



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### St Wilfrid's Church of England Academy

Duckworth Street  
Blackburn  
BB2 2JR

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Good

**Current inspection grade:** Outstanding

**Diocese:** Blackburn

Local authority: N/A

Dates of inspection: 3 and 4 March 2016

Date of last inspection: 11 and 12 May 2011

School's unique reference number: 136900

Headteacher: Catherine Huddleston

Inspector's name and number: Jo Fageant 104

### Academy context

The school is a larger than average town centre school. Most pupils come from faith based families and many travel to the academy from beyond the immediate area. St Wilfrid's became an academy in July 2011. The principal has taught in the school for over twenty years but took up the leadership role in 2013. The academy has more ethnic minority students than the national average. It has below the national average of those who speak English as an additional language, are entitled to free school meals, have special educational needs or are eligible for additional government funding known as 'pupil premium'. There is a local authority resourced provision for hearing impaired students.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Wilfrid's as a Church of England academy are outstanding

- The academy provides a distinctively Christian environment in which all students and staff, from whatever background, are supported and encouraged to flourish and be the best they can be.
- The academy's worship is distinctively Christian. Especially inspiring are the services which take place in the cathedral and enable creative participation. Once a year this follows a procession to the cathedral making the academy's Christian status clear within the town.
- Students value the contribution made by religious education to their understanding of their own and the faith perspectives of others.
- Students are inspired by the personal challenge of the Wilfridian and Wilfridian Edge awards which develop high aspirations, confidence and engagement with religious faith.
- Strong, mutually beneficial links with churches and the wider community develop a sense of generous reciprocal service.

### Areas to improve

- Building on existing practice, the academy should consider ways of delegating more responsibility for planning and leading collective worship to students. They should also be involved in developing ways of evaluating the impact of worship which involve all relevant members of the academy community.

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

Almost everyone describes the academy as being 'one big family' where all care for and help one another. This is understood to be the outworking of Christian values and teachings which underpin excellent behaviour and relationships. Students recognise in teachers a commitment to serve which for many is an aspect of their Christian faith. This prompts them to strive to provide the best and most supportive opportunities for all students. The result is exemplary academic and pastoral support which enables students to make good progress, attain excellent results and develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally (SMSC). The academy's commitment to all round development and challenge is exemplified by the Wilfridian Award undertaken by Year 7 students. It focuses on developing them as well-rounded and active citizens who are responsible as well as socially and faith aware. They say it builds their confidence, sets high aspirations and encourages them to try out new things, in some cases discovering unrealised talents. Students speak with enormous appreciation of the help and encouragement teachers give them and of the awards and rewards which recognise their efforts and achievements. Amendments to these are an example of how students' views are able successfully to influence the life of the academy. Muslim students feel welcomed and accommodated, for example by being provided with spaces and mats for prayer. They say this Christian acceptance is 'what makes the academy so special'. This ethos of care, arising from Christian teachings, leads directly to high levels of attendance and few exclusions which are, when they occur, very carefully managed. Although there are a few racist incidents and name calling, students are confident these are regarded as unacceptable and dealt with effectively. Religious education makes a strong contribution to SMSC development and helps define the inclusive Christian character of the academy. It enables students to develop a good understanding of their own religions, the diversity of belief and practice within them and a respect for other faith and non-religious traditions. The openness with which many teachers speak about their faith encourages students to talk and share thoughts about theirs. The highly valued rich variety of extra-curricular activities also includes meetings through which students explore aspects of the Christian faith. Performers valued the fact that their production of Les Miserables engaged them with a powerful Christian message as well as an opportunity to perform. The academy's values and associated quotations from the Bible are displayed all around the building. Each subject area has adopted at least one value to link with its work, for example, history has chosen 'wisdom', social sciences honesty and geography respect. This explicit focus means that everyone is aware of both the Christian distinctiveness of the values and of their relevance to learning and everyday life.

