



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### Wenlock Voluntary Aided Church of England Junior School

Beaconsfield Road  
Luton  
LU2 0RW

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: St Albans**

Local authority: Luton

Dates of inspection: 15 June 2016

Date of last inspection: 29 March 2011

School's unique reference number: 109633

Headteacher: Debbie Williams

Inspector's name and number: Shirley Whales 830

#### School context

Wenlock C of E Junior School is a culturally rich Deanery school in the heart of Luton. 63% pupils compared to 29.7% nationally are from minority ethnic groups. Over one third of the pupils are in receipt of pupil premium funding and 15% are registered with special educational needs. There has been a change in leadership since the last inspection. The school has strong relationships with the local churches. School leaders promote a distinctive vision for the community it serves.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Wenlock C of E Junior as a Church of England school are good

- The headteacher models the explicit Christian vision 'Learning and growing together within the love of God'. Her commitment to developing the school's Christian distinctiveness is exemplified through the good, well-established relationships between school, family and community.
- School staff and governors create a secure and supportive Christian environment, which adds significantly to the values and practice within the school.
- Pupils recognise the school's values as Christian values and that they contribute successfully to their positive attitudes to learning and spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) well-being.

#### Areas to improve

- Provide more occasions for pupils to experience and learn about Christian traditions so that they are able to understand their significance within the church year.
- Develop religious education (RE) planning and assessment to ensure that all children are sufficiently challenged and supported in their learning.
- Develop a cohesive plan of Christian themes and Christian values in worship and involve pupils more fully in the planning, leading and evaluation of worship so as to maximise its impact on the whole school community.

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

The school's deeply-embedded Christian character is immediately evident to visitors. The vision, "Learning and growing together within the love of God" is well developed and is made explicit across the school, in newsletters and on the school website. Parents agree that the school's strong sense of community, based on Christian values, 'nurtures and helps every pupil to feel secure.' They appreciate the core foundations of the values, which enable the pupils to build strong relationships with each other regardless of their faith backgrounds. Consequently, despite a recent dip in standards, pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Achievements are celebrated through a range of awards including 'star pupil award' and a leaf on the prayer tree for those who have had an opportunity to demonstrate one of the values. The school rightly recognises that its values and commitment to engaging with families to find sympathetic solutions have a positive impact on attendance and good behaviour. Colourful displays, such as those in the spiritual garden, exemplify how the values are becoming embedded throughout the school. The emphasis on values has had an impact on pupil well-being and SMSC development and this is also appreciated by parents who applaud the ways pupils interact. Pupils are confident and cooperative, expressing themselves enthusiastically and with a desire for more active involvement. Philosophy for Children curriculum experiences enable pupils to explore spirituality in a meaningful way. They express their thoughts with clarity and confidence. Pupils appreciate the spiritual outdoor space but class reflection areas do not always provide quality opportunities for individual, personal reflection. Pupils and parents speak positively about visits to places of worship in order to gain a fuller understanding of religions. One pupil explained about how their visit to a synagogue helped them to understand 'how boys and girls become adults'. Whilst this develops pupils' respect for diversity and difference and adds to pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Jewish faith, their understanding of Anglican traditions or Christianity as a world-wide faith is not so well developed and the school is aware of these as areas for development.

