

## Methodist Schools Committee: Annual Report 2019/20

<b>Contact Name and Details</b>	The Revd Dr Roger L Walton, Chair of the Committee
<b>Resolution</b>	41/1. The Council receives the report.

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and Aims</b>	To provide an annual report to the Conference, through the Council, as directed by Standing Order 343A.
<b>Main Points</b>	<p>The report updates the Council/Conference on the work of the Methodist Schools Committee and the three Trusts overseeing our schools work. In particular it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• highlights some of the outstanding work undertaken by Methodist schools during the pandemic;</li> <li>• outlines new ventures emerging from the close cooperation between the three trusts;</li> <li>• draws attention to the development of Anti-racist RE materials;</li> <li>• provides an account of the establishment of the Epworth Education Trust from the merger of the Wesley and Acorn Trusts.</li> </ul>
<b>Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)</b>	This report should be read alongside the ' <i>Transforming Lives</i> ' document which outlines a schools strategy for the Methodist Church (considered by the Council in January 2021 – see MC/21/12). The 2012 Education Commission set a direction of travel for our schools work. <i>Transforming Lives</i> builds on that, setting priorities and goals for the next ten years.

### Introduction

1. The Methodist Schools Committee was established by Resolution 29/3 at the 2017 Methodist Conference. Its primary purposes are to ensure positive and constructive collaboration between the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust (MAST), the Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST), the Wesley Trust, and their schools, to share resources, to encourage the development of the Methodist ethos in all our schools, and to provide annually a co-ordinated report to the Conference through the Methodist Council on behalf of all Methodist Schools (Standing Order 343A).

### Joint Working and Initiatives

2. The Trusts have worked together in the following ways:
  - a. Actively engaging with the Methodist Schools Committee (MSC).
  - b. Undertaking, through the MSC, the necessary processes of discussion and identification of key areas of work required to enable the MSC to submit to the Conference a Schools' educational strategy for the Church.
  - c. Through the Ethos Development Group, chaired by the Revd Peter Whittaker, sharing experience and needs across the Trusts including, for example, the new Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) framework.

- d. The website, [www.methodistschools.org.uk](http://www.methodistschools.org.uk), launched in September 2017 has been added to with new resources for school worship, assemblies, governance and leadership, it is due for full review during the coming year.
- e. Supporting the merger of the Acorn and Wesley Trusts to establish the new Epworth Education Trust (which was officially recognised by the Department for Education in November 2020).
- f. MAST webinars have been available to appropriate members of MIST schools to attend.
- g. MIST's safeguarding consultant has provided on-line training to appropriate members of MAST schools.
- h. MIST, MAST, the Epworth Education Trust, both severally and through MSC, have enjoyed closer connection to the Connexional Team (especially through the Director of Learning for Ministry).
- i. MSC are developing an emerging map of where our Trusts interface with public policy and with other Methodist founded organisations.
- j. Sharing expertise with Southlands and Roehampton: for example, the schools group contributing to teacher training sessions on diversity within Christianity and Roehampton contributing specialist training for the webinars.
- k. Contributing their experience of green initiatives, from their different perspectives, to the Church's preparation for setting emissions targets to combat climate change.
- l. By sharing experience in the Trusts and the schools on adjusting to the pandemic crisis.

## MAST

### 3. Facts and Figures:

- The Methodist Church is a school provider in the state sector. The Council's responsibilities for the standards and ethos of its schools are delegated to MAST under SO 342.
- The Council currently has responsibility for 66 Methodist maintained schools, educating approximately 15,000 children.
- 26 of our schools are solely Methodist and the rest held in ecumenical partnership trust, most commonly (though not exclusively) with the Church of England. All are in the Primary phase.
- About a half of the Methodist state schools are in the North West of England (predominantly in the Lancashire and Bolton and Rochdale Districts), with the rest scattered across England covering, in all, 40 different Local Authorities and 18 Dioceses.
- Currently 18% children are taught in schools which have become academies in non-Methodist groups; this requires a particular kind of MAST oversight to ensure that the academy chains are honouring the schools' Methodist Trust.
- As there have been no statutory inspections of the schools, either OfSTED or SIAMS, since March 2020, MAST cannot give the usual update against statutory or published performance indicators.

