



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### **Nutgrove Methodist Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Govett Road

St Helens

WA9 5NH

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Outstanding

**Current inspection grade:** Outstanding

**Methodist Circuit:** St Helens and Prescot

Local authority: St Helens

Dates of inspection: 25 February 2016

Date of last inspection: 21 May 2010

School's unique reference number: 104821

Headteacher: Ian Rimmer

Inspector's name and number: Gillian Simm – QA Assessor Neville Norcross NS403

#### **School context**

Nutgrove Methodist VA school is an average sized primary school. It is one of only two Voluntary Aided Methodist Schools in the country. Most children are from white British families. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average and the percentage of pupils eligible for additional funding via the pupil premium grant is in line with the national average. The school was judged outstanding by OFSTED in June 2014. The Wesley Room (a professional meeting room) was opened in 2011 and a new Nursery/Community Centre was opened adjacent to the school in 2013.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Nutgrove Primary School as a Methodist school are outstanding**

- Christian Leadership is excellent with staff and governors constantly reviewing and developing the school's Christian vision and Methodist distinctiveness.
- The Christian Values are explicit and embedded and are lived out in the excellent relationships within the school family.
- The impact of collective worship inspires the thinking and day to day actions of the whole school community.
- Highly effective leadership and teaching of Religious Education leads to pupils' outstanding levels of understanding of faith and spiritual development.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to plan collective worship so that it continues to have relevance to their own lives.
- Work with the circuit to develop a shared vision between church and school in order to provide more opportunities to reach out to the community.

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

A strong commitment to Christian values, Methodist traditions and the development of the whole child underpins the work of the school. Consequently the school is very good at meeting the academic, emotional and spiritual needs of the pupils. Parents' comments on questionnaires give examples of happy, settled and confident children and show that those with educational and medical needs are extremely well cared for. The distinctive Christian character of the school has a significant impact on the very good academic standards and progress achieved by the end of Key Stage 2. The school has a strong Methodist distinctiveness, which is evident across the school through high quality displays, the learning about John Wesley and the focus on values of trust, service and justice. A parent spoke of how his youngest child was enjoying using actions to help him learn John Wesley's rule and the school council were keen to show that they knew it 'by heart'. Children speak with clarity and deep understanding of the Christian values and how they are important for their lives. An excellent example of this was when the children were asked to give examples of Bible stories that demonstrate the values. One child talked about how the story of Paul's conversion demonstrated the value of service. Similarly, in the Foundation Stage a sand tray was used to help pupils understand forgiveness. After a disagreement they would write in the sand and then wipe it away. Positive, caring relationships between all members of the school community directly connect with Christian teachings and are nurtured by collective worship and religious education. All members of the community know that they are valued and the outstanding ethos of trust and respect is clearly evident. Behaviour in school is exemplary. Pupils take on the role of Christian Values Ambassadors. They put the values into action every day and help other pupils to do the same. This role is now so popular and valued by the pupils that it is becoming a target for all pupils to achieve. Parents agree that Christian values are taken into the home. One parent said that her child often surprises her by asking her 'deep questions' at bedtime. Staff have high expectations of the children and themselves. As one teacher said 'the school's motto 'My best, Always, Everywhere' is something we all aim for'. They describe working in the school as being part of 'a big family' and see the Christian distinctiveness of the school as very important because 'the values the children learn here last a lifetime'. The school provides opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of Christianity as a world religion and develop their awareness of diversity. For example, Methodist visitors from Nigeria, Christian visitors from South Korea, projects linked to Fair Trade and the partner school in Tanzania.

