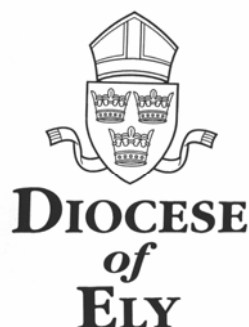


## Statutory Inspection of Church Schools Report



### **The Vine Inter-Church Primary School**

The Vines  
Cambourne  
Cambridgeshire  
CB3 6DY

### **Ely Diocese and the Methodist Church**

Local authority: Cambridgeshire  
Dates of inspection: 23<sup>rd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007  
Date of last inspection: Not applicable  
School's unique reference number: 134894  
Headteacher: Mrs Debbie Higham  
Inspector's name and number: Marika Mears

### **School Context**

This is a new school, opened in September 2005, in the growing community of Cambourne. During this time the pupil population has grown rapidly from 88 to 229 pupils, with new pupils joining the school almost weekly. The school is being built in phases and is about to move all pupils into the main part of its building. Pupil mobility is higher than nationally. Staff numbers are continually growing to meet the rising school numbers. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language is slightly above average.

The school has established many links with the local community and provides extensive family and pupil support services.

The Church in Cambourne serves all the Christian groups in the community. Services are being held in a community centre until a Church is built.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of The Vine Inter-Church Primary School as an Inter-Church school are good.**

Christian values underpin all aspects of school life. The Christian ethos is at the heart of the school, and relationships within the school and with the wider community are very well developed. The self-evaluation process has provided an accurate and perceptive picture, and the school is well placed to develop its vision still further.

### **Established Strengths**

- The clear vision of the Head Teacher and Governing Body which includes a determination to raise standards within a secure and nurturing Christian environment.
- The very good relationships between staff, pupils, parents and the wider community.
- The collaboration of a new and growing staff team to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment.
- The strong working relationship between the school and local minister, who also leads the Governing Body in his role as Chair of Governors.

### **Focus for Development**

- Construct a policy for spiritual development to formalise the significant work the school has already achieved in this area.
- Strengthen and broaden the involvement of the Governing Body in the ongoing development and rapid growth of the school.
- Ensure that there are periods for consolidation of the very good practice in the school during its growth phase.

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

The school proclaims its Christian foundation from the moment a visitor enters it through the prominence of displays, Church notices, Christian symbols, and the distinctive, carefully chosen, school logo. Visitors receive a very warm welcome from all staff and pupils that they come into contact with.

The pupils are aware of the distinctive Christian ethos of the school and can explain what it means to them in personal terms. This is having a good impact in ensuring that pupils share common values in terms of school rules and looking after the school. They appreciate the very supportive family atmosphere, and established pupils enjoy helping younger pupils and new children during the school day. Relationships within the school are of a high order and are characterised by Christian care and consideration for others. Pupils feel that they are respected by staff at school and enjoy being consulted on school matters such as school meals and new play equipment. Although the school has grown rapidly there is very good collaboration within the staff team to ensure that the needs of all learners are met. The local Vicar supports the staff team by providing weekly opportunities for personal reflection and growth.

The school offers a wide variety of activities for pupils to become involved in using its own staff and a wide variety of outside agencies. Parents speak very warmly about the nurturing work of the school, and value the impact it has on their children. Parents have many opportunities to contribute to the life of the school, both formally and informally. They feel that all staff are very approachable, particularly the Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher. The school has demonstrated its commitment to inclusion by developing an Inclusion team to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met fully. Links have been made with an impressive number and variety of external agencies to ensure that all pupils are valued as individuals and involved in the life of the school. The school uses the Social Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) curriculum to develop PSHE, and parents feel that this supports the development of pupils very well, particularly as all the children have recently been uprooted from different communities.

The school has added an additional strand to the Every Child Matters agenda, that of developing spiritual awareness. Although this is in the early stages of formal development through a policy, there are many opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually through Religious Education, collective worship, music, art and drama. This was very well developed during a music lesson, linking a Chinese Creation story with Christianity. Pupils had the opportunity to participate with singing and musical accompaniment and did so in a confident

and reflective manner.

