

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### St James's Church of England Primary School

<b>Address</b>	Kingsway, Wollaston, Stourbridge DY8 4RU		
<b>Date of inspection</b>	28/03/2019	<b>Status of school</b>	Voluntary Aided
<b>Diocese</b>	Worcester	<b>URN</b>	103851

<b>Overall Judgement</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?		
<b>Additional Judgements</b>		
<b>The impact of collective worship</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>The effectiveness of religious education (RE)</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

#### School context

St James's Church of England Primary School is a primary school with 407 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national averages. The headteacher has been in post for eight years and since the last inspection there has been a new deputy headteacher and changes in middle leadership.

#### The school's Christian vision

Faith: *So God created man in His own image.*  
Friendship: *Follow me & I will make you fishers of people.*  
Fulfilment: *Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid.*

#### Key findings

- St James's has a highly cohesive Christian vision and set of values which together form the reference point for strategic decisions and the day-to-day running of the school. The biblically-rooted themes of valuing every child, building community and doing the best for all, guide and transform the lives of pupils.
- Inspired by the school's vision, pupils develop a remarkable ability to question and challenge unfairness and injustice. As a result, they take highly effective social action.
- The school has developed exceptional partnerships with the church and other local schools. These help to strengthen the local community and enrich the lives of pupils and families across the local area.
- The school has a highly innovative approach to prayer which enables pupils to gain a deep understanding of the place of prayer in their lives.
- Inspirational and challenging religious education (RE) enables all pupils to engage with the big questions of life with confidence and integrity.

#### Areas for development

- Further strengthen the cohesion of the school's Christian vision by ensuring that all policies are informed by the vision.
- Share St James's highly effective practice in RE with other schools so that the existing strong partnerships continue to grow and flourish.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

### Inspection findings

Working in partnership with parents and pupils, school leaders have developed a rich and highly cohesive vision for their school. This vision is deeply rooted in the Bible and all at St James's have a clear understanding of what the vision looks like in practice and how it is inspired by Scripture. The vision guides governors when they make strategic decisions, such as appointing a member of staff to build community links, and when they monitor the effectiveness of the school. It also provides a reference point for staff as they make daily decisions. Policies are being reviewed to reflect the vision, but this process is not complete.

Central to this vision is the unique importance of every pupil created in God's image and the passionate desire that everyone should flourish. Leaders constantly ask themselves, 'Am I providing every pupil with every opportunity to enable them to meet their dreams?' Pupils have a clear understanding of what the vision means to them. They speak eloquently about 'faith' teaching them to respect all people, 'friendship' being how they gather together as a loving community, and 'fulfilment' being about their hopes and aspirations. One pupil commented, 'our teachers help us to fulfil our dreams'. The school lives its vision through its Christian values and reviews these to ensure that they remain relevant. Families who are new to the school are struck by the way the values underpin everything. As one pupil said, 'the values bring the community together and are what we base our lives on'. This grounding sets children up for life. Parents speak powerfully of how values taught at St James's have helped their children to flourish at secondary school and beyond.

One way in which the school lives out its vision is through partnerships of exceptional depth and effectiveness which enable children and adults to flourish within the wider community. Over the past seven years, the school's worship forums for pupils in local schools have been attended by around two thousand children. This has equipped them to enrich the quality of collective worship in their own schools. The annual Stourbridge Unity Service, which in recent years has been co-ordinated by the school, is strengthening the cohesion of the local community. Successful prayer days are helping to build links between different Christian denominations in the area.

Pupils achieve well at St James's. The belief that every child is created in the image of God inspires staff to ensure that every child achieves, regardless of any circumstance which might hold them back. The result is that disadvantaged pupils make good progress and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make exceptional progress. Pupils have high aspirations to succeed. They talk about courage and perseverance - two of the school's values - as underpinning their outlook on life. Success is not measured solely by academic achievement and the school provides good support for wellbeing and mental health. The governors' decision to prioritise spending to fund a family support worker – a key appointment in supporting pupils' wellbeing - is an example of how the school's vision is used to guide important decision making. Staff at St James's have thought carefully about what spirituality means for them and use this shared understanding to plan highly effective experiences of spirituality in different subjects from Reception to Year 6. The result is that pupils grow and flourish in their appreciation of spiritual experiences in all aspects of life.

