



Great and Little Shelford Church of England (Aided) Primary School

Church Street
Great Shelford
Cambridgeshire CB2 5EL

Diocese: Ely

Local authority: Cambridgeshire
Dates of inspection: 12th – 13th September 2007
Date of last inspection: 3rd – 4th February 2003
School's unique reference number: 110831
Headteacher: Mrs Alison Evans
Inspector's name and number: Peter Adams (205)

School context

The school serves the two Shelford villages to the south of Cambridge. It is of average size and over subscribed. Most pupils come from White British families with a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. Some families have chosen to use the school because of the Christian Foundation. The school is situated next to the local parish church on a compact site. The buildings are well-maintained but present some challenges, which are overcome through careful planning and good organisation.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Great and Little Shelford Church of England (Aided) Primary School as a Church of England school are good

This is a very effective church school with a caring ethos, firmly based on Christian principles. The headteacher gives a positive Christian lead and is well-supported by the school staff, governors and local clergy. The integration of school, church and community is well-developed and beneficial to the learners.

Established strengths

- The school leadership presents a clear Christian vision.
- There is a strong commitment to the personal development and well-being of the 'whole child.'
- Relationships are excellent with an emphasis on care which encourages learners to look to the needs of others.
- Learners are confident, well-behaved and academic achievements are outstanding.
- The school is well-organised with good structures and communication systems that promote an inclusive atmosphere.
- Links with the local church communities are strong and mutually supportive.

Focus for development

- Develop existing monitoring arrangements for RE through assessment and analysis procedures to confirm the high standards of progress in the subject.
- Improve systems for the evaluation of Collective Worship to show how it supports spiritual growth and affirmation of faith.

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

The school has a strong Christian ethos which has been thoughtfully reviewed and developed to provide a rich environment to encourage the spiritual development and meet the needs of the learners. The school's aims of high expectations and behaviour in a Christian environment are valued and supported by stakeholders and the school community. Parents described the school as a place with 'happy and busy children, who behave well, are kind to each other in a positive and caring way.' School staff wholly identify with the Christian values; relationships are excellent and adults in the school provide very positive role models for the learners. A governor remarked on the 'very strong and inclusive team spirit' among the staff. Structures and policies that encourage learners to take responsibilities are in evidence. This includes a strong ethic of looking to the needs of others. The headteacher wrote in the school brochure 'we want the children to feel part of the school family, with each individual caring about others.' This is reflected in the attitudes of learners who feel special and have high self-esteem. Ofsted wrote: 'Pupil's personal development and well-being is outstanding. It is a key strength of the school.' There is a calm, purposeful and inclusive 'feel' to the school. The caring learning environment has a considerable impact in enabling learners to develop their potential. The learners demonstrate a respect for each other; they are proud of their school and feel safe. The school promotes community responsibility as is evident from the behaviour and attitudes of the learners. Pupil voice is seen as important, is encouraged and acted upon. Learners are well-informed and understand the significance of the Christian character of the school. A child said 'everyone is so friendly here; I just wanted the holiday to end so I could go back to school and be with my friends.' There is an atmosphere of mutual support within the staff. The role and contribution of support staff is well-defined and valued. A Teaching Assistant commented that 'the care for each individual was outstanding.'

Prominent Christian symbols and displays are in evidence, which confirm the church foundation of the school and contribute to the spiritual development of learners. A group of learners were able to describe the significance of Christian symbols on the school badge. The school celebrates its status as a church school and provides a focus for the community. The local clergy and Bishop's Visitor are involved in the life of the school and make a very positive contribution to the benefit of all learners.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective Worship is well-planned, structured to meet the needs of all learners and takes a significant and central role in the life of the school. Worship is used to promote the key Christian values that underpin the ethos of the school. It represents different worship styles and supports Anglican heritage and practice including Festival Services that follow the church year.

The learners respond well and are pleased to be involved in the worship. The quality of their singing in hymns and worship songs is inspirational.

The school values the regular input of local clergy and other groups that are invited to lead Collective Worship and gains benefit from the involvement of local church communities.

The school is situated alongside the local church, which provides a useful resource and venue for Festivals and end of term services. The church building in the other village of the catchment area is also included when appropriate.

During Collective Worship care is taken to provide appropriate experiences for all learners, including times for quiet reflection to facilitate spiritual growth.

Learners can recall recent acts of worship, including Bible stories from both Old and New Testaments and relate them to their everyday lives. One pupil expressed this as 'We need to face up to life and not run away from God like Jonah'. Prayer is a natural part of Collective Worship. They are familiar with the Lord's Prayer and appreciate times for reflection and quiet prayer. The school prayer was written by the learners and includes an adapted version of the

school motto 'Help us to gain knowledge from which wisdom flows.' A Foundation Governor observed that 'Prayer is integral to the experience of the children.'

Some evaluation of the impact Collective Worship has been carried out with learners. There are plans to further develop this in the context of planning for spiritual development.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious education is seen as an important ingredient in the curriculum and it is delivered in a positive and confident way. The scheme of work allows for an understanding of other world faiths, but is predominantly Christian. A system of monitoring is in place and the school judges lessons to be of a good standard. Observation of lessons confirms that the overall standards of achievement in RE are good. There is a timetable for Governor visits to look at, and monitor the curriculum; this includes RE later in the school year. The subject is co-ordinated and there are links with other schools through 'network meetings.' The School Development Plan includes a detailed programme designed enhance the role of the RE co-ordinator. This will include seeking guidance and agreement on monitoring arrangements for RE and develop further assessment and analysis procedures to confirm high standards of progress in the subject. The school sees RE as making a significant contribution to the spiritual development of the learners.

A feature of the school's approach to RE is that learners are encouraged to reflect on spiritual issues and apply the principles to their own lives for example in conflict management. In a lesson on harvest, the children were encouraged to think about generosity and identify '... a way to make a positive contribution to another's life.'

The school utilizes the church community as a resource for the Christian element of RE – thus giving the learners valuable insights and help towards an understanding of the practical aspects of faith and the Anglican tradition.

The inclusive culture of the school enables families from other faiths to come in and share their beliefs when appropriate such as the Chinese 'New Year' celebration – in one RE lesson, a group of older children showed a good understanding of the nature and practice of worship and demonstrated a well-developed knowledge of Christianity.

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

The distinctive Christian vision of the school is evident in school documentation and aims. The headteacher is committed to the Christian ethos and gives a strong and effective lead to the school community. She is comfortable in the role of spiritual leader and is well-supported by foundation governors, local clergy and staff. The staff are sympathetic with the Christian ethos and they feel valued and supported. There are good communication systems, including a daily briefing and staff prayers. Christian values are well established and permeate all areas of school life. The leadership team works well together and is able to make accurate evaluations of the strengths of the school and areas for development. There is a thoughtful and reflective approach to school improvement through careful analysis and self-evaluation. This is done in the context of the role of a church school.

Parents/carers are well-informed about school activities, are supportive of the leadership and fully involved in the life of the school. One parent mentioned that she was 'very impressed with the way a suspected bullying incident was dealt with by the headteacher'.

The foundation governors give good support and provide some encouragement and challenge to the leadership of the school. The school enjoys a supportive and productive relationship with the church.

The parents/carers are made welcome in a range of church services and events.

The Christian ethos is evident in relationships, mutual care and respect between all members of the school community. A member of staff said 'there is something special about this school – and it has got even better over the past few years.'