4. The period of the pandemic has been one of mixed blessings for MAST and its schools. A significant proportion of MAST schools serve communities of complex multiple deprivation, while the rest generally serve families who are 'just about managing'. In these communities, the vulnerabilities of daily living have been exacerbated by the pandemic crisis. The schools have been on the front-line in addressing the much-reported issues of food poverty, the widening of the educational gap and digital exclusion. While some families have had positive experiences through various lockdowns, our schools have also been responding to significantly increased issues of safeguarding, heightened domestic violence and mental ill-health. This has been the backdrop for the work of MAST over the last year.

5. All our schools have risen to the challenge of working through the varying demands of the pandemic, veering between partial and full closure, often at short notice. There have been times of great enjoyment but also of anxiety and exhaustion; adapting to frequent changes of plan has been particularly difficult, often coming during the holidays or late on a Friday night. Timetables and bubbles have been organised and reorganised; testing/track and trace come and gone; risk assessments have changed almost weekly. The move to remote learning is not straightforward – for our schools two key issues have been providing equality of opportunity where families lack internet or computers, and managing the impact on the physical, social and emotional development of the youngest children – for example, schools have been delivering little packs of crayons, paper and scissors to promote the development of fine motor skills and wrist strength.
6. Despite the unexpected circumstances, the work of MAST as an organisation over the last year has flourished. The discovery of the webinar format has enabled us to offer a strong programme of training and support to our dispersed group of schools in ways not previously possible. The webinars have ranged from formal professional development for teachers and leaders (such as excellence in teaching English, Art etc), themes for school leaders and governors (such as well-being in schools and safeguarding update) and some general sessions for staff to support each other with ideas for lockdown, re-opening and remote learning. A particularly popular session was Prof Barry Carpenter of Oxford Brookes on providing for children’s mental wellbeing in the full return to school. The viewing figures for the webinars have been consistently high, and the development of the MAST YouTube presence means schools can re-use the sessions as appropriate. Since first showing, for example, the Barry Carpenter webinar has registered over 500 viewings which does not, of course, take account of the times it is shown to a whole group of staff or governors.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSe5RypzzF8&feature=youtu.be> Online working has enabled MAST to strengthen partnership working with others, especially MIST, the Children, Youth and Family Ministry Team, other appropriate school provider groups, and the School of Education at the University of Roehampton, with whom we have a developing reciprocity facilitated by its Methodist-founded College, Southlands. Our links with the International Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges and Universities have also enabled us to make our contribution to the world family of Methodist Schools.
7. Perhaps the most significant change for MAST over the last year has been the deepening of its relationships with its schools. The webinar programme has enhanced this, but it has been the care offered to schools which has been of primary importance. A series of pastoral letters, ‘Watching Over One Another in Love’ has combined pastoral support and spiritual encouragement. Pressured school leaders have commented they have been unable to find such support anywhere else and this has raised the importance for them of belonging to the Methodist family. The work of our Regional Leaders in Education has strengthened relationships and the sense of fellowship at a more local level. In addition, MAST has brought together the people delivering chaplaincy in our state schools (whether lay or ordained) for regular fellowship and training; attendance at this group has been strong with chaplains expressing gratitude for the opportunity to meet and telling stories of how the group is shaping their developing practice. MAST has a developing, mutually beneficial partnership with the Centre for Chaplaincy in Education, which is developing chaplaincy training on a broader scale, to which MAST has been a significant contributor. Through this work and these partnerships, we are able to develop the creativity of ministry within the schools, the depth of worship and the opportunities for working out the God-story within the school and community.
8. Anti-racist RE resources: a singular activity of note this year has been the production of ground-breaking resources for religious education. MAST initiated the idea for these and, working with the Free Church Education Committee, sourced funding from the Westhill

Foundation. The resources were developed by RE Today working with a group of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) teachers and with a further BAME reference group. These have proved hugely popular and very highly regarded. Since launch in November, there have been about 2000 hits on the two different websites, with further links from the Methodist Schools website. At the national RE teacher conference in January, a further 500 teachers attended online training, bring the total of teachers trained in the first 3 months to almost 1000. Through this, MAST has made a significant contribution to the national RE scene and, through this, to the developing anti-racist curriculum in schools everywhere in the UK. The materials are here:

[https://www.google.com/search?q=anti+racist+RE+resources+FCCE&rlz=1C1DIMC\\_enGB865GB866&oq=anti+racist+re+&aqs=chrome.69i59j0j69i57j69i60.6754j1j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=anti+racist+RE+resources+FCCE&rlz=1C1DIMC_enGB865GB866&oq=anti+racist+re+&aqs=chrome.69i59j0j69i57j69i60.6754j1j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)

9. SIAMS: there have not been any statutory inspections of our schools since all inspections were suspended at the beginning of the pandemic. The uncertainty of when and how inspections will restart has been an ongoing question of the year.
10. MAST has not experienced a typical full financial year of activity since its set up. The first year was not a complete twelve months and the two subsequent years have been impacted by the pandemic although we have found new ways of building our contact with schools and stakeholders. As a result, it is possible to finance an overall six years of activity from our planned income. Our future spend is closely aligned to clear priorities of need and continued strengthening of our support to and development within the state-funded Methodist schools community.
11. Governance: Mr Steven Colledge took over as the new Chair of MAST in September.

## **MIST**

12. Facts and Figures:
  - Most Methodist Independent Schools were established by groups of local Methodist communities in the nineteenth and early twentieth century following Wesley's pioneering opening of Kingswood School in 1748.
  - In 1903 many were brought together by a common Trust Deed and under the ultimate control of the Board of Management for Methodist Schools (BOM). BOM was superseded by the Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST) in 2011.
  - There are currently 19 independent schools linked in some way to MIST: Trust Schools (8), Acquired Schools (4), Associated Schools (3), Affiliated Schools (4) – a full list and details can be found on the website: [www.methodistschools.org.uk](http://www.methodistschools.org.uk)
  - MIST is directly responsible as Trustees for the 8 Trust Schools and as Sole Member of the Trusts of the 4 Acquired schools; the General Secretary of MIST is a Governor at the Associated Schools and at one of the Affiliated Schools.
  - There are over 10,000 pupils on roll in Methodist Independent Schools.
  - Fourteen of the schools have boarders as well as day pupils.
  - Three of the schools are for children of nursery and primary age only, two have pupils from 11-18 only and the rest offer continuity of education from 3 to 18.
  - All of the schools are inspected by the Independent Schools Inspection Service (ISI) which reports to OFSTED; all such inspections in the past academic year have confirmed high standards in all the schools. Copies of independent school inspection reports are published on each school's website and at [www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net)
  - Chairs of District are ex-officio Governors of any Methodist Independent Schools in their District.