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

Collective worship provides a rich variety of distinctively Christian styles of worship. It is planned and led by many different people and experienced in a range of contexts. Formal Eucharistic services held in the cathedral for key celebrations are regarded by staff and students as particularly special. Students value the opportunity to contribute high quality dance and music to these occasions. Some students as well as staff have been licensed to assist with the wine at these services. Giving to and receiving from one another in this context has given rise to some profound conversations about faith. Members of the congregation are able to respond as seems appropriate, going forward either to receive the bread and wine, have a blessing or simply take a reflective walk. One Muslim student commented, 'It's fascinating to watch the school collectively worship together...makes Muslims respect Christian beliefs and reflect on our own ethics and beliefs.' When a Eucharist takes place in the academy sheets with explanatory text are used. These, together with an annual explained Eucharist, ensure students develop a good understanding. This includes understanding the centrality of Jesus in Christian worship and the belief in God as three in one. This belief about God is clearly set out in the academy's mission statement so students are able to talk about it with understanding. The Christian youth worker in her role as lay chaplain produces helpful resources which support worship in year and form contexts as well as business assemblies. The weekly themes are shared in a variety of ways and engage everyone with the Christian significance and personal challenge of the academy's values, key Christian teachings and important occasions of the Church year. They inspire personal spiritual and moral reflection and a strong commitment to social and charitable action. Prayer is used in all worship contexts, at the end of each day and by some Muslims and Christians at lunchtimes. Prayer boxes around the school are well used with prayers taken to the monthly staff prayer meetings. Students have opportunities to contribute to worship and some, most commonly in form contexts, to lead. Worship is monitored and evaluated by staff and students are also able, on a selective basis and informally, to contribute and influence the choice of worship themes. However, there is no strategic process through

which all members of the academy community can regularly express their views about worship.

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

Students do not only value religious education because of the GCSE results achieved, which are above the A\*-C national average, and the improving standards at AS and A level. They also appreciate the way it applies to and prepares them for real life situations beyond the academy. It deepens their understanding of the academy's Christian values. Students like the way it engages them with, and develops to a high level, their understanding of their own and others' religious beliefs. It encourages them to form and express their own views whilst listening respectfully to those of others. They enjoy wrestling with challenging questions to which there are no right or wrong answers but a need to justify the answers they decide upon. In the process, they develop and apply skills of enquiry, analysis, interpretation, evaluation and reflection. Offered a choice of ways of presenting work means students can use their preferred learning styles to achieve well. Teaching is consistently good and often outstanding. Students recognise the commitment and expertise of their teachers saying, 'They care about you. It's not just a job for them. That's what makes it special.' Lessons move at a fast pace with good use made of time limits, questions to probe understanding and varied activities presented in interesting ways. Marking is thorough and requires students to reflect and improve their work. This means they know how well they are doing, what their targets are and how to achieve and exceed them. Teachers track progress carefully, always encouraging and supporting students to do better. Some are inspired to aim high and achieve more than they thought possible. The curriculum has been revised using the diocesan *Illuminating Pathways*. This has been insightfully adapted to the context of the academy, for example by taking into account the views of Asian heritage students. Trips like one to the cathedral and a synagogue in Manchester excite students and enrich learning. The subject is led with vision and energy focused on high aspirations which are being achieved. All members of the subject team work well together, contributing their particular skills and areas of expertise in the constant drive for improvement. Areas identified for development in the last report have been exceptionally well addressed.

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

Leaders are consistently explicit about the Christian vision and values of St Wilfrid's Academy. They run like a thread through all aspects of academy life, positively influencing relationships, behaviour and learning. Values, illustrated as pebbles, are presented and explored from a distinctively Christian perspective, linked with quotations from the Bible. They are, however, accepted as relevant to everyone. They are clearly expressed in documentation and displays and referenced in many meetings. The commitment to providing the best for everyone, helping them to 'prosper' and giving them 'hope and a future' (Jeremiah 29:11) means leaders are forensic in their approach to data and all other indicators of progress and wellbeing. This leads to appropriate and valued interventions for students and training for staff that make a discernible difference. The accelerated reading programme and Wilfridian awards are good examples of initiatives which have had a very positive impact. This commitment also leads to well researched, innovative approaches to learning with, for example, the introduction of iPads for all students and a room with sophisticated technology which allows learning through simulated experiences. The same motivation ensures that all subjects of the curriculum contribute to SMSC development and engage with the Christian values in relevant ways. Whilst it is not possible to offer a full range of courses in the sixth form, the academy plays to its strengths and provides excellent guidance for students who need to follow pathways elsewhere. As a consequence, all students go on to further education, employment or training. Governors know the academy well and challenge appropriately, including in relation to its Christian distinctiveness. High priority is given to collective worship and RE. The Christian youth worker and learning area coordinator for RE are very well supported. The result of this can be seen in the highly effective and improving practice in both areas. Students, staff and parents have opportunities to express their views. These help the academy to understand itself and they inform aspects of change. There are good links with the diocese and the Woodard Corporation from which training is accessed. Two members of staff are currently undertaking a Christian leadership course, enabling them to grow and contribute well to the academy in new ways. The importance of playing a part in its distinctive Christian ethos features in the appointment of all staff. Relationships between the academy and local churches and the wider community are mutually beneficial. A good example is the relationship with the international PAIS organisation whose gap year students support Christian lunchtime activities. In its turn the academy has hosted start of the year training for new recruits. Another is the way in which clergy lead collective worship and musicians from the academy contribute to church services.

