



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### Woodthorpe Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Seymour Lane  
Mastin Moor  
Chesterfield  
Derbyshire S43 3DA

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Outstanding**

#### Diocese: Derby

Local authority: Derbyshire  
Dates of inspection: 15 October, 2015  
Date of last inspection: 8 June, 2009  
School's unique reference number: 112857  
Headteacher: Eileen Gunton  
Inspector's name and number: Kerry Palmer (60)

#### School context

Woodthorpe Church of England (VC) Primary School is a smaller than average village primary school. It attracts children from a wide area due to its high standing in the community. The children, almost all of white British heritage, come from socially diverse backgrounds. The proportion considered disadvantaged and attracting additional funding is lower than average but there are some children with significant additional needs. The original Victorian building has been extensively expanded and modernised to provide a learning environment appropriate to modern needs. Both the headteacher and rector have been appointed since the last inspection.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Woodthorpe Church of England (VC) Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Highly motivated, well informed Christian leadership which puts the school's Christian ethos explicitly at the centre of all school development.
- Inspirational collective worship which enthuses children to follow the teaching of Jesus and reflect on the wonder of God's world.
- An inclusive community of school, parish and village enthused by shared Christian values which motivates confident, secure learners who consequently, achieve well.
- Religious education (RE) that successfully promotes Christian values and spiritual growth whilst nurturing respect and understanding of other faiths.

#### Areas to improve

- Establish a review cycle of vision statement, school aims, key policies and documentation so as to make clearly evident the Christian foundation of all school activity.
- Form a representative group of school leaders, governors and clergy to coordinate the monitoring and evaluation of worship and RE to inform improvement.

**The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting**

### **the needs of all learners**

Woodthorpe is a school informed by explicitly verbalised and highly influential Christian values, freely discussed by children, lived out in their lives and recognised and endorsed by parents, governors, the community and any casual visitor in ways that are not always evident in documentation. This is a school where nothing is too much trouble in its efforts to ensure the achievements and wellbeing of every child. It has developed an exciting and creative learning environment where children of all abilities are happy, hardworking and do well. This is because school leaders and staff are committed to core Christian values that recognise each child as a unique individual. 'Be the best you can be' and 'we are all the same in the eyes of God', are phrases constantly heard when discussing the school's philosophy. Professional and compassionate support for the less able, a varied programme of enrichment activities, including a residential retreat and continuous assessment for learning ensure all children make excellent progress. Perseverance has been promoted along with independent, enquiry based learning. Data indicates that progress and achievement continues to improve; an increasing number of children exceed national expectations. Children, across the age range, thrive on the responsibilities linked to collective worship, anti-bullying and school council groups. Justice and forgiveness are evident in positive behaviour management resulting in children who cooperate and support each other at work and play. Christian service and empathy for the needs of the less fortunate are evident in enthusiastic support for the local food bank and a range of charities including Barnardos and Children in Need. There is a strong atmosphere of mutual support and cooperation, children naturally offering help to their peers and younger children throughout the day, disciple groups in collective worship are just one obvious example. Support for children's wellbeing is a particular strength with time and loving care extended to families as well as pupils. Consequently, attendance is above national levels and behaviour excellent. Effective strategies have been put in place to ensure that children from this almost exclusively white British community have appropriate knowledge of other faiths and cultures in a way that successfully promotes appreciation of diversity and respect for all. Children's social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is enhanced by a range of experiences built into RE teaching, collective worship reflections and church based activities such as the very successful whole school church activity day.

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

Collective worship is a highlight of each school day, eagerly anticipated by most of the children. They participate fully and enthusiastically, many involved in planning and delivery of worship which is explicitly and obviously Christian. Worship begins with a gathering with lighted candles for each of the disciple groups saying 'we are the disciples of Jesus'. Themes are directly linked to Christian values and their application in children's lives. These, along with prayers and reflection time, often from the children, but including the Lord's Prayer and school creed combine with stimulating leadership to promote transforming worship. 'What would Jesus do?' is at the centre of much school discussion. Creative approaches, used with sensitivity and wisdom ensure that children have an age appropriate appreciation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Structures evaluation, including staff observations and pupil surveys feed into clear action plans in pursuit of continuous improvement. This is a positive development since the last inspection. Children understand, appreciate and participate thoughtfully in reflective prayer activity in a variety of situations. Children's prayers are prominently displayed and used in worship, such as prayer 'leaves' for others at harvest and offering worries to God following the 'calming of the storm' story. Children have some appreciation of Christianity as a multi-cultural and world-wide church. Worship is significantly enhanced by input from a number of outside providers and particularly the local clergy who see links with the school being at the core of their parish mission. This is greatly enriched by their skill and commitment to school worship resulting in very positive responses from children and staff alike. They are great friends and a valued pastoral support to the school. Children and families gain much from church based festival worship at St John the Baptist Church like the Christingle, and their leavers' service when year six children leave their worries and fears at the foot of St John. Opportunities to use

the church more are only limited by the distance. However, church is brought to school with parishioners joining parents in school for regular Mass in which children actively participate. The majority of older children accept an invitation to be prepared to receive the sacraments. Parents also enthuse about regular opportunities to join in class and celebration worship.

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

It is evident to all that the school succeeds in its core function to 'maximise the learning potential of every child within the love of God'. Significant improvement, recognised by all stakeholders have been made under the current leadership team. Staff and governors are united in their pursuit of excellence in a school that rigorously evaluates and has focussed and aspirational development priorities, driven by strong Christian values. Headteacher and dedicated subject leader ensure that the clearly recognised Christian ethos is at the forefront of school life and impacts on all decision making. Increasing use is made of collaborative partnerships with other schools. The staff team makes good use of career development opportunities and training with quality support from the diocese. Parents comment on the enthusiasm of the children for school, the friendly, open atmosphere and the Christian love extended to all. Although there is no formal evaluation of parents' views about Christian distinctiveness, one said 'in tough times God will help us,' another 'she taught us all to say grace at home', yet another 'they love the values activity sheets', reflecting very positive attitudes. Governors know the school well, are actively supportive and see Christian leadership as a high priority in staff appointments. However, they do not play a sufficiently structured role in the evaluation and development of RE, worship or the school's Christian distinctiveness. Links with the parish are strong and vibrant, a big leap forward since the last inspection. The clergy, working in close partnership with school leaders, are a dynamic force for the continuing enrichment of Christian distinctiveness. There is no doubt that the school's Christian vision and the promotion of Christian values are key drivers for improvement and the quest for this outstanding school.

SIAMS report   October 2015   Woodthorpe CE (VC) Primary School, Derbys. S43 3DA