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

High quality planning includes Christian themes, with a strong emphasis on scripture and Methodist teachings and practice. Worship is of a very high quality and is valued by all members of the community. One member of staff said how, within that morning's worship, the quote from the book of Jeremiah (God having a plan for each of us) had had an impact on him personally. There is a strong focus on Jesus and the central position He occupies in the Christian faith. The life of John Wesley and the impact that he is having on the lives of all the school community are returned to again and again throughout the year. Children benefit from a varied experience of worship led by a wide range of leaders from all denominations. Adults and pupils regularly lead worship in partnership together. Although pupils, along with other stakeholders, regularly deliver and evaluate worship there is scope for them to take more responsibility at the planning stage. Methodist traditions of music, singing, and informal prayer are strong and adults and pupils play in the worship band together. One pupil in the worship band talked of how, because of what other children had said to him, he knew he was inspiring others. Pupils' understanding of prayer is well developed. One pupil offered to pray for the seriously ill relative of another pupil, another understood that the answer to a prayer may be 'yes', 'no' or 'wait'. This is in no small amount due to the many opportunities to pray throughout the school day and around the school environment. All classes have prayer spaces linked to the Christian Values. Children are encouraged to write their own prayers and will regularly offer them for inclusion within whole school worship. One pupil said 'prayer is a big part of our school'. The school has been proactive in helping pupils to develop their understanding of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The subject is regularly

returned to and approached in a variety of ways. For example, an African carving of three dancers all made from one piece of wood, the Trinity banner in the hall or posing the question 'who owns a house, the architect, the builder or the dweller?'

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

The co-ordination of RE is excellent. The subject knowledge and commitment of the co-ordinator, working in partnership with the headteacher, is outstanding and their impact on RE teaching throughout the school is very evident. A system for assessing children's achievements is well embedded and used effectively to track progress. Standards in RE compare well with those in other core subjects and the regular monitoring and moderation of work ensures standards remain high as evidenced in portfolios, written work and pupils' oral responses. The school uses the Blackburn Diocese scheme of work, supplemented by additional Methodist units that help learners develop an understanding of the life and influence of John Wesley as well as learning about Methodist traditions. Regular monitoring of lessons together with work by senior leaders and governors ensures that all children have access to creative and challenging RE. There is a strong emphasis on learning from religion as well as learning about religion and this approach is developed from Foundation Stage onwards. Pupils say that they enjoy their RE lessons. In one lesson pupils wanted to carry on, even though it was break time, as everyone wanted to share their views. Lessons have clear links to scripture and the RE teaching supports and develops the lessons from collective worship enabling children to develop a very deep understanding of faith and spirituality. Pupils are given regular opportunities to reflect on and respond to what they have learnt. At the end of a lesson about their perceptions of Jesus pupils were asked to sum up what He meant to them. One child said 'the shepherd who gives his life for the lamb' another 'my best friend and personal teacher'. When marking work teachers often comment on the pupils' responses and it was evident that these comments were valued by pupils as in many cases this developed into a dialogue of reflection.

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

The headteacher and governors provide outstanding leadership and management of the school as a church school. They share a clear vision and are highly effective in articulating and promoting this throughout the school and beyond to the community. Christian values are embedded in all policies and practice. Governors know the school well and have a clear understanding of their role. They visit school regularly and carry out monitoring activities to ensure that church school issues are identified and addressed through school improvement planning. An Ethos Committee has been created to focus specifically on Christian distinctiveness and upholding Methodist traditions. The school carries out evaluations on a regular basis and uses this feedback to continually develop the Christian vision. For example, evaluations of collective worship by pupils showed that they would like more involvement. This has led to the formation of a worship band, worship leaders and more prayers written by children being used in collective worship. The musical instruments for the worship band were purchased following a successful bid for funding from the circuit. There is a strong emphasis on developing Christian leaders at all levels and the headteacher recognises that this is achieved not just by allowing staff to access further training but also by identifying opportunities for staff to take on additional responsibility. RE and collective worship are both extremely well led with planning and evaluation key to future development. Parents like the school's Methodist distinctiveness. One parent said he is learning about Methodism from his child. Another said she felt the children were more tolerant and had 'more thought for other people' because of the school's Christian ethos. The school plays a pivotal role in the way church, school and community work together although the development of a shared vision between church and school would help to capitalise on this. Since the last inspection the school has worked in partnership with the local Methodist Circuit to develop the community centre. This is used by the school for activities such as 'messy church' and also provides some additional services for the community, for example, a mums and tots groups.