



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### Woodchurch High School

Carr Bridge Road Woodchurch Wirral CH49 7NG

**Previous SIAMS grade:** N/A

**Current inspection grade:** Outstanding

**Diocese:** Chester

Local authority: N/A

Dates of inspection: 4 and 8 July 2016

Date of last inspection: N/A

School's unique reference number: 138853

Headteacher: Rebekah Phillips

Inspector's name and number: Carol Berry 324

### School context

Woodchurch is a larger than average secondary academy of 1403 pupils. Many students come from the housing estate where it is situated. Levels of deprivation are significantly higher than usual and 46% of pupils are disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium. Significantly more pupils than usual have special educational needs and disabilities. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The school has been part of a church trust since 2010 and has bought into chaplaincy services from local churches since 2012. It converted to become a church academy in 2014.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Woodchurch as a Church of England school are outstanding

- There is visionary and committed Christian leadership from the headteacher and other leaders. Christian values, including a concern to act with integrity and an aspiration to impart hope, inform all leadership decisions and relationships.
- Christian values are deeply embedded at all levels of school life. Students have an excellent understanding of their importance and readily apply the values to their own lives. Christian values effectively support the development of character and enhance learning.
- Collective worship is relevant and inspiring. The work of the chaplaincy team has been a key factor in the way in which the school's distinctive Christian character has developed and worship makes a significant contribution to pupils' understanding of Christian values.
- Excellent leadership of religious education (RE) results in outstanding progress. RE makes a valuable contribution to personal development.

### Areas to improve

- To support a wider range of staff and pupils in leading collective worship, providing more varied worship experiences and different ways in which pupils might respond to worship. This is so that pupils' understanding of diverse worship traditions is enhanced through exciting acts of worship.
- To ensure that evaluation of collective worship and RE explores in depth the impact of initiatives on pupils' attitudes and personal development. This is to ensure that the school is able to celebrate and build on the progress made.

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

Christian values are integral to all aspects of the life of the school, with the result that it is a happy and inclusive place to learn. A pupil said, 'I couldn't be happier anywhere else'. Behaviour is excellent and many pupils facing personal difficulties flourish. Students say that the beautiful carving of Jesus with open arms at the centre of the building symbolises the way in which everyone is welcomed by the school. RE supports the inclusive ethos through the respect with which diverse faiths and cultures are studied. The recent 'Diversity week' provided pupils with a chance to celebrate diversity and examine their own attitudes. This secure learning environment and the school's high aspirations for its students contribute to pupils making outstanding progress. Pupils have an exceptionally deep understanding of why Christian values are important. They routinely use them to evaluate their behaviour and they apply Christian values to thinking about their own character. For example, they think about humility and the need for endurance when facing new challenges. Students' profound understanding of Christian values springs from the innovative ideas developed by pastoral and curriculum leaders. Examples of excellent practice include values based workbooks for students in exclusion and reflection activities for students taking time out of lessons for behavioural reasons. Students have a good understanding of Biblical teaching about Christian values and readily make links to the teaching of Jesus, including the school's aspirational statement, 'Let your light shine'. Christian values make an excellent impact on the content of the curriculum. Curriculum planning for all subjects incorporates work on Christian values. Reflection time is often included in lessons, sometimes with 'Take-away Menus' of values and underpinning Biblical teaching as a focus. This means pupils understand the way each subject links to Christian values, for example, when considering ethical issues such as IVF in science, or expressing personal reflections in art. Thinking about Christian values helps students make connections between their learning in different subjects, for example, reflecting on justice helped them to link statistical work on restorative justice in maths to work on crime and punishment in RE.

