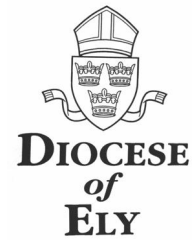




## The Diocese of Ely and Church Schools



*The Diocesan Director of Education and Training, Canon Tim Elbourne, writes:*

The Diocese of Ely, centred on its magnificent cathedral, covers a diverse area of some 1,500 square miles. Its growing total population is more than 650,000 and there are over 300 parishes and 325 churches. The Diocese includes the Cambridgeshire fens, the western part of Norfolk, the southern part of Peterborough City, the communities either side of the A1 down to St Neots as well as the city of Cambridge and its surrounding villages.

There are more than 80 church schools, all but one in the primary sector (about one third are Voluntary Aided (VA) and two thirds Voluntary Controlled (VC) They have together some 14,500 pupils and come under the Local Authorities of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Peterborough.

Church schools in Diocese takes their Christian distinctiveness seriously. The 2005 Education Act introduced new OfSTED Inspection, but also, under Section 48, new arrangements for the denominational inspection of Church of England schools. This second public inspection is known as Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools (SIAS) and usually takes place within six weeks of the Ofsted Inspection. Its report is published online<sup>1</sup> and focuses on four key questions (three in VC schools). These key questions are:

1. How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners?
2. What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?
3. How effective is the religious education? (VA schools only)
4. How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school?

Church schools leaders should be as committed to and confident in developing excellence in these areas as in all others. All Anglican schools in the Diocese subscribe to the common Ethos Statement which underpins the SIAS framework (or one very similar to it), and it describes the philosophical basis which underpins the life of the school:

*Recognising its historic foundation, the school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Church at parish and diocesan level.*

*The school aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils.*

The Diocesan Schools Team works to support schools in developing Excellence and Distinctiveness and provides a number of resources, many of them available through a Basic Service Level Agreement<sup>2</sup>. The Diocesan Website is well developed and publishes a wide range of free resources

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.ely.anglican.org/schools/](http://www.ely.anglican.org/schools/)

<sup>2</sup> Statutory functions are provided free of charge and there is a 'pay as you go' option for schools which do not yet subscribe to the Service Level Agreement.

[www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools](http://www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools). There is also a fortnightly e-bulletin. Organised activities include regular training, hugely popular Cathedral schools days each year and annual Headteachers' Conference. There is normally an Induction Day in the Autumn Term for recently appointed Church School headteachers. There is an excellent Resource Centre in Ely from which may be borrowed a wide selection of books, artefacts, videos and other resources for use in school. There are additional services available to VA schools to support their responsibilities for premises.

The church school provision of the Diocese is currently expanding, with the building of new schools and several have opened in recent years. Our schools are committed to being Distinctive and Inclusive and rooted in the local communities they serve. Most are better described as 'neighbourhood schools with Christian character' than by the media tag of 'faith schools'. Some 25% of the nation's primary schools have a Church of England foundation and their profile and confidence has grown significantly in recent years, and especially since Lord Dearing's landmark report 'The Way ahead' (2001) which reaffirmed that inclusive church schools stand at the centre of the Church's mission to the nation.

Tim Elbourne  
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