

Methodist schools – from

to life-changing projects

A look at how schools around Britain are continuing the Methodist



METHODIST education is an important strand of the mission of the Church. Our schools deliver Our Calling on the ground, particularly through their daily lives of learning, serving and the opportunity for worship. There is a lot happening to expand this mission to more people, especially those in particular need, and Methodist schools are at the forefront of this.

Boarding partnerships for Looked After children and places for refugees

Methodist schools are committed to playing a prominent role in helping vulnerable children move out of social care and prepare for the future with much greater confidence. Research by Norfolk County Council has recently shown that boarding can significantly improve the life

chances of vulnerable youngsters. Of 52 young people given boarding placements (17 of them Looked After), 63 per cent were able to be taken off the "at risk" register completely after three years.

The Department for Education has now launched the Boarding School Partnership Scheme (BSP), inviting schools to offer long-term bursaries for young people currently Looked After in the care of their local authority. More than 25 per cent of the first schools to get involved in the scheme are Methodist schools – Methodism is punching well above its weight here.

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the School System, Lord Agnew, said, "We know that boarding schools can be highly effective in improving both social and educational outco-

mes for vulnerable young people who could otherwise have quite chaotic lives. This commitment from so many of our best boarding schools to work with local authorities and subsidise boarding school placements will have a hugely positive impact on many vulnerable children."

Outside of this scheme, Methodist schools have a strong reputation for working with young people in need. The Leys School (Cambridge) has launched a "Gift of Education" fund that will, in due course, support several fully funded places for vulnerable young people in partnership with Cambridgeshire local authority. Meanwhile, at Queen's College (Taunton) and at Shebbear College (Devon), Syrian refugee children have been given a fresh start at school in the UK thanks to partnerships with local charities.

Community partnerships

Elsewhere Methodist schools are actively engaged in local community partnerships with a wide range of social groups, sports clubs and schools; putting their facilities to good use for widespread benefit. Some such activities are informal, others subject to more formal agreements.

Woodhouse Grove School and One In A Million Free School (OIAMFS) in Bradford have signed a Memorandum of Understanding detailing a new collaboration between them. The aim is to share best practice, resources and facilities in teaching and learning, keeping the interests of both schools' pupils as the focus. The partnership aspires to encourage pupils to consider what lies beyond their existing social, intellectual and cultural experience. Pupils and staff in



Kent College Canterbury during a visit to partnership schools in Tanzania.

similar roles at each establishment will collaborate and work together forging links between academic departments, sharing staff inset opportunities, encouraging and facilitating pupil debate, exploring character education opportunities, sharing experience of internal structures and more.

A particular element of the collaboration is a formal agreement, which will see Woodhouse Grove award two full Sixth Form bursary places per annum to OIAMFS Year 11 leavers.

Such partnerships are well established in other schools, too. Kingswood, for example, works with several local secondary schools to provide support in minority subjects,

Oxbridge preparation and joint music and drama activities; Kent College has established a social mobility fund to enable disadvantaged young people to join the college in the sixth form.

Following the dissolution of Cornwall Council's music service at the end of 2014, Truro School was instrumental in helping to establish the Cornwall Music Service Trust (CMST) which is now hosted at Truro School. CMST now employs and manages more than 100 peripatetic music teachers and music therapy teachers, delivering a music service to 82 per cent of all Cornish schools.

This initiative has been very significant in ensuring Corn-

wall's children have access to high quality music tuition and to keep going the wonderful tradition in the county for ensembles, youth orchestras and choirs.

Meeting specific needs

Methodist Recorder readers may remember the story of Louis Moorhouse, a severely visually and hearing impaired student who has attended Woodhouse Grove since Year 7 thanks to a combination of school bursary, local authority funding and grant from the Royal Pinnac Foundation. Louis achieved eight good GCSE passes this summer, exceeding the targets set in his local authority EHC Plan and has started



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AN extract from a report by a student from Kent College Pembury, who visited Nepal:

"Our trip to Nepal was a life-changing experience. Starting in Kathmandu we travelled eight hours to Pokhara. Despite the rickety bus and lack of space we were able to keep ourselves occupied with Millie's struggling attempt to teach us sign language while Prim and Olivia were flung into the air when we went over one of Nepal's many pot-holes. Next stop was the local school Shree Deurali (KC Nepal).

"We arrived showered in the local flower which there seemed to be an endless supply of. Their welcome was more than friendly and it was our joy to show them the bags filled of gifts which were generously donated.

"After we were treated to lunch we took our first shot at teaching the kids. Over the next two days we took to teaching all ... different subjects including English, Maths, Science, sports and arts and crafts, finishing our visit off with a sports day where everyone left a winner.

"One of our favourite moments at the school would be in the afternoons when most of the kids had gone and the local children would come back in their pyjamas. Dancing and teaching them games like duck duck goose and the hokey cokey. In return they would teach us some of their local games which we had stuck in our heads for the rest of the trip.

"As our parting gift, the school and local village asked us to start off their Festival of Lights celebrations. We decided to do our rendition of 'Shine Jesus Shine' or as we liked to call it 'Shine Shine Shine'.

