



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### **Banks (Voluntary Controlled) Methodist Primary School**

Chapel Lane  
Banks,  
Southport. PR9 8EY

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Outstanding

**Current inspection grade:** Good

**District:** Lancashire Methodist District

Local Authority: Lancashire

Date of inspection: 23 June 2016

Date of last inspection: 23 May 2011

School's unique reference number: 119405

Headteacher: Christine Adams

Inspector: Ian Rimmer 801

#### **School context**

Banks Methodist School is a small village primary school outside Southport serving the immediate community. There are 40 learners and the proportions with additional needs and those eligible for free school meals are well above average. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. When the former headteacher retired in December 2013, the current headteacher initially became associate headteacher and then substantive headteacher in April 2014. Ofsted judged the school as requiring improvement in March 2014 and when monitored in April 2015, the school was considered to be taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Banks Methodist Primary School as a Methodist church school are good**

- The inspirational Christian leadership of the headteacher supported by the governors, Methodist church, staff, parents and learners ensures that distinctively Christian values are at the heart of the school community to rapidly drive forward school improvement.
- Relationships between all members of the school community, founded upon Christian love and trust, nurture the well-being and academic development of all pupils.
- The vibrant and well-maintained school shows that everyone is valued and unique as children of God and is given a well-resourced learning environment to reach their full potential.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Agree a mission statement to express the school's values and purpose now as a distinctively Christian school.
- Evaluate how well the distinctively Christian values are embedded
- Ensure that worship consistently promotes spiritual development throughout the school.

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

Learners regard their school as happy and amazing largely because love and trust, amongst other distinctively Christian values, are clearly expressed daily and help nurture them more to achieve their full potential. Staff and learners relate these values to the teaching of Jesus. Parents and learners say that everybody is valued as unique and everything possible is provided for them to make progress. Learners achieved particularly well at Key Stage 2 in most subjects last year and the school is making good progress to further improve attainment at Key Stage 1, writing at Key Stage 2 and reinforce maths problem-solving. Stakeholders attribute this improvement directly to this year's focus on six distinctively Christian values. As learners were involved in designing the Christian values banners, they now have added relevance on display in the hall with supplementary photographs and comments by pupils. One learner said, 'Jesus forgave people and forgiveness is still loving someone even if they are mean to you'. Learners appreciate the support of 'Playground Partners' when lonely. A strong focus on prayer in many ways throughout school life strongly contributes to learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Learners pray in different ways including fastening ribbons on a cross in the hall or playground fence, holding small crosses and writing prayers in the quiet garden. One learner writes, 'If we pray outside, we feel closer and more connected to God'. Some learners can speak with confidence about John Wesley and that their school would not exist if it were not for him. Pupils understand the importance of John Wesley and how he told people about God. Through religious education (RE) pupils are rapidly grasping the Christian basis of the new values as they draw strength from Bible stories illustrating the values. One learner writes, 'Daniel prayed to God because he believed in him and relied on him in trouble'. Another writes, 'Be brave and always try. Never give up'.

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

The school community sees worship promoting a meaningful understanding of Jesus Christ for them to apply to their lives because links exist between worship, RE and Christian values. In planning worship, the headteacher models personal reflection and the use of story bags to further develop staff-led worship. Christian symbols serve as strong focal points. Learners and staff enter to music which makes them feel calm yet happy. Worship leaders use appropriate music, imagination and resources to create mood and draw the school community into Bible stories. Worship encourages all members of the school community to trust God when they are afraid. One learner said after worship, 'If God can calm a lake, he can calm the world'. The more staff refer to the Christian values from daily worship, the more learners are beginning to ask big questions in class. Learners enjoy leading worship because this enables them to teach people about Jesus. However, they would welcome more opportunities to take active parts in worship including sharing their thoughts and prayers because this is not consistent practice yet. Where leaders do use more reflective approaches, then worship leads to deeper spiritual development. For example, following worship about the lost son, learners spoke about an invisible thread keeping people together like the Christian faith. Some learners have an understanding of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and describe this as a 'holy pyramid'. Learners currently evaluate worship in terms of whether they like worship and feel involved. As a result, the school has introduced new worship songs with actions and sign language. For over two years, a group comprising pupils and foundation governors has evaluated that worship is developing in the school, learners often ask probing questions and staff are committed to developing reflective spaces and interactive worship stations. School leadership is looking forward to further strengthening the Methodist traditions in worship with the arrival of a new minister. Evaluation of worship is not yet sufficiently refined to evidence best practice in all aspects of worship.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a Church school are outstanding**

Since her appointment, the headteacher's priority is for all staff, learners and their families to witness the positive impact on their lives of her living out her Christian faith in action. Faced with having to bring about rapid improvement following the 2014 Ofsted inspection, new school leadership firmly established the vision to set Christian values as the foundation upon which to build an effective school improvement plan to raise standards. The headteacher says, 'If you put God at the centre, then everything else will come together'. The local authority advisory section acknowledged this at the time and continues to do so as improvements are embedded. The impact of this plan, motivated by the Christian vision, is now very strong. Changes in membership on the governing body have further increased capacity for more rapid school improvement. A specific group of school leaders including governors and diocesan visitors have a thorough understanding of the school's performance and distinctiveness through strategic self-evaluation. All staff consistently and confidently articulate the Christian vision for school improvement and embrace effective strategies to improve all pupils' outcomes – most noticeably the excellent behaviour for learning. The headteacher notices the more that staff personally experience a living faith, the more their Christian love and nurturing break down barriers to learning more effectively. Staff give their time more freely in serving learners and their families to meet their collective needs in many practical ways to strengthen their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The appointment of dedicated learning support staff also makes a real difference here. This commitment to pastoral care is also matched by the governors' decision to continue to provide daily hot meals in school. The chair of governors, reflecting Methodist tradition, speaks about the school needing to live out what Jesus did by doing things practically to help people. Learners and parents value church services, the minister, church family and parent volunteers. Through supporting charity projects and links with the Methodist church in Uganda, learners consider others whilst being thankful for what they have themselves. School leadership has secured additional training and support from external partners including the wider Methodist church and its support network for education, particularly the worship course by the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust (MAST). Consequently the provision for the learners in the school has become stronger. This has ensured further support and benefits for the current leadership of the school. Through leading worship and RE, the headteacher gives a high priority to these important areas and models highly effective practice. Once the six Christian values have been in place for a full year, evidence of their impact over time and how well they are embedded can be clearly evaluated. School leadership is keen to embrace new opportunities for the school to develop further as a Methodist distinctive Christian school with the arrival of the new minister in September 2016. This appointment is fundamental to the writing of a new relevant mission statement that explicitly articulates the distinctively Christian values and current school aims in line with the school's Methodist tradition.

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