St James's is founded on very strong relationships and a deeply-rooted sense of community. Through excellent teaching of the school's Christian values, pupils learn the importance of respecting all people and celebrating difference and diversity. This is underpinned by what pupils call the 'key value' of forgiveness. As a result, behaviour is of a high standard and children learn to live in harmony with those with whom they may not agree.

The 'St James's family' is a phrase that is widely used to describe the strong sense of community. While this is a family which cares for its members, it also places high value on looking outwards and making pupils aware of issues on a global scale. The Classrooms in the Clouds project, which aims to improve the quality of education in Nepal, is about much more than fundraising. Through the project, pupils develop a keen sense of fairness and justice in context. They want the children in Nepal to have as good an education as they do, but also appreciate the good things about life in Nepal and ways in which they can learn from the Nepalese. The result of this imaginative work is that pupils at St James's are passionate and articulate in their pursuit of social justice. This is seen in a variety of pupil-led initiatives, notably work on reduction of plastic use, currently being undertaken by the school.

Collective worship is a considerable strength of St James's and is highly inclusive. It builds a strong sense of community. This is another example of how the vision is lived out in all aspects of school life. Worship allows all to participate with integrity, regardless of their faith. This is evident in the termly celebration of a school Eucharist. The school and local church have taken an innovative approach to developing this, by ensuring that both consecrated wafers and ordinary bread are shared during the service. This enables all to be involved if they wish to and does not exclude those who have not been confirmed. Pupils gain a good understanding of biblical stories and the meaning behind them. Through imaginative interpretations of key festivals, such as the Easter Labyrinth, pupils explore the Church's year in depth and gain a good understanding of how this relates to the life of Jesus. Pupils play a big part in planning and leading worship and, along with staff and governors, regularly evaluate its quality and impact. As a result, worship is constantly being improved and refined to meet the needs of the school and wider community.

The school's approach to prayer is innovative and creative because leaders want prayer to be something which is normal and comfortable for pupils. The school and its grounds are rich in places to pray and different means of articulating prayer, but pupils know that they can pray anywhere and whenever they like. Pupils develop remarkable confidence and frequently pray spontaneously during worship. As a result of all this, pupils develop a deep understanding of the place of prayer in their lives. One pupil remarked that praying made him 'feel calm because God is always there to guide you'. The local church is closely connected with the development of prayer in the school and has recently funded resources to further develop classroom prayer and reflection areas. The high quality of prayer in the school has caused the church to reflect on how it structures and articulates prayer in its own services.

Pupils are inspired and enthused by RE. The RE curriculum is well-planned and challenges pupils to explore their own beliefs. This is a key element of RE and reflects the school's vision to develop every child as a unique individual. Use of the 'Understanding Christianity' materials ensures that the curriculum for Christianity is rich and deep. Imaginative approaches in teaching religions other than Christianity ensure that pupils gain a good knowledge of a variety of faiths. They particularly enjoy this aspect of RE and recognise how important it is to understand what different people believe, so that they can learn to live in harmony with one another. Pupils confidently articulate their opinions, often substantiated by theological accounts, in a safe, non-judgemental environment. RE is very well led and staff assessment is exceptionally detailed and informative, meaning that teachers know exactly what their pupils have understood and how they can challenge them to improve.



**The effectiveness of RE is Excellent**

In general, pupils attain as well in RE as they do in English and mathematics, often better. This is due to the creative and inspiring teaching which is always at least good and often excellent. Pupils who find other academic subjects difficult are able to flourish in RE where the high level of religious literacy they gain enables them to express their opinions with confidence. Even the very youngest pupils are able to engage with questions such as 'where is God?' The standard of work in pupils' books is of a very high quality and reflects the importance with which the subject is viewed.

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