"The night was filled with endless traditional dancing which was effortlessly carried out by the locals and not so effortlessly by us".

level courses this September.

Across the country there are many examples of Methodist schools providing specific support to children and young people in conspicuous need and working closely with their local communities, perhaps especially, but not exclusively so, in the maintained sector. Breakfast clubs, self-esteem groups, use of nurture groups and pupil premium champions enable children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds to make good academic and social progress.

At Rosehill Methodist Community Primary School in Ashton-under-Lyne, for example, the list of extra support the school makes available is outstanding: family cohesion worker, additional learning mentors, Dads and Kids Club, Mums and Kids Club, breakfast club and "Commando Joe" who is at the school two days per week to work alongside the inclusion team on behaviour, self-esteem and attendance issues.

At Rosehill and at other schools, funds are raised to help parents afford uniform, trips and visits. In Canterbury, two Methodist primary schools work in partnership with Kent College Canterbury in

joint activities using the specialist skills in each place to widen access to facilities such as the Kent College Farm.

International partnerships

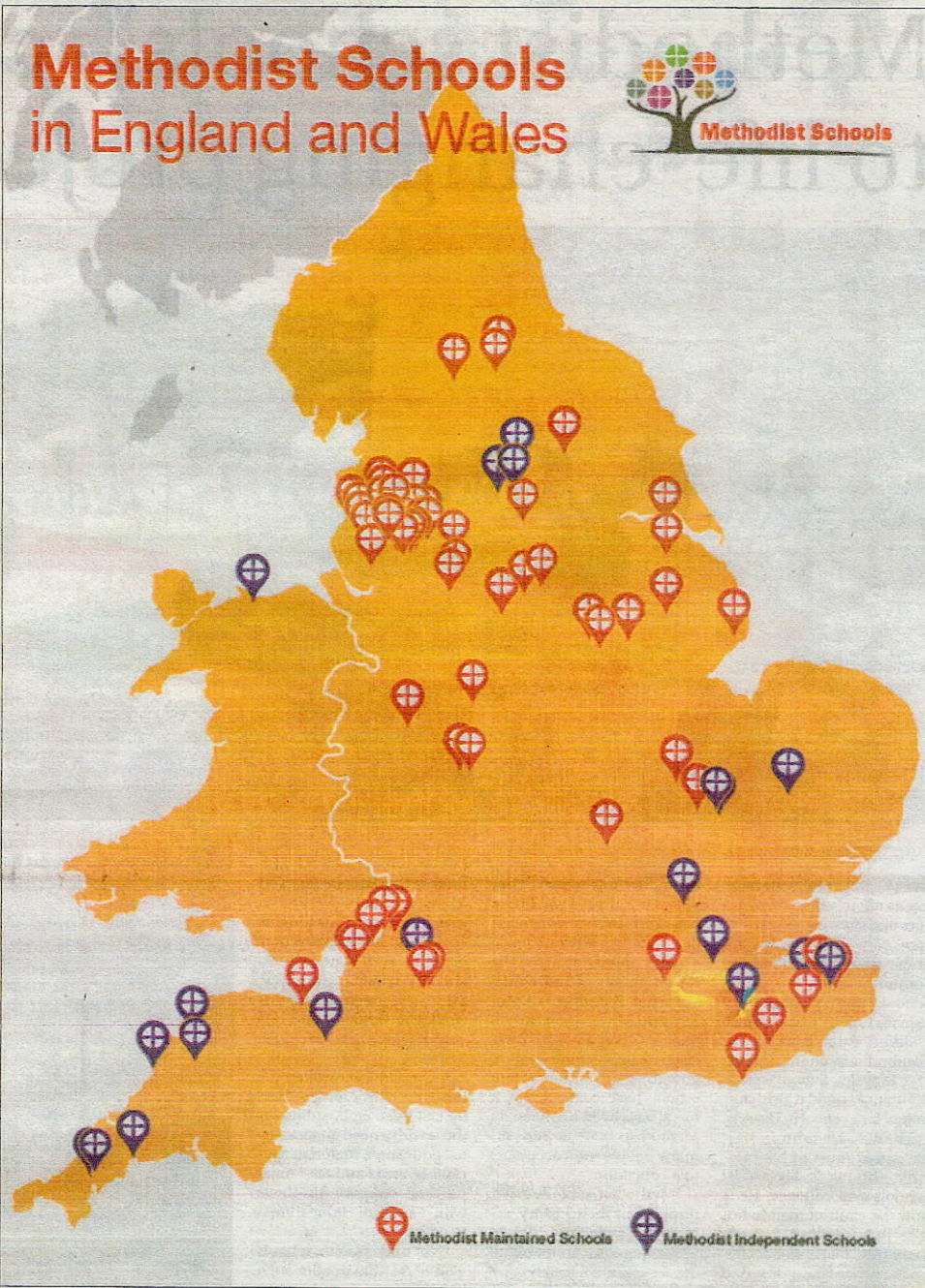
Methodist schools are also actively engaged in international outreach and partnerships. Ashville College in Harrogate, Kingswood School in Bath and Culford School in Suffolk, for example, have long established links with sustainable projects in Malawi. This summer, students and staff from Kent College Canterbury visited their school and community partner schemes in Tanzania.