- MIST schools provided £5,934,000 in means-tested bursaries to help hundreds of children to attend the schools whose family circumstances would otherwise restrict access; these bursaries are funded by a mixture of funds raised from using school facilities out of term or school time and from diverting a proportion of the fees paid by all to support the costs of others. In addition, the Methodist Bursary Fund made awards for Methodist families attending MIST (Trust and Acquired) schools totalling £83,752 and a further £24,365 for such families attending Associated or Affiliated schools.
13. All the schools have had to adjust to new ways of working during the pandemic but, to date, have weathered the considerable financial impacts of the pandemic to date - with the single exception of a small Acquired school in Bude (St Petroc's).
  14. New Heads have been appointed at Farringtons School (David Jackson) and Truro School (Andy Johnson). Kingswood (an Associated school) also has a new Head (the former Head at Truro School – Andrew Gordon-Brown). There are new Chairs at Truro School (Richard Thomas) and at The Leys Foundation (an Affiliated school – Tom Buchanan). New Chaplains have taken up their positions at Shebbear College (the Revd Donna Leigh) and The Leys Foundation (the Revd Simon Coleman). Ashville College (an Associated school) has an Acting Head (Elspeth Fisher); Richard Marshall was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer in the summer and tragically passed away at the end of November 2020.
  15. We have welcomed new Trustees: the Revd Dr Jonathan Pye, Chair of the Bristol District and Governor at Kingswood School; Lady Fiona Mynors, a former Headteacher, Reporting Inspector and known to many in MIST for her work in safeguarding visits to the schools and the SSRA project; John Weaving, former Director of Finance at MIST and formerly a Governor at a MIST school. Newly in attendance at Trustee meetings, at our invitation, as a senior representative of the Connexional Team, is the Revd Dr Jonathan Dean. We also welcomed the Revd Dr Calvin Samuel as Chair of MIST following several years excellent service provided by the Revd Dr John Barrett.
  16. All MIST meetings since late March 2020 have been held electronically and we anticipate this continuing, probably until Easter, not least because the main meeting rooms at Methodist Church House remain closed. Our usual September Away Days in 2020 had to be cancelled, so too the Annual Schools Conference in April 2020 and 2021. In the meantime, there have been regular group meetings by Zoom for Heads, Junior School Heads, Designated Safeguarding Leads, Chairs and Trustees.
  17. MIST and the schools are reviewing the steps that may need to be taken to ensure strong recovery after the pandemic. Some impacts are immediate (such as revised meeting arrangements), others are more speculative and long term (revised business model/plans in light of longer-term impacts of the pandemic on the economy, on demand for places at our schools, on income and cost lines etc). All this is set in the context of our new Group Plan for 2020-25 in which we remain committed to ***developing a culture that encourages and enables collaboration, communication and co-operation between the schools and MIST***. The plan ***seeks to deliver a financially sustainable, inclusive education that is focused strongly on both the individual and the community experience, shaped by Christian values***.
  18. At the start of the lockdown, there was a concern about the general availability of food - particularly for shielding individuals. Senior schools within the Group decided that – with their kitchens no longer deployed to feed their whole school community – they could feed the wider locality, offering their facilities and employees to this cause. For example, Truro School in Cornwall partnered up with a charity, *The Hive*, to produce up to 4000 meals per week for people suffering from food insecurity. Truro High School also turned over two car parks, from

April onwards, to NHS staff employed at the nearby *Health Park* to accommodate their longer shift patterns.

19. With the lockdown came waves of loneliness, our elderly relatives being unable to receive visitors in care homes feeling it particularly sharply. In response to this, Kent College Canterbury students made cards for residents at *Bradbury Grange MHA*.
20. Methodist Schools recognise that we are families within a wider community of families, and all schools give of themselves and their time. Ashville College in Harrogate, for example, supported a 'Busy Bees' team making and distributing PPE to local care homes. They have also made and delivered story-time activities and materials to the children's ward at *Harrogate Hospital*. PPE was also made and distributed by Kent College Canterbury, Rydal Penrhos, Queens College Taunton, Woodhouse Grove, Truro School and Truro High School. In the latest lockdown, Methodist Schools have supported local schools with access to laptops and provided pastoral support to families affected by the pandemic illness and where, sadly, schools have suffered losses among their families and staff.
21. Methodist Independent Schools are determined to continue to provide an all-round education infused with a strong Christian ethos informed by their Methodist foundation in an era of political, economic and social scepticism, uncertainty and change. Methodist Independent Schools are committed to doing everything within their power to increase the number of bursaries available to enable the offer of places to as wide a cross section of the community as possible, though several schools are currently working within the constraints of deficit budgets. The likelihood of business rates relief being withdrawn, and the possibility of VAT being applied to school fees threaten to make them less, rather than more, affordable. In the meantime, the pandemic has put some schools under considerable pressure, especially those with significant numbers of (especially) overseas boarders.

