



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church**

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

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

The Vines  
Upper Cambourne  
Cambridgeshire  
CB23 6DY

**Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Current inspection grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Diocese of Ely and the Methodist Church**

Local authority: Cambridgeshire

Date of inspection: 10 November 2015

Date of last inspection: 16 September 2010

School's unique reference number: 134894

Headteacher: Debbie Higham

Inspector's name and number: David Bunkell 815

### **School context**

The school celebrated its tenth birthday earlier this year. It serves the new settlement of Cambourne, with a current population of about 10,000, and still growing. The school has seen a period of comparable growth, from 88 when it first opened to the 417 pupils now on roll. The founding headteacher remains in post. The school is closely aligned with the ecumenical Cambourne Church. A new minister was appointed in January 2014. He is ordained in the Anglican church, and is additionally authorised to conduct Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed Church worship. Admission to the school is not dependent on any religious affiliation.

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

- This is an excellent example of an ecumenical Christian community, where those of all faiths or none are welcomed and valued and where the Christian ethos is paramount.
- Relationships between all in the school community are excellent, based on Christian principles of caring for others.
- The personal example of senior staff and governors in living out the Christian message plays a significant part in the school's success.

### **Areas to improve**

- Broaden the range of sung material used in collective worship, to enrich pupils' experience of this aspect of religious observance.
- Develop the time of reflection and prayer before lunch and at the end of the day to enhance further the pupils' individual spiritual journeys.

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

Invariably pupils were much aware in discussion that they attend a church school, and spoke of the considerable positive impact that this has on their enjoyment of school and their own successes. They explained the significance and importance to them of the cross and bunch of grapes on their school uniform. Pupils learn in an environment where they feel supported and are not afraid to risk making mistakes. As a result, they achieve well, regardless of their background or ability. The Christian character of the school very effectively supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development, regardless of whether or not they share the Christian faith. A sense of spirituality is particularly well developed. Pupils pointed out that the school prayer has been divided into individual clauses, each one of which is painted in large letters on different internal walls. A large enclosed courtyard tells the creation story in words, images and plants, and pupils were proud to show the display of ceramic poppies that were made and planted last year as an act of remembrance. They spoke of the significance of further poppies that were due to be placed there later in the week of the inspection, made in response to the governors' challenge linked to the parable of the talents. Relationships are highly positive amongst pupils, and between pupils and adults. The resounding response to the welcome at the start of collective worship, 'all are welcome here' was clearly heartfelt and seen to be put into practice. Older pupils are keen to take on responsibilities of caring for other children, and do so very effectively as play leaders or as peer mediators. The school is a multi-cultural community, and pupils show great respect for one another, always keen to learn more about the faiths and practices of their friends who follow another religion. In conversation they showed a considerable depth of knowledge about major world religions, and were particularly adept at describing the similarities of religions rather than the differences, largely as a result of the effectiveness of religious education in shaping the Christian character of the school.

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

Daily collective worship (CW) takes place at the start of the day, and is allocated 30 minutes. It is attended by all pupils, regardless of their religion, together with a good adult representation. It is highly regarded by everybody as an essential part of school life, pupils saying that it sets the tone for the remainder of the day. During the inspection visit, the theme for the week was peace, to reflect the fact that the visit took place between Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day. This was also the theme of the two worship songs used, one sung in a very contemplative manner as everyone entered, with the singing encouraged by 'sing-up' volunteer pupils at the front. A variety of worship songs are used in CW, but traditional hymns are only sung occasionally, most often for special occasions such as Holy Week or Harvest. CW is always distinctively Christian, with liturgical greetings and dismissals used. The school's values of the fruits of the spirit are set out in CW, firmly establishing their Christian context. Time is given for quiet reflection, as a candle is lit for the time of prayer. Pupils' personal spirituality is encouraged as they are asked to find the 'still, quiet space inside' while prayers are read, often having been written by the pupils who read them. The Bible is central to CW, either with stories read from it, or incidents from the Bible used as the basis for a talk. At the inspection, the headteacher reminded everybody of the time when Jesus went to the garden of Gethsemane to be alone to pray. In conversation, pupils could explain the central place of Jesus Christ within the Trinity of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Governors routinely attend CW. They and pupils regularly complete a simple pro-forma to evaluate CW, and changes have been made as a result, such as the use of a microphone when necessary. A range of adults lead CW, with the minister from Cambourne Church doing so weekly. Pupils said that he provides helpful books to enable them learn more about Christianity, and that he always includes the school's Christian values in his CW sessions. Pupils routinely plan and lead parts of CW and on occasions are responsible for the whole session. In addition to the morning CW, each class has a time of prayer before lunch and at the end of the day, with the same prayers used every day.

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

Religious education (RE) has equal status with other core subjects, and pupils' achievements are high. Pupils spoke spontaneously of links between RE and other curriculum areas and the impact of RE on their lives. They take pride in the presentation of written work, and in the lessons observed during the inspection were keen to take part in discussion, always listening carefully to the view of others. Teaching is of a consistently high standard, utilising a range of learning styles. The RE coordinator teaches most of the RE to older pupils, along with some teaching by the headteacher. This in itself helps demonstrate the importance of the subject. The RE curriculum is based on the local authority agreed syllabus, and gives due prominence to Christianity. In recognition of the school's inter-church status, units of work on Wesley and Methodism have been added. Pupils also learn about other major religions, and highly effective use is made when possible of pupils or parents to help with this part of the RE curriculum. On the eve of Diwali, a Hindu pupil was keen to demonstrate artefacts that would be used in the family celebrations, and the questions asked by other pupils showed respect and maturity. The previous inspection made a recommendation to appoint and develop the skills of a new RE subject leader. This was implemented at the time, but that member of staff has since moved on. Following a recent very thorough audit of RE by a diocesan official, it was noted that the resultant new team for leading RE 'is both enthusiastic and effective', and inspection evidence confirms this. A named foundation governor works closely with staff, and provides useful insight and support. The budget allocated to resources for RE matches that of other subject areas.

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

An explicitly Christian vision underpins every aspect of the leadership and management of the school. The fact that pupils feel safe and cared for enables them to achieve to the best of their ability and to exceed national expectations in statutory assessments. The Christian character of the school is immediately apparent from the many displays inside and outside the building, showing the importance placed on outward demonstration of the Christian ethos. Governors and staff share the vision to ensure that the school is committed to serving the community of Cambourne, and to strive to 'open hearts and minds'. This is clear in the way that the well-being of all in the school community is of the utmost importance. Governors are fully involved in the process of evaluation and planning, and they help to celebrate successes and support developments. The recommendations of the previous inspection regarding monitoring by governors and involving pupils more in planning and leading worship have been entirely met. Future leadership of church schools is carefully considered, with opportunities actively sought for relevant professional development for staff at all levels, and training for governors in church school matters. The partnership with the local church is particularly strong, with the minister a very familiar figure who is much appreciated by pupils, and in addition effective links with the children and youth workers and the foundation governors. The Methodist Church is well represented on the governing body, and the twice-termly visits by the Methodist Schools' Visitor further strengthen this link. A prayer written by Year 4 pupils has been published at the front of the current Methodist prayer handbook. Partnership with the diocese is also strong, with pupils in Year 5 visiting the cathedral each year, and the bishop making visits to the school, most recently earlier this year as part of the tenth birthday celebrations. On behalf of the diocese, the headteacher helps to support other church schools. Parents of pupils of diverse faiths or none spoke very highly of the importance of the Christian ethos to them, with some non-Christian parents explaining eloquently their reasons for choosing a church school when there are several local secular alternatives. The arrangements for RE and CW far exceed statutory requirements.