



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Boughton-under-Blean and Dunkirk Methodist Primary School

School Lane
Boughton-under-Blean
Faversham
ME13 9AW

Previous SIAMS grade: Satisfactory

This inspection grade: Good

Circuit: Canterbury and East Kent

Local authority: Kent

Dates of inspection: 27 November 2014

Date of last inspection: May 2011

School's unique reference number: 118705

Interim executive headteacher: Wendy Stone

Acting head of school: Jo Godfrey

Inspector's name and number: Lyn Field 151

School context

This is a slightly smaller than average primary school. The proportions of disadvantaged pupils and of those from minority ethnic backgrounds are lower than in most schools. There are slightly more pupils that usual needing support to meet special educational needs. The interim leadership team has been in place since April 2014 and this arrangement will continue until July 2015.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Boughton-under-Blean and Dunkirk as a Methodist school are good

- Actions taken by the acting executive headteacher have rejuvenated the school's Christian and distinctively Methodist character.
- Pupil leadership and their involvement in new initiatives ensure they promote the importance of Christian values in what happens in school.
- The developing partnership with the Methodist Circuit is enriching the quality of leadership and learning in the school.
- The school's Christian character, through good teaching in worship and religious education (RE), helps pupils appreciate issues that affect society beyond their school.

Areas to improve

- To develop pupils' understanding of Methodist traditions in worship by involving them in its planning and delivery
- To build on pupils' understanding of the place and purpose of prayer with greater opportunities for them to reflect and pray as individuals
- To enhance the school's Methodist profile of outreach to the community by expanding links and developing the involvement of parents in school life

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

Pupils understand that their school is both Christian and distinctively Methodist in its character and this has also become much clearer to parents in the last few months. The arrival of the executive headteacher prompted surveys of pupil views. It quickly emerged that pupils found it hard to verbalise the teachings of John Wesley and that RE lessons on Methodism were slow to capture their interest. This has now changed and everyone knows about John Wesley and his 'Rule'. The introduction of new RE units on Methodism is at an early stage but, overall, RE is important to pupils and challenges their spiritual, moral, social and cultural thinking. They have a secure knowledge of Christianity and a curiosity for how religious beliefs affect practices in daily life. This means their attitudes to diversity in society are open and positive and incidents of any prejudice-based bullying are very low.

Pupils have many opportunities to take responsibility as leaders. This is a strength of the school and Christian values touch on all these roles. Older pupils, therefore, have a strong understanding of how the core values affect school life. The transfer of Christian values from lessons to the playground and after school activities is seamless. Pupils talk convincingly about justice. They explain how prejudice about money or appearances can mean people are treated unfairly in society and link this clearly to the stories Jesus told. The school's other four core values of forgiveness, trust, friendship and perseverance have an equal impact on relationships, behaviour and learning because good teaching in worship and RE means there is a common language for talking about them. Parents have observed how pupils draw on the values to make choices in their personal conduct. An accurate Christian understanding of forgiveness, for example, is strongly reflected in the very visual system of 'turning cards over' and pupils explain it shows how poor behaviour is 'wiped out as if it had never been'. As a result, behaviour and attendance have improved. Better rates of pupil progress have been maintained in the current term and gaps between disadvantaged and other pupils are closing, including at the higher levels.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The style of worship reflects the school's Methodist character. However, pupils do not always recognise these features because their involvement in worship is still moving from the stage of making active contributions to a role in planning and leading. Themes are explicitly Christian with clear teaching from the Bible that reinforces the school's core values. As a result, pupils grow in their knowledge of Jesus Christ and of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit as they move through the school. Pupils' views have been taken very seriously. Their feedback identified shortcomings in how well they felt able to engage in worship and to remember the key teaching points.

Subsequent changes have made significant improvements. A variety of strategies from sign-language to talk partners now keeps everyone engaged from beginning to end. A reflection wall has been introduced in the hall where older pupils collect and display some of the thoughts prompted by what has been said. This is a useful reference point for everyone and is helping the messages of worship to be followed through into the rest of school life. The seating arrangement for whole school worship reflects the careful thought that goes into how it is organised. Year 6 sit around the edge, 'cocooning' the rest of the pupils in order to support the classes where they provide coaching and support. Adults contribute alongside pupils to create a powerful sense of an inclusive community worshipping together. Assemblies led by classes now focus on Christian values rather than curriculum topics. These significant changes to worship are deepening pupils' thinking on spiritual and moral issues and the school has identified personal prayer as the next step for development. Pupils contributed to the creation of the school prayer and so formal prayer is well established in worship and at other times in the school day. However, pupils are less confident in how to make use of time for their own prayer and reflection. Leaders from the Methodist Circuit, particularly the Methodist minister and family worker, are regular and welcome visitors who reinforce the importance of the pattern of worship. Singing is a popular and a strongly Methodist feature of worship. Pupils of all ages have a good recall of songs and hymns and refer to specific wording in nominating their favourites.

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

The acting executive headteacher has taken prompt action to raise the profile of the school's Christian and Methodist character and progress has been rapid. Her open and unequivocal style of leadership has quickly gained the confidence of staff and parents. She has put structures in place for the school's Christian vision to be lived out in its organisation and through the curriculum. Although some initiatives are in the early stages, there is firm evidence of leaders' capacity to sustain improvements and RE and worship are given a high profile. Momentum is growing and all actions now feed into the same vision. There has been a significant shift in the work of governors from merely monitoring results to tracking the impact of the Christian vision on pupils' achievement and wellbeing. They recognise the challenge of making qualitative as well as quantitative evaluations so their school visits and discussions with pupils are sharply focused on checking improvement. In the last few months, issues from the previous inspection have been tackled effectively and pupil feedback has been instrumental in shaping changes, particularly in worship. A set of five core values is proving more manageable than an earlier extensive programme of values. Everyone keeps these five in mind as the basis of relationships and decision-making both as leaders and as individuals. The partnership with the Methodist circuit and the Faversham network of schools has given leaders insight into the practical benefits of the Methodist principle of collaborative working (*The Connexion*). It has opened up opportunities for staff to develop skills in leading aspects of a church school. On the curriculum side, the links with a Methodist care home have opened pupils' eyes to what elderly people can bring to their perceptions of the past. Moving forward with more of these links is now high on the school's agenda. Parents welcome new opportunities to see the school in action through open mornings and *Values* days. They increasingly recognise the higher profile given to the school's Methodist character with the logo restored to newsletters, their children's knowledge of John Wesley and the focus on outreach in the community.

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