#### **The Wesley Trust (now Epworth Education Trust)**

22. Facts and Figures:
  - There are currently 6 schools within the Epworth Education Trust (EET) all of which are primary schools.
  - 3 schools have nursery provision, 2 of which provide education for 2 year olds alongside provision for 3 year olds and 4 year olds.
  - The schools are all Methodist Schools based in the North West of England.
  - There are approximately 1600 pupils on roll in the schools.
  - There are 227 staff across the Trust.
  - EET are commissioned to lead the Westleigh Start Well Family Centre in Wigan. Managing the support for the most vulnerable families and providing some of the safeguarding offer for approximately 25% of the 0-5s in Wigan.
  - The Trust sponsored its first school this year following the school being categorised as requiring special measures by Ofsted.
  - Within the Trust, with the exception of the sponsored school, all schools are at least good. 2 have the highest grading of outstanding.
  - All schools are subject to a SIAMS and are all judged good or better. 4 of the schools have the highest grading of Outstanding/ Excellent.
23. The last year has witnessed significant change for the Epworth Education Trust, not solely due to the challenges of the pandemic but also related to the significant organisational changes it has undergone. 12 months ago, the Wesley Trust was serving three Methodist Schools in the North West. Following a period of due diligence, it was agreed to merge the Wesley Trust and

the Acorn Trust (a well-established, successful Trust with two Methodist schools) in order to establish a stronger Trust utilising the strengths within each Trust. The Epworth Education Trust was approved by the DfE in August 2020 and all schools moved into the Trust on 1st November 2020.

24. The new Trust Board has an excellent set of trustees that have significant experience across a range of sectors such as education, legal, business management, and finance with many being members of the Methodist Church. They offer strong oversight of the management of the Trust. The Trust is funded through receiving a percentage of the government funding to schools, whilst the budget is extremely tight, they manage it effectively.
25. The Trust has worked with key stakeholders to establish six core principles which will shape their work. The first states: 'We will build a family of schools with shared Methodist values, who can support their individual communities in their own unique way'. These values are present in everything we do.
26. Summerseat Methodist Primary School received a judgement of special measures during its inspection in March 2019 due to its curriculum not being effective enough. The government department responsible for academies, the Regional School Commissioner (RSC) identified the Trust to sponsor the school. Sponsorship is only awarded to Trusts that are well established and able to support rapid improvement in schools. We have supported the improvement of the school since June 2020 and the school officially joined Epworth Education Trust in December 2020. We are pleased that this support has already had a substantial impact on the improvement of the school despite the challenges of the pandemic.
27. Reflecting the national picture, the pandemic has provided major challenges to the Trust and its schools over the last year, but they have risen to the challenge of this. The commitment to collaboration within our family of schools and the Trust has proved to be an enormous strength during this period. The Trust has provided significant support in managing COVID-19 within schools such as writing risk assessments, providing summaries of government guidance or providing strategies for reopening schools which has enabled the schools and their leaders to focus on the educational and pastoral offer of the school, so it was as strong as possible. The Headteachers within our schools recognise the strength of this model in their successful delivery of education in this period.
28. Many of our schools are situated in economically deprived communities, which has created additional challenges during lockdown. As many families did not have access to appropriate technology or have adequate Wi-Fi provision, the schools have had to adapt their provision to cater for their communities. School staff have created a mixed media strategy to providing education during both lockdowns. They have continued to deliver recorded lessons and uploading them onto the learning platform whilst also have creating paper-based work packs that have been hand delivered to families. Our schools have been relentless in their pursuit of ensuring all children have the opportunity to continue to have a good education. During lockdown, Nutgrove School received the Inclusion Quality Mark for the work they undertake with children with special educational needs and vulnerable children.
29. In September 2020, as pupils returned to school full time, our schools delivered a recovery curriculum focused upon delivering mental health and wellbeing support alongside the wider curriculum. We had done extensive work towards the end of the summertime to plan for the return, preparing to deliver a curriculum that catered for the gaps that would have arisen during the first lockdown whilst also addressing any emotional needs that would be evident. The return of all pupils was a joyous moment for our schools as the school family were together again and pupils were keen to return to the routine of school and engaged well with learning. The gaps in learning for some pupils was huge and the schools quickly established a

plan to overcome this and the impact could be seen by the end of the first term as this gap had started to narrow.