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

The act of worship seen was of very good quality with opportunities for celebration, praise, pointers for Christian living, reflection and prayer. Pupils were eager to be involved and participated enthusiastically, sharing in celebrating with their friends in a calm atmosphere of respect. The school is at the early stages of monitoring and evaluating the impact of collective worship. The Governing Body have well established plans to do so and collective worship is a key area for development in the School Development Plan. Three governors regularly lead collective worship for the school, as does the Church Youth Worker.

The Chair of Governors leads collective worship on a weekly basis and pupils talk about the different ways in which he makes the teachings of Jesus come to life and influence their lives. All teachers are involved in leading collective worship and value the opportunities for sharing school values and personal reflection. Pupils of other faiths talk about the ways in which the school community shares their traditions. The school has carefully considered different symbols for reflection at different times of the school year, such as a candle during Advent, an open Bible during Lent and incense during Pentecost.

Pupils and families talk about similarities between worship at school and the local Church and enjoy the new songs that they share. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to ask "BIG" questions and explore these in class groups and during collective worship. They are very confident with the idea of "being still" during collective worship and can transfer this stillness to activities in class. Pupils are very excited about a new Church being built which will enable them to take part in collective worship in a different environment. They explained how the vicar had shared the plans and opportunities with them in school, and pupils in turn share these plans with their families.

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

Pupils have a growing knowledge of Christianity and participate confidently in lessons, sharing their ideas and reflecting on the impact Christianity has on their lives. Pupils show very positive attitudes and their interest is stimulated by enthusiastic teaching, skilful questioning techniques and opportunities for personal reflection. Lessons are very well planned with clear objectives and an opportunity for pupils to respond according to their ability. The coordinators work very hard to ensure that the subject is well managed, drawing upon the Cambridgeshire and QCA schemes of work. The co-ordinators have a very secure knowledge base, and share this with other teachers. They are keen to teach RE through cross curricular links, as well as a discrete subject, taking opportunities to compare and contrast major world Faiths.

Pupils have very mixed attainment upon entry in RE, and the school is using ICT effectively to monitor and assess achievement. Although resources for RE are limited at present. The school has plans to evaluate these through the Diocesan resources centre, once the curriculum is fully developed.

Pupils enjoy RE and talk about the ways in which teachers use music, art and drama to make lessons more interesting. They feel that RE "comes to life" in these lessons. Parents feel that their children are confident to talk about the values they have learnt in Christianity and compare these with other faiths. They speak highly of the way in which RE teaching encourages their children to develop spiritually and to develop their own beliefs, whilst respecting those of others.

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

The Head Teacher's leadership is excellent, strongly supported by the Deputy Head Teacher and Chair of Governors. The Head Teacher's vision for the school, shared with a very energetic leadership team, is already having a significant impact on practice within a secure

and caring Christian environment. The Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher and Chair of Governors have been warmly welcomed by the school and the wider community. The open style of leadership of the Head Teacher has been accepted because it emanates from aspiring high standards linked with an infectious enthusiasm for the further development of the school. She is very well supported by the staff team and Governing Body, all of whom share the belief in the Christian ethos of the school. The wider Church community supports the school. Governors work hard within the school community for example in recruiting staff and ensuring the quality of school meals. The rate of development has been relentless and staff and Governors have shown an impressive stamina to keep up with the changes.

The Chair of Governors is inspirational in his vision for the school to be a transformational experience, where pupils are open to wonder, learning, imagination and finding God in their lives. He talks of the innate spirituality of children and of the role of the school in encouraging the recognition of mystery and joy of community, beyond the materialistic needs prevalent in today's society. The Vice Chair of Governors has shared Godly Play with pupils and has a key role in supporting school development. The school also benefits from the support of the Church Youth Worker on residential visits and in running an after school club.

The school has developed a remarkable partnership with the Church and local community, in such a short time, promoting events, contributing to ideas and participating in worship.