



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

### Medlar with Wesham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Garstang Road North  
Wesham  
Preston  
PR4 3DE

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Outstanding

**Current inspection grade:** Outstanding

**Diocese: Blackburn**

Local authority: Lancashire

Date of inspection: 18 June 2015

Date of last inspection: 8 February 2010

School's unique reference number: 119553

Headteacher: Liz Astbury

Inspector's name and number: Susan Cliffe (832)

#### School context

Medlar with Wesham Church of England Primary School is a smaller than average sized school serving a semi-urban area. All children are taught in single age classes. The majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds with 14% coming from Latvian or Russian backgrounds. Pupil premium levels are below average. Since the last inspection a new headteacher has been appointed. The parish church is next door to the school. The local incumbent has been on leave of absence for a year. Local clergy have supported the school throughout this period. The school received the Diocesan 'Church School Distinctiveness Award' in January 2015.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Medlar with Wesham as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The exemplary behaviour of pupils is based on a firm foundation of Christian values.
- The outstanding Christian leadership of the headteacher inspires the school community to achieve. She is ably supported by staff and governors.
- The strong links with church support the spiritual development of all members of the school community.
- The outstanding provision of religious education (RE) and collective worship makes a great impact upon the children's spiritual development.

#### Areas to improve

- Increase the involvement of pupils in evaluating collective worship thereby allowing them to impact upon its development.
- Provide more experiences for children to make links between the beliefs and practices of faiths other than Christianity through partnerships with schools nationally and globally.

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

Christian values are deeply embedded within the school and are clearly articulated by the school community. These values create a secure and caring environment. A school council member explained, 'Christian values guide how you should act and the choices you should make.' This is encapsulated in the school motto, 'More than I am', which children say encourages them to be more than they need to be in life. Relationships are nurturing and very supportive- 'We look out for each other and it is a happy place,' said one child. Children feel 'listened to' especially through the school council and worship team. Achievement is very good given the children's below average starting points and this is underpinned by exemplary behaviour. Children show positive attitudes, especially towards their learning, with one child describing teachers as 'awesome'. Their achievements are celebrated and parents appreciate that school sees their children, 'Not just in an academic way but also as individuals.' They enjoy raising funds for many appeals such as Cancer Research, Samaritan's Purse, the local food bank, Night Shelter and Street Life. Children understand that it is their Christian duty to help those less fortunate than themselves. All members of the school community feel valued. Pupils' spiritual development is outstanding with distinctively Christian displays, such as 'God's Rainbow', having a positive impact on this development. They enjoy thinking about difficult questions and they are challenged to do so. This is especially the case in RE which contributes significantly to the Christian character of the school. One child stated, 'I love RE - it is fun.' Worship tables are in each classroom and crosses, along with prayers and verses, provide focal points for reflection and response. RE has become more implicit in all areas of the curriculum supported by the Diocesan 'What if?' initiative. RE strongly promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and a growing awareness of other beliefs and cultures. They have a good understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. However, their experience of other faiths and cultures is not, as yet, fully developed and school leaders are keen to develop links with other schools nationally and overseas.

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

Collective worship is a core part of the life of the school, building upon the strengths identified in the last inspection. It is firmly rooted in Christian values and Biblical teachings. The headteacher stated, 'Worship spills over into our everyday lives.' It is well led. The vicar is involved with the headteacher in the overall planning of worship and, until her absence, she led worship once a week. This is now being provided by a local cleric until the return of the incumbent. Planning and delivery is good and children are enjoying becoming more involved in this aspect of provision through the worship team. This is exemplified by the receipt of the Diocesan Distinctiveness Award for the creation of the team. However, evaluation of worship by pupils requires further development to enhance future provision and promote ownership. Worship focuses primarily on Gospel values and Anglican traditions with children showing a developing understanding of the Trinity. Children are confident in leading worship and enjoy the variety of provision, especially on Thursdays when visiting speakers lead. A pupil explained, 'Worship is a great time of the day- it is good to share a feeling of community.' In worship, the atmosphere is warm and the excellently behaved children are given time for reflection, prayer and praise. They focus upon the newly installed stained glass window which they were involved in the creation of. Singing is joyful. Parents can attend worship twice a week in church. They feel most welcomed and think that the school's Christian values are effectively promoted through worship. Church is well used by school and children see it as an extension of their community- it is used for special services and performances throughout the year. Prayer is a key part of school life and children say that there are many times in the day when they can pray. They enjoy writing for the prayer trees and they have ownership of the worship areas in each classroom. Children's spirituality is nurtured by the spirituality garden (for which there are re-development plans), the reception rainbow garden and the bible garden showing the empty tomb. A child said that she likes to visit the latter before and after school.

