



The Diocesan Director of Education, 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 in the diocesan family, all but one in the primary sector - about one third are Voluntary Aided (VA) and two thirds Voluntary Controlled (VC). They have together some 14,000 pupils and come under the local authorities of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Peterborough.

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, 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. The Church School provision of the Diocese is currently expanding, with the building of new schools and several have opened in recent years

The Diocese offers support, training and resources including a regular e-Bulletin and events as well as a comprehensive website (www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools). A particular feature is the Schools' Wellbeing Project that offers headteachers one-to-one consultancy and our network of Bishop's School Visitors. All our services are included in the Service Level Agreement (SLA) to which 90% of our schools subscribe. The three East Anglian dioceses work closely together to support work with schools and many useful resources can be found on their website (www.churchschoolseast.org.uk)

There is a Church School Self-Evaluation model and also 'denominational' inspection, known as 'Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools' (SIAS). This usually follows within six weeks of Ofsted inspection and its report is published online. It focuses on three or four key questions. These 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 only)
4. How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a Church School?

Church School leaders should take a lead in developing excellence in these areas as in all others. Our schools subscribe to the common Ethos Statement underpinning the SIAS framework :

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.