30. The pandemic has placed a torchlight upon the incredible work our schools undertake in offering pastoral care and support, not only to our pupils but also our families. They see this as living out their Methodist ethos within their communities. Providing love and care has been a priority. This has been demonstrated in a wide range of ways such as food deliveries, housing support and helping them to apply for required benefits. Our pastoral teams have offered strong pastoral support for those requiring it during the pandemic, sometimes being a listening ear but at other times proactively providing additional support. Our smallest school only has 90 pupils and is a close community. At the end of 2020, they experienced two bereavements in their community – a parent of a pupil and a long standing member of staff. The Headteacher and school staff provided incredible bereavement support to all the children and family to ensure that as a school family they worked through it together. They went the extra mile to support the community during this time, for example meeting the bereaved family every morning, for the first few months, in the school car park at 7.30am so they did not have to interact with other families whilst their emotions were so raw.
31. The Trust have also continued to provide the support to our staff during this challenging time. As staff, our two key drivers in managing the pandemic have been safety and wellbeing, they have shaped our decision making and ensured we continue to view the situation from different perspectives to ensure the right support. As a result, all of our schools have offered support to staff during this period, adjusting working patterns or places of work. Some schools have delivered wellbeing packages to staff, others regular wellbeing calls and a small group of staff have set up a mindfulness wellbeing private group on social media, available to all staff across the Trust, that offers regular insights and ideas to support well-being, even delivering online yoga lessons. Bedford Hall and Westleigh School received the Teach Well school gold award for exceptional care of the physical and emotional health of the staff during the pandemic.
32. During feedback both informally and within questionnaires, the staff and parents have spoken highly of the approach the Trust and its schools have taken during the last 12 months. They have recognised that they have chosen to live out their Methodist ethos by serving their communities and meeting them at the place of need to overcome barriers. Responses included statements such as ‘it was good to know you were always available to support us’, ‘I don’t know what I would have done without school at the moment’, ‘my school enable me to manage my workload whilst providing home schooling for my own children’. Being a lighthouse of hope within this period continues to be a priority as we know showing love, care and compassion enables us to deliver a strong education to all. The schools continue to be the church in action, as many of our school community only experience the Christian faith and the Methodist Church through the life of school.
33. Worship has continued to play a pivotal role in the life of our schools. Whilst unable to meet together, in person as a family, the schools have found strategies for ensuring this remains central to their work. They have recorded worship for pupils to watch within their classrooms or delivered live online. The schools have prayer spaces to support the pupils’ ability to explore their faith and communicate with God on key aspects of life. Pupils find worship a strong root that guides them in managing many of the situations they experience, the exploration and demonstration of the Christian faith helps them in grounding their own belief systems and faith. Chaplains continue to play a pivotal role in this work providing a strong link and joined up working between our schools and the church. Prior to the pandemic, this work was about bringing the church into the school in a variety of different ways, for example delivering ‘messy church’ in school, enabling our children and families to experience faith and

church in an accessible way. These types of activities attract a broad attendance, and the families engage well with our chaplains.