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

Pupils' attitudes to RE are extremely positive. They look forward to lessons saying, 'RE is fun- it helps us to understand God's word.' RE makes a very significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The subject is strongly linked to Christian values and it is effectively led and closely monitored by the co-ordinator who is new to the role since the last inspection. She is ably supported by the vicar who is governor for RE. The vicar teaches RE whenever appropriate and her input is highly valued. Staff have been given excellent professional development through Blackburn Diocese. The school has been using the 'What if?' learning initiative. This has brought RE into all areas of the curriculum. One of the School Council members stated, 'God can be found in subjects such as Literacy now- not just in RE.' A range of other faiths is studied and evidenced by the menorah candle display in Year 3 and the trips which classes have made to places of worship such as a local mosque. Parents said that their children particularly enjoyed these visits. In RE lessons, children listen to everyone with great respect and work with creativity. For example producing superb models to celebrate Sukkot. RE is taught discretely and attainment within it is high- this is reflected in the quality of work in children's books and the high standard of presentation. The class reflection books, containing pupil responses to RE, are excellent; children are proud of these and enjoy reading them. Marking and feedback to children is of a high standard and this helps children to reflect and make good progress. The RE portfolio of levelled work provides conclusive evidence of good progression and high standards. Displays are focused on RE in many areas of the school. Lessons are well-planned and allow pupils to explore 'big questions'. In an outstanding Year 2 lesson, a couple of children came up with the question, 'When we die are we really dead?' in response to an exploration regarding loss.

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

The Christian headteacher, supported effectively by governors and staff, has built upon the strength of the school to ensure that its Christian mission is shared by the school community. The chair of governors stated that the school's distinctive Christian character, 'is the currency of the school.' The staff team is effective and they appreciate the outstanding Christian leadership which has, said a teacher, 'become even stronger since the last inspection.' The mission statement and motto underpin all school life leading to an overarching feeling of well-being within the community. The governors have a clear understanding of their role and they challenge and support. The way in which members of the school family live out their Christian values are seen in the caring relationships which have blossomed, especially when anyone is faced with personal difficulties. The school has good systems for self-evaluation and has increasingly involved more groups in driving school improvement so achievement is good. The professional development and support of staff and governors is seen as a priority. Worship and RE are central to the life of the school, are given a high priority and meet statutory requirements. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children is a strength of the school and the children are keen to take on new responsibilities such as being part of the worship team. The school council presented a case to the governors' premises committee for a trim trail which has since been built with ongoing input from the children. Parents are welcomed into school and the parent teacher association is very pro-active. A new parent stated, 'It feels like my family has always been at this school- it is brilliant.' There are many links with the local community. These include the local Roman Catholic school, 'Young at Heart', a special school and national bodies such as Cumbria University. A governor said that, 'School is at the heart of the community and church.' However, school has recognised that more links with global communities would enrich this understanding further. The website is very informative and welcomes involvement with 'The Daily Blessing' and 'Quote of the Day' giving opportunities to reflect. Children are at the centre of communication with a weekly report from the head boy and girl on the weekly newsletter. The school's capacity is excellent for sustained improvement.