



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### Cuerden Church School

Station Road  
Bamber Bridge  
Preston  
PR5 6ED

**Previous SIAS grade:** Outstanding

**Current inspection grade:** Outstanding

**Diocese:** Blackburn

Local authority: Lancashire

Dates of inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2016

Date of last inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> July, 2011

School's unique reference number: 133645

Headteacher: Carolyn Ranson

Inspector's name and number: Susan Cliffe (832)

### School context

Cuerden Church School was created by the amalgamation of St. Saviour's Church of England School and Bamber Bridge Methodist School. The school enjoys a purpose built building opened in 2006. There are currently 187 children on roll and the majority of them are from white British backgrounds. The percentage of free school meals has risen over the past four years and is now above the national average. The school has received a Diocesan Church School Distinctiveness Award.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Cuerden Church as a Church of England and Methodist school are outstanding

- The explicit Christian character of the school which permeates all aspects of school life enables the school to flourish socially and spiritually
- The outstanding leadership of the Christian headteacher has driven school improvement and she is ably and wholeheartedly supported by staff and governors
- The strong, supportive links between the school and the Anglican and Methodist churches make a significant contribution to the school's Christian character
- The outstanding behaviour of the children stems directly from the firmly embedded Christian values

### Areas to improve

- Develop more rigorous methods to assess religious education (RE) to ensure that standards are rigorously tracked to inform improvement
- Increase the involvement of children in the planning of collective worship so that they can have greater ownership and thereby contribute to its future development
- Develop links with other local schools to enrich the children's experience of other faiths and cultures

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

Christian values are clearly expressed and explicitly understood by all school members. They clearly underpin every aspect of life in the school and are closely linked to the life of Jesus and his teachings. There is a focus upon a different value each half term. Representatives of the school community and Diocese drafted the school's mission statement in September 2015. The mission, 'nurturing faith and inspiring success', has been placed at the core of school life. The school is described by the vicar as a place where everyone is 'in the presence of God'. The behaviour of children is excellent being influenced greatly by the Christian character of the school. They feel that they are 'listened to' especially through the student council. A six year old child explained that school made him feel 'thumbs up' and another child described the school as a 'warm place where everyone is loving'. Children work in a calm, respectful, happy environment with excellent relationships. These contribute greatly to good standards and progress given the children's below average starting points. A parent described the school as 'very nurturing and caring', especially valuing the input from the school's learning mentor. Another parent commented that her child even links behaviour at home to Christian values. Children's spiritual development is outstanding. Worship areas, crosses and Christian displays such as 'Jesus' friends follow him' have a positive impact on this development. Children are comfortable saying their own prayers aloud because they feel respected. Children are enthusiastic about RE and they enjoy being able to explore important questions. One child said, 'I like being able to say what I feel and think deeply.' Children have a high degree of understanding of other faith communities and school leaders are keen to forge links with other schools to further their experience of such communities. They have a very good understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. One child stated, 'We are all just part of one big Christian family tree.' This is enhanced greatly by the school's links with a school run by a Christian charity in southern India for whom they fund-raise. Children are aware of their Christian duty in supporting those less fortunate. They have supported a variety of charities such as Children in Need, the British Legion and the Bishop's Harvest appeal.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective worship is at the heart of school life and is firmly rooted in Christian values and Bible teachings. A child commented, 'Worship reminds me that Jesus is always with our school family.' It is well led and focuses on a half-termly Christian value. The ministers and worship co-ordinator work together on planning and staff and clergy deliver worship weekly. Visiting speakers, such as youth workers and charity workers, are welcomed. This ensures a rich experience for the children. Worship is held in school and in the Methodist church weekly. Children attend the parish church of St. Saviour's for major events in the church year such as Christmas and Easter and the school community enjoy the variety of settings. Behaviour during worship is excellent and children are given time for reflection, praise and prayer. They sing with joy and enjoy joining in with actions. Children have become increasingly involved in the delivery of worship. They lead an annual class worship which is attended by parents along with class led acts of worship throughout the year. However, the involvement of children in the overall planning for worship requires further development to enhance future provision and ownership. Class worship evaluation books are discussed at circle time and comments are fed back to the co-ordinator. This has led to many improvements such as more action songs which followed an infant class request. The Christian values, Anglican and Methodist traditions are a major focus for worship and children see the churches and ministers as 'together'. The children are able to connect a mural in the school hall with the Trinity as it represents, 'God, Son and Holy Spirit'. Prayers are also used in worship to develop this concept. The school is a prayerful place and children use the worship tables present in each classroom. They are inspired to write down prayers or simply be still. The newly commissioned worship table provides a focus in the hall. It symbolises the unity of the churches within the school as both clergy collaborated in its design. There is a prayer walk in the school grounds and is a great resource used, for example, as a place for reflection on the tragic losses of World War One when children sowed poppies. 'These poppies will represent our prayers for the fallen soldiers,' commented one child.