**“Our Calling”<sup>1</sup> is lived out and reflected in the life and work of the Trusts and the Schools:**

34. Each of the schools’ groups gives serious thought to its Christian character and the living out of what it means to be a Methodist school operating in each particular context. The joint Ethos Development Group oversees this, giving an opportunity for each sector to grow together by reflecting on practice, sharing, challenging and being challenged. As the Methodist Church seeks to deepen its own commitment to a ‘Methodist Way of Life’, our school communities are also modelling important aspects of this pattern for our living and believing<sup>2</sup>.
35. Our schools are denominational but not confessional. Although they are not the setting for **Evangelism** in its narrow sense, they offer a clear witness to the faith which undergirds our educational commitments, giving children and their families the opportunity to experience Christian values and practices, and encounter with a Christian way of living and learning together. With a community of around 25,000 children and 5,000 adults, the outreach of the Christian message through the schools is estimated at about 100,000 people, week in, week out. Through international boarding, the influence of this ‘church’ spreads more widely than might be imagined. Families are often initially attracted by the school’s Christian foundation and the deliberate focus on values and rounded human development. However, through their encounter with explicitly Christian life and teaching, many families come to say, ‘For us, you are our church’. The schools are not just part of the mission of the church, they are themselves profoundly and explicitly missional. As the Methodist Church embraces a new strategy for Evangelism and Growth, God For All, our schools will play their part in proclaiming the good news of God’s love in Christ, in all the ways outlined above<sup>3</sup>. In that we will reflect Methodism’s generous optimism about God’s grace<sup>4</sup>, at work in every human life, and our deep commitments to serving God in one another. We also hope that our schools can continue to be active partners in offering hospitality for new Christian communities in their neighbourhoods, creating ‘New Places for New People’, and contribute their wisdom and current experience as the Church develops its priorities, expressed in the strategy, in marginalised communities.
36. Striving to uphold the Methodist Church’s vision to “increase awareness of God’s presence and celebrate God’s love”, our schools offer creative and grounded opportunities for our students to be assured of their own worth and value, to explore what it means to live a life of worship which seeks to acknowledge and respond to God’s image in all people, and to know the reality of love and grace at work in their own lives and in the world. Our schools offer frequent, moving and creative opportunities for children to **worship** in formal and informal settings; even during lockdown, the Pastoral Visitor and school Chaplains have provided thoughts for the day, prayers and acts of worship. Such staff have also provided support for staff children and families who have suffered all sorts of challenges through the pandemic. Our work with the chaplains has strengthened their fellowship and the confidence with which they have approached the challenges of working in our schools through the changing circumstances of the year.
37. The fellowship of community, and the possibility of being a Christian community, is an important hallmark. Our schools are committed to the search for social holiness. Community,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/our-calling/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/life-and-faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/what-is-distinctive-about-methodism/>

and strong pastoral care, provides the context for our **learning and caring**. All our schools offer a liberal broad and balanced curriculum and all pride themselves on the extent to which they emphasise opportunities for rounded human development by expanding children's horizons through co-curricular experiences. We encourage our schools to enable children to live with contradictory convictions in many areas of life and notably, this year, some of have contributed their views to the God in Love Unites us discussions. In terms of religious education, which is under threat in many state schools, we aim for our schools to be beacons of good practice and have a growing suite of resources on our website, including for teaching about Methodism with every age group. This year we have initiated the development of anti-racism resources for use in RE classes and other contexts, reflecting the Church's commitments to be inclusive, justice-seeking and invested deeply in questions of equality and diversity<sup>5</sup>. These are freely available nationally to any teacher who wants them, and uptake has been rapid. Additionally, we have resources for world citizenship education, particular links with **All We Can**<sup>6</sup>, and opportunities for teachers to share ideas across the full curriculum. The website is also home to a range of bespoke worship resources and helpful links. Both MIST and MAST offer a fellowship for all those involved in the leadership of Methodist Schools. MAST has brought together Chaplains from MIST and MAST schools through digital coffee mornings and opportunities to support each other and learn together about new initiatives. In classrooms, extra-curricular activities and beyond the school premises, we strive to enable our students to consider what it means for them to embody the Church's commitment to others, including in questions of interfaith relationships, community engagement and self-giving compassion, through which we believe meet Christ in our neighbour, and are nurtured in our own growth and understanding.

38. **Service** is a strength of all our schools and one which is widely valued, regardless of individual faith conviction. Our schools have strong relationships with local charities as well as creating a global perspective through links with **All We Can**, **Edukid**, **JPIT** and **Christian Aid** particularly. Within MIST, G2L AIMS ('Global to Local' Action in Methodist Schools) continues the work of World AIMS and gives schools opportunity to maximise local contacts and staff special interests as a recognised part of their service and outreach. In the reports from each of the Trusts you will read of the outreach and service opportunities that have arisen during the pandemic. Our schools also reflect and echo the Methodist Church's commitments to urgent current challenges, including climate change, the refugee crisis, and the misery of global poverty<sup>7</sup>. Students are encouraged to 'live on a large map', to engage sensitively and thoughtfully with the world they inhabit, and to cultivate habits of mind and heart which will equip them to take their place in it as wise stewards of creation and generous neighbours to all. These are reinforced by inclusion in our church school inspection framework.

### \*\*\*RESOLUTION

#### 41/1. The Council receives the report.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-worldwide/all-we-can/>

<sup>7</sup> See for example: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/public-issues/environment-and-climate-change/>; <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-worldwide/the-refugee-crisis/>; <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/public-issues/social-justice/>