear action plan for RE. The personal commitment of parochial church council (PCC) members to its school is very strong. Together with the excellent support of a self-supporting (voluntary) minister from Folkestone, this has ensured that links with the church have flourished during an interregnum. This has included the establishment of 'Church Explorers' to increase the familiarity of local families with Elham church. It has also led to pupils' participation in Sunday worship. There are many links with groups of all ages in the local community. Pupils regularly find ways to support local, national and global charities. Statutory requirements for worship and for RE are met. This is a school which has improved rapidly as a church school and which demonstrates the capacity to continue to do so.

SIAMS report, January 2016, Elham CE primary school, Elham CT4 6TT