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

RE is enjoyed by children and enjoys a very high profile. A child stated, 'It helps me to live my life well.' RE has become more creative and children particularly enjoy drama activities such as acting out Peter's denial of Jesus. Clergy are involved in delivering RE. For example, the Methodist minister spoke to children about being called by God and the vicar shared his experiences of visiting Israel. High quality RE displays are evident throughout school and children are able to speak about them with confidence. A range of other faiths are studied as evidenced by the impressive displays relating to major faiths of the world. Children have visited non-Christian places of worship and one child remarked that we need to know about synagogues because, 'Jesus used to worship in them.' Learners are able to apply their knowledge and skills to good effect with one infant child reflecting on a lamb as being a sign of Jesus and rebirth. Children make good progress and standards of attainment are in line with national expectations. This is reflected in the class scrapbooks which log a range of creative approaches to the subject. Systems are in place for planning and monitoring RE and the majority of teaching is at least good. Lessons are linked to clear learning objectives which are shared and discussed with the children. Children respond well to the teacher feedback and say that it really helps them to improve their work. One child commented, 'The teachers are brilliant. They give us time to think and help us to get better.' However, systems for assessment require further embedding to ensure that improvement is sustained. The newly appointed RE co-ordinator is enthusiastic, committed to further improvement and is gaining confidence in leading the subject. Attendance at Diocesan cluster meetings and further liaison with Diocesan advisors will enhance this confidence further. RE is used to nurture the Christian values of the school and the children respond sensitively. One child wrote, 'We need to love and respect people who don't worship our God.' RE makes a significant contribution to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Children look forward to lessons. One child shared, 'We are asked to think about God and important things'.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding**

The Christian headteacher, supported effectively by governors and staff, ensures that the school community shares the school's Christian vision. She is described by a colleague as 'an inspirational leader.' All members of the governing body take their role very seriously and are fully aware of the distinctive nature of the school. One governor said that they seek, 'God's direction in the work of the school'. The chair of governors leads with enthusiasm ensuring that the group are well-informed and that they offer both challenge and support. Governors are regular visitors. Worship and RE are major priorities within the school and the school improvement plan. They meet statutory requirements. However, RE requires more stringent monitoring and assessment by school leaders to ensure further improvement. Christian values can be seen in the nurturing relationships and excellent behaviour which are seen in school. The staff feel that these values enrich the school with Christianity filtering through the school. The professional development of staff is encouraged with some members moving on to headships. Parents are highly supportive of the school and feel welcome. They state that issues are quickly dealt with. One parent remarked, 'This great faith school gives the children the Christian values to help them cope with life.' They also commented on the excellent behaviour of the children underpinned by an effective behaviour policy. The parents' friends association supports the school well and funded a 'buddy bench' to comfort children who may need support. Links with the local community are good with a strong example being the visit of the choir to local care homes. An increasing number of families are now attending Messy Church and school is described by the vicar as a 'touchstone of the community'. Anglican and Methodist foundations in the school are a strength. The headteacher shared, 'At our school we are a united Christian family.' The school is to develop links with other local schools to further enrich the understanding of other faiths and communities. The SMSC development of the child is well developed with the children being given a voice through the school council. Extra-curricular provision is a strength of the school and is appreciated by children and parents alike. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is excellent.