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

Pupils behave well in worship and they are attentive and respond respectfully to the different elements. Worship is distinctively Christian but there is insufficient consideration given to the development of Christian music during worship. The pupils, including prayer leaders and RE ambassadors, who are mainly pupils from the upper school, enjoy contributing to prayer by writing their own prayers and reading them to the school community. This aspect is also encouraged in class, where daily prayers add to the pupils' personal spirituality. Some classes have created prayer books, which they use during the school day but this practice is inconsistent across the school. Reflection time is sometimes built in to collective worship and pupils explain this as 'something that we have to think about at the end of assembly.' Collective worship sometimes includes biblical material, particularly when 'Open the Book' volunteers deliver worship but the stories do not always link coherently to the value of the month. Pupils reference the value and can explain how 'Jesus shows some of the values'. They are then able to assimilate these for their own lives and experiences. Following a special day focusing on the Trinity, pupils' understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is good. They refer to 'God always being around to lend a helping hand.' Pupils enjoy the opportunity to produce religious pieces of art work, which provide purposeful links to the themes. The visits to church help to make pupils more aware of Anglican practices but their understanding of the significance of these traditions is less secure. Pupils encounter a range of worship leaders during the week which ensures that there is variety and breadth in the worship although there are few opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship themselves. Planning of worship provides a basic structure, which is repeated weekly but insufficient consideration is given to consistent Christian themes. Whilst governors and pupils have evaluated worship, the practice is sporadic and has not been given sufficient attention to impact on the improvements identified.

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

Some aspects of the teaching of religious education (RE) are good but this is not consistent across the school. Progress is satisfactory, pupils achieve in line with national expectations. Lessons demonstrate a link between RE and Philosophy for Children. Whilst this is effective in generating some good discussion around deep spiritual concepts, links to the RE themes within the curriculum are underdeveloped. Most pupils engage and take part respectfully. Teachers observe and ask questions to reshape and extend learning but opportunities to collect the more articulate answers from the pupils are missed. Work in books shows little evidence of tasks being matched to the abilities of different pupils. Some tasks do not provide the imagination, independence or challenge necessary to enable pupils to attain appropriate levels. Marking is ineffective because next steps do not always refer to the RE focus and pupils are not always given the opportunity to improve. Assessment takes place every term but exemplification of standards or moderation of levels does not inform school improvement strategies. The teaching of other faiths and traditions is good. Pupils visit places of worship and are able to articulate various facts, honouring other approaches to faith and drawing upon knowledge from their own faith experiences. Teaching allows children to maintain their own cultural identities and also celebrate these differences. Quality professional development opportunities have provided valuable stimuli for effective learning but teaching strategies are not yet fully embedded and an overall strategic view is not yet coherent. The RE subject leader acknowledges the need for regular and efficient monitoring across the school in order to put in place a systematic method for identifying priorities for improvement and acting upon them so that substantial progress can be made.

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

The headteacher is able to articulate the explicit Christian vision for the school and she does so with enthusiasm and drive. Church school self-evaluation informs school improvement planning and has brought about recent improvements especially in the development of Christian values. These values have strengthened the impact of the school's Christian character on the community and pupils' SMSC development. Quality professional development provides innovative ideas for RE. Staff, who lead RE and collective worship, are fairly new to the school and to leadership. They have a very comprehensive action plan in place, which relates coherently to the inspection schedule. Whilst staff can identify the desired outcomes, there is insufficient focus on evaluating outcomes in order to enhance their impact across the school community and on the learning experiences of the pupils. RE and worship meet statutory requirements and are led with commitment and a genuine desire to continue seeking ways to improve further. Performance management objectives, emphasising the importance that school leaders place on improving Wenlock as a church school, are in place for the personal development of all staff. Church, community and diocesan links are well developed and are effective in moving the school forward. Governors endorse the excellent relationships between the school and the community and the headteacher's commitment to developing the Christian character throughout the school and wider partnerships. Governors are an active and supportive presence; they explain, 'We are in the middle of our journey, we are not complacent, we have laid the foundations and now we are gaining momentum'. They are focused on a 'sharper, open and realistic' approach to school improvement and rightly have faith in school leaders to deliver the improvements required. The areas from the last inspection have been partially met and governors are aware of the urgency required to address them fully. The relationships with parents are very strong. Parents say that the school has the balance right in promoting a distinct Christian ethos and is doing so in a way that includes all members of their community. Parents appreciate the caring support given to all pupils and they acknowledge the core values that are fundamental in building robust foundations within this culturally rich community. It is on these strong foundations that leaders at Wenlock are able to continue to build its distinctive Christian character.