Since 2005, Kent College Pembury (KCP) has sponsored the Shree Deurali Primary English School based in the remote region of Lahachok in Nepal; over these years KCP has funded new classrooms, toilets, fresh water supplies, provided teaching resources and funded teacher training.

In all such partnership activity, however, the student visits leave a lasting impression (see box above).

These international partnerships are not Western voyeurism generated from feel-good fundraising; they are

Methodist Schools in England and Wales



making a lasting impact in the communities and our students. Culford's Malawi commitment, for example, during the past decade, has enabled a new school to be built in Malawi from scratch. The school now provides a life-changing education for 160 children each year.

Kent College Canterbury has been involved with Kleruu School and Saba Saba School in Iringa, Tanzania, for the past 10 years; there have been a number of teacher exchanges, student exchanges and placements. The initial partnership has now developed to include the joint building of a new rural nursery and primary school. In Malawi, Methodist schools have also provided the back-

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Methodist schools – committed to life-changing projects



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bone to projects as wide ranging as afforestation, orphanages and sustainable medical care. New partnerships are underway too, like the shared commitment of Truro High School, Queen's College and Ashville College to sponsor 20 children from a village in Cambodia to attend school; and Kingsley School's commitment to build a girls' dormitory for a school in Uganda.

The Rev Dr John Barrett has spent most of his ministry working in Methodist schools and colleges. He is now the chair of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST). He says: "Methodist schools are proud to be part of the Church's mission, offering an education that is firmly based on Chris-

tian values. Within this, the independent schools have a distinctive role to play. They provide a first class, broad based education, with facilities and class sizes that give greater opportunity for the development of individual potential. But this costs money and since, by virtue of their independence, they receive no grants directly from government, independent schools have to charge fees. It has always been a concern to Methodists that this prevents many people from accessing this education.

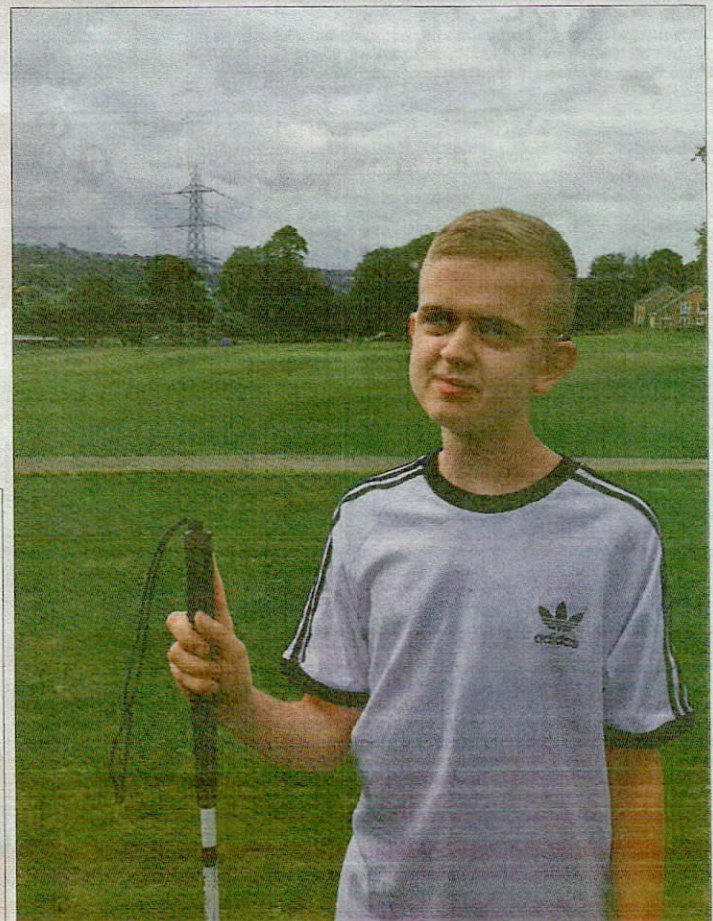
"Methodist schools have, throughout their history, offered bursaries to children whose parents cannot afford the fees. But what they have been able to do has been limited by the resources available.

"In 2012, following its ac-

ceptance of the Education Commission report, the Methodist Conference charged its independent schools to look for ways to broaden this access and develop new partnerships with state schools and the wider community. They have been taking this challenge seriously and it is encouraging to see how much help is now possible. In many cases, the education offered is beyond what the local authority can offer, eg boarding for those with a need for residential education, tuition in specialised areas and additional pastoral support for those with special educational needs.

"Not only are our schools glad to be able to offer such help, they are clear that they are greatly enriched by the experience."

Above: Group games with children from Shree Deurali. Below: Louis Moorhouse is a visually and hearing impaired student who has attended Woodhouse Grove.



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