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

Collective worship inspires pupils. It is challenging, engaging and relevant. Pupils say, 'It is a great way to start the day!' It is rooted in the Bible and provides students with insight into the reality of living a life of faith. Leadership by the chaplaincy team models excellent practice and has set a new standard for worship since the school's change of status. Staff comment on how pupils' understanding of the nature of worship has developed, from seeing collective worship as a performance to be applauded to something much deeper and more reflective. The integrity of the chaplaincy team in sharing the challenges of their own faith journey has contributed to the excellent way students engage with worship. An example of this was the moving worship when a member of the clergy shared how his son lost his life to drug abuse. Planning for worship secures consideration of a broad range of themes, key beliefs and festivals. As a result, pupils gain a good understanding of the nature of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Planning links to the Christian value of the week, resulting in students thinking deeply about different values. Collective worship takes place in year groups and tutorial groups. The quality of tutorial worship is secured through the provision of excellent resources, including videos produced in-house which make a powerful impact on pupils' thinking. Leadership of year group acts of worship is almost always by the chaplaincy team and other staff do not usually lead worship. As a result, students do not experience a range of different Christian traditions and worship styles. Students participate in worship, reading or contributing prayers. They understand the importance of prayer as a result of contributing to prayer books and the prayer blog. The students' worship group enriches worship through their contribution of vibrant contemporary music. However, students do not have the opportunity to take responsibility for leading parts of collective worship. There is a rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluation which informs planning. However, there are limited opportunities for the chaplaincy team to explore in depth the impact of worship on pupil's thinking and understanding.

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

The RE department exemplifies excellence and the department holds the RE Quality Mark Gold. Students make outstanding progress in RE and the standards achieved at GCSE are the highest in the school. This is the result of creative teaching which enthuses pupils. Lessons make use of exciting teaching activities, including videos, artefacts, group work, the use of drama and innovative strategies to review progress. Well-structured activities ensure that pupils develop thinking skills, as when they developed analytical skills in a lesson exploring a Christian Aid video. Lessons provide many opportunities for collaborative learning. In a GCSE revision lesson, pupils worked together to revise a particular topic and secured their learning by teaching each other. The high standard of teaching is supported by the excellent leadership of the RE subject leader and the commitment of the RE team of highly skilled specialists. Secure procedures for monitoring and self-evaluation inform future development. However, evaluative conversations about RE with pupils are not routinely carried out by a subject specialist, with the result that some opportunities for deep reflection on the impact of RE are lost. The curriculum coherently secures progress across the key stages, building understanding of key concepts and developing skills of religious literacy. Planning ensures that pupils apply their learning to their own lives. As a result, students are enthusiastic about studying RE and say it provides a safe space where they can explore beliefs. The department is well-resourced. Curriculum time and the proportion of time devoted to Christianity are in line with expectations. RE makes an excellent contribution to the ethos of the school and supports the delivery of the Archbishop of York's Award Scheme to the whole of Year 8. As a result, students are able to see how faith results in community action. They are inspired by their work on people of faith to take on personal challenges to serve. Learning about different faiths includes an exciting programme of extra-curricular experiences, including visits to Chester Cathedral, a Buddhist Centre and a synagogue. The respect demonstrated for different faiths in RE helps pupils to value diversity.

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

Strong Christian leadership from the headteacher means that the vision for a school founded on Christian values is embraced by all members of the school community. Concern for integrity has been central to developments. This includes respecting the integrity of all members of staff, also ensuring that developments have been embedded with integrity and are not superficial. Pastoral and curriculum leaders are playing an important role in moving the school forward through their distinctively Christian work on spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. As a result of the clarity with which the vision has been shared there has been exceptionally rapid progress in the development of the school's Christian character since it became a church school. Students recognise the impact of the way the school has developed. A Year 11 student looked back on his time at the school and said, 'Due to the values, the whole school's behaviour and work has been helped'. Governance is very effective and draws on a very high level of expertise. The trustees are committed to securing the academy's Christian vision. Robust systems of monitoring and evaluation feed into strategic planning and are reviewed regularly by the governors. The school provides strong support for professional development and many staff are following courses to prepare them for leadership roles in school. The expertise within the school is shared widely with other schools, for example, through local RE networks. The school's work on character is being shared at a national conference. Partnerships with local churches and the diocese are mutually beneficial. The art department created stations of the cross with pupils which are in use in a local church. There are very strong partnerships with the local community. Local schools attend 'The Big Bible event' where children interactively engage with Bible stories and the pigs on the school farm are used to explore the story of the Prodigal Son. Local organisations support community action as part of the Archbishop of York's Award. Students develop as compassionate citizens through their support of local charities and the local Rotary Club say their work has been enriched by their partnership with the school.