



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Bakewell Methodist Junior School

Stoney Close
Bakewell
DE45 1FR

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Circuit: Peak District

Local authority: Derbyshire

Date of inspection: 9 October 2015

Date of last inspection: June 2011

School's unique reference number: 112870

Headteacher: Sarah Owens

Inspector's name and number: Lyn Field 151

Context

This smaller than average-sized school is located at the edge of Bakewell and serves the town and surrounding villages. The number on roll has dropped in recent years but has now stabilised and is predicted to rise in 2018. The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding known as pupil premium is broadly average whilst the proportion with special educational needs or disabilities is high at around twice the national average. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The Methodist minister is new in post.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bakewell Methodist Junior School as a Methodist church school are good

- The commitment of the headteacher and foundation governors to the Christian distinctiveness of the school has resulted in systems and regular partnerships to ensure this is secure for the future.
- The Christian character of the school influences the whole curriculum, particularly how pupils develop skills in taking responsibility and contribute to the life of the school and wider community.
- Relationships, care of pupils and behaviour all reflect a biblical understanding of Christian values and great value is placed on the worth of every individual.
- Collective worship is fully inclusive reflecting the school's commitment to being a church school for all.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that development planning sets clear priorities for improvement as a church school so that the actions to be taken are manageable and make the best use of time and energy in a small school
- Raise the profile of the school's distinctively Methodist identity and improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of John Wesley and Methodism
- Ensure that strategies to support pupils in personal reflection, and the organisation of classroom reflection areas, challenge and enrich pupils' spiritual development

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

The Christian character and values of the school contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school's Star Awards of gold, silver and bronze are proving to be highly effective in developing aspects of character so pupils understand that the sort of person you are is as important as your academic achievements. This contributes to the very positive culture for learning that exists in classrooms. The excellent quality of support and pastoral care from teachers and learning support assistants enables pupils to attend regularly and make good progress during their time in the school. More able pupils do well with a similar proportion to schools nationally reaching the higher levels. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special needs are closing the gap with other pupils. The criteria for meeting each level of the Star Awards helps pupils to progressively develop their skills in taking responsibility, concentrating on tasks, resolving tensions and contributing to the life of the school and wider community. It includes a strand on how pupils participate, and develop leadership roles, in collective worship, demonstrating the attention that the school gives to spiritual development. New areas for quiet reflection have been introduced in the school grounds and pupils are finding these helpful. In classrooms, however, these areas are less developed. Although important, they go little beyond providing a place where written concerns or worries can be posted.

Christian values are treated as far more than a stand-alone aspect of the curriculum. They receive special attention in the themes for worship and underpin the school's work in developing character. This is because these values help pupils to use appropriate language to explain what is the right thing to do and why it is important in a church school. Older children are able to make insightful connections between the values and Bible stories such as 'the Prodigal Son explains what Jesus thinks about justice'.

Given the limited cultural diversity in the school community, religious education (RE) provides valuable insight into other faiths and cultures that helps pupils to interpret media coverage from a more positive viewpoint. This is valued by parents who say it prompts lively discussions at home. Links with a Methodist school in Rwanda have given pupils a realistic perspective on life there because there is direct contact through the Church and they have a role in selecting projects to support that are vital to communities, such as bee keeping. Over the last two years, bullying and racist or homophobic incidents have become extremely rare. Greater attention has been given to teaching about Christian values and diversity. Pupils are very accepting of difference between people and refer to Bible stories such as Zacchaeus and the Good Samaritan to explain that colour, religion, personality or language does not affect who your 'neighbour' is and why any form of prejudice is unacceptable. They understand forgiveness from a Christian perspective and say that 'the victim has to do the forgiving or it doesn't work properly'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils of all abilities are exceptionally keen and confident to play an active part in worship. All members of staff encourage and support them so worship is important in the life of the school and has an impact on everyone. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The inclusion of collective worship as an essential strand at bronze, silver and gold level of the Star Awards has given worship a central place in school life. This sets clear expectations for pupils to take an active part in worship as well as making use of the time for their own personal reflections, whatever their faith background. Pupils with very specific and challenging needs are equally able to take an active part because children are totally accepting of each person as an individual. Consequently worship is highly inclusive and clearly builds their self-esteem, something that is at the centre of the school's work.

Inspired by training from Derby Diocese, a proper sense of occasion has developed together with a better structure for the planning and delivery of worship. More work is needed on the use of space to reinforce the pattern of worship but pupils understand how worship has a very different purpose to their lessons. However, they are less sure about any distinctively

Methodist features of worship. In spite of this, they enjoy singing and, given the enthusiasm and expertise of both the headteacher and the new minister, there are already clear signs that this is set to reach new levels. Pupils take careful note of the words they sing because leaders consistently draw attention to them. This motivates pupils to respond to charity appeals especially where the words refer to helping others. The use of material from 'Values for Life' and the range of staff and members of local Christian churches who lead worship, enrich the quality of pupils' experience. The 'Open the Book' group is particularly popular and, consequently, pupils have a secure knowledge of core Bible stories and what Christians believe about Jesus Christ. This is reinforced by the celebration of key Christian festivals in conjunction with the Methodist church and other churches locally and gives pupils a strong sense of belonging to a faith community.

Prayer has an established place in the daily life of the school. Pupils are confident to lead prayers and many follow this up in their own lives. Pupils value the time to reflect at the end of the day and welcome the introduction of Grace at lunchtime. Where times of quiet have a clear focus to help their thinking, pupils say they gain more benefit. This is often when adults guide their reflection by talking with individuals and groups but the value of this is not developed as part of a wider strategy to support spiritual and moral development.

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

The school welcomes pupils of all abilities and backgrounds, including those with disabilities and a significant degree of special needs. This stems from the Christian ethos of the school and pupils receive high quality care delivered by a strong and skilled staff team. The headteacher, staff and governors are totally committed to putting a curriculum in place that ensures pupils flourish in their learning and in their personal development. Consequently the principles and values that shape the curriculum are, in the school's words, 'at the heart of Christian belief'. Since the last inspection, the foundation governors have been rigorous in their monitoring and have actively supported the school's involvement in church and community events. The systems in place to keep the Christian character of the school at the forefront of governor business is a strength of the school. The outcomes of a range of activities to monitor aspects of the Christian ethos are consistently reported to the full governing body and the Church council as well as being a regular part of the headteacher's reports and the school improvement plan. This ensures that progress continues to be made as a church school and Christian distinctiveness is part of the strategies to raise the number on roll. Self-evaluation is generally accurate and recognises where improvement is needed. However, it lacks the cohesion to make action planning more manageable. This is because the analysis of monitoring does not take enough account of how any issues raised make an impact across the whole school. It is not always easy to see, therefore, where action is most needed.

The majority of pupils transfer from the Church of England infant school. Although they are very aware of coming to another church school, they do not grasp the ways in which a Methodist school might be different. The curriculum for RE has an appropriate emphasis on Christianity and worship is explicitly Christian. However, specific teaching about John Wesley and the features of Methodism are only just being introduced. Partnerships with churches and schools in Bakewell have a positive impact on pupils. They give them a strong sense of being part of this community and the celebration of Christian festivals is a key vehicle for this. Links with the Methodist church have strengthened since the last inspection through the commitment of the headteacher, minister and foundation governors to maintaining regular contact with the congregation. Arrangements for pupils to meet with the Thursday Group have benefited everyone involved. At a national level, liaison is less developed and the school benefits from local training and support from Derby Church of England Diocese, This has helped develop a more explicitly Christian structure to worship and kept the school up to date on developments in RE.