



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Elmley Castle Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Main Street, Elmley Castle, Pershore, Worcestershire WR10 3HS

Previous inspection grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Worcester

Local authority: Worcestershire

Date of inspection: 11 December 2015

Date of last inspection: 11 November 2010

School's unique reference number: 116808

Headteacher: Megan Thomas

Inspector's name and number: Stephanie Boulter 785

School context

Elmley Castle is a smaller than average rural school serving the village of Elmley Castle and surrounding area. Since the last inspection pupil numbers have decreased from 75 to 29 with no Year 3 class currently in the school. The vast majority of pupils are of white British heritage with the proportion of pupils with special educational needs being 28% which is slightly above national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Elmley Castle VC as a Church of England school are good

- The inclusive Christian vision of the school ensures that all pupils are supported as individuals in their academic, personal and spiritual development
- Hardworking staff go that extra mile for the children with the result that pupils feel secure and safe and are confident in expressing their opinions
- The behaviour of pupils and the strong, supportive relationships between all members of the school community create a loving and secure distinctively Christian environment where the talents of each pupil are recognised and celebrated

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the school's core Christian values are explicitly shared with all members of the school community, so that there is a deeper understanding of their link to Bible teachings and of how these values relate to daily life
- Develop a shared interpretation of spirituality so that there is more explicit planning for and monitoring of opportunities for pupils to explore 'big questions', across all areas of the school curriculum
- Further develop independent monitoring and evaluation by governors of Christian distinctiveness, standards in religious education (RE) and the impact of worship so this leads to challenge and improvement in the school's effectiveness as a church school

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

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school seeing it 'as at the heart of its community, fully inclusive and where every child matters'. The vision is shared by staff and governors and as a result the drive for further improvement based on shared Christian values is strong. Attitudes to learning are good and attendance is high; this is because pupils enjoy coming to school motivated by the responsibilities and challenges given to them throughout the day. The school has a set of core Christian values which are known and understood by most pupils. However, these have not been explicitly explained to parents or pupils, nor embedded across all curriculum areas. As a result, pupils are not able to link them to Bible teachings and are not clear about how these core Christian values impact on their daily lives. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their school saying it is 'a family' and this in turn shapes the way that they all help each other out and take responsibility for their actions. Relationships between all members of the school community are built on trust and mutual respect linked to the Christian values of the school. This impacts implicitly upon pupils' behaviour and their caring attitude to all. Religious education (RE) makes a positive impact to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development as well as their understanding of and respect for diversity and difference amongst people. As one pupil said confidently, 'all people regardless of colour or religion deserve our respect, otherwise we would not be showing compassion and Jesus' love'. The school recognises the importance for all pupils to encounter other faiths and cultures and as a result of this, has developed links with a culturally diverse school in Redditch and is organising various visits to other places of worship, in order to further pupils' understanding of world faiths other than Christianity and a range of different cultures.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils have a high respect for collective worship and it plays an important part in the life of the school. The themes are well planned and are linked to the school's distinctive Christian values but these have not been explicitly explored as being distinctively Christian values. Relationships are strong, with older pupils caring for younger pupils throughout the day. Prayer and reflection are becoming more embedded features of the life of the school and pupils readily write their own prayers for the prayer tree; these are often used in daily worship. Acts of worship provide time for pupils to be still, reflect and pray, resulting in pupils understanding that prayer is a time to talk to God or Jesus, to say thank you for the good things He gives us. Older pupils in particular speak of how prayers can help by giving confidence or courage in times of difficulty. Pupils are beginning to take a lead in planning worship through the Crew and the introduction of 'Flippin' Praise'. As a result of these initiatives pupils are gaining confidence in this lead role. As yet however, there have been fewer opportunities to take ownership of the direction in which worship messages are explored which is recognised by the collective worship co-ordinator as a development area. Pupils have a good understanding of Anglican worship and Christian festivals due to the close relationship the school has with the local church, St. Mary's. There is a developing understanding of the Trinity within worship helped by the symbolic use of three candles in worship. Monitoring and evaluation of worship is undertaken informally; therefore the impact worship has on pupils' SMSC development is not always clearly known by school staff and leaders. There is a celebration assembly each Friday and parents appreciate the fact that all achievements are recognised by the school, but there is still a strong element of Christian distinctiveness and worship during this time with the opportunity for prayer and reflection.

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

This is a nurturing and supportive environment, testament to the Christian vision and the commitment of the headteacher and staff to ensure every child is seen as a child of God. As a result they work hard to ensure every pupil flourishes in their potential and succeeds in a

wide range of activities and endeavours. This is recognised and appreciated by parents. The excellent relationship with the vicar, who is chair of governors, and the local church allows a 'joined up approach' to the pupils' learning about Christianity which is both recognised and appreciated by parents. There are six distinctively Christian core values but these are not explicit in documentation, communication nor in curriculum planning. As a result, they are not fully known and understood by all so have not been fully embedded into the life of the school. Governors are supportive of the headteacher but have not accessed specific training from the Diocese in church school leadership and management and therefore are unsure of their role and responsibility to regularly, formally monitor and evaluate the impact which the school's distinctive Christian character has on standards in RE and worship and all aspects of school life. The RE co-ordinator has a good understanding of the standards of teaching and learning within the subject. The RE and collective worship co-ordinator has accessed support and training from the Diocese and, as a result, self-evaluation of key areas of church school distinctiveness and effectiveness is accurate. This has further led to development areas including tracking of standards in RE being identified and put into the school's development plan. The school maintains strong mutually productive links with St. Mary's church whilst relationships with the wider community are also good and sustained. The situation regarding pupil numbers has somewhat restricted the professional development of staff as leaders of church schools and this is recognised by governors. Collective worship and RE meet statutory requirements, and the developments from the last inspection have been addressed. Parents speak very highly of the school and how it gives their children an excellent start in their journey to becoming 'caring, tolerant and respectful members of society'.

SIAMS report December 2015 Elmley Castle Church of England VC First School Pershore WR10 3HS