

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

## St James Church of England VC Primary School, Handsworth

**Address** Sandwell Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, United Kingdom, B21 8NH

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

**Overall grade** **Good**

**The impact of collective worship** **Good**

### School’s vision

'Let all that you do be done in love.' Corinthians 16:14 Leaders and staff strive for every child to live life in all its fullness being the best that they can be today and in the future. The school community is encouraged to grow together and flourish through our core value of love. Let your light shine; Opportunities for all; Value one another; Enriching education.

### Key findings

- Empowering leadership, embraced by everyone, has a strong inclusive approach to wellbeing and the importance placed on each individual. This embodies the school vision 'let all that you do be done in love' and enables everyone to flourish as the person they were created to be.
- In serving the community with love, outstanding pastoral care is generously given by a dedicated staff team. This is highly valued by families and their children.
- Pupils are valued and their voice is heard. The Christian vision and associated values give pupils confidence to challenge injustice and make a difference to their community and beyond. They think deeply, ask big questions and build strong and meaningful relationships.
- Collective worship is inclusive, in line with the vision and enjoyed by all. Pupils do not yet have regular opportunities to plan, lead and evaluate their own independent acts of worship.
- Religious education (RE) at St James is given high priority. It is challenging, engaging and flows from the vision. An enquiry based approach empowers pupils to explore their own and others' beliefs with genuine curiosity, respect and understanding within a highly multicultural setting.

### Areas for development

- Leaders, including governors to develop more systematic approaches for monitoring the impact of the school's Christian vision and distinctiveness. This is to ensure that it more explicitly leads to continuous improvement as a Church school.
- Ensure there is a clear shared definition of spirituality so that staff can plan for deepening experiences across the curriculum and throughout the school.
- Extend pupils involvement and independence in leading, planning and evaluating collective worship to further enrich the worship life of the school.

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

Love is the heartbeat of St James. The deeply considered Christian vision is evident as unconditional love in action. It strongly reflects the school context and the community it serves. The vision motivates every aspect of school life and transforms lives. The headteacher talks passionately about her determination to ensure every child's needs are met which results in a loving, supportive, inclusive culture. Inspired by the vision, there is an openness and honesty in relationships throughout the school. Everyone is free to be themselves whilst respecting the worth of others. Consequently, an atmosphere of harmonious calm permeates this multi-faith community. The vision of love draws school, church, home and community into one big family.

Staff describe the school team as a family who love and support one another. This results in excellent relationships and high staff morale. The whole school community is dedicated to meeting the needs of individuals to enable all to 'let their light shine'. Vulnerable pupils, and those with special needs and/or disabilities are extremely well supported. Every pupil is nurtured and thrives. Adults receive personal and professional development that promotes their wellbeing and enables them to support pupils to achieve their best. This supports middle leadership and the development of future school leaders extremely well. Mutual respect and excellent behaviour emanate from such values as community, acceptance, and forgiveness. Harmonious relationships are a result of a very strong culture of embracing, respecting, and understanding difference and diversity.

'Let all that you do be done in love' drives all strategic decisions. Governors' spending priorities reflect and promote the school's focus upon meeting the needs of each pupil effectively, so that all can grow and flourish. For example, every child has trips and clubs paid for to ensure that no one is excluded. Current monitoring systems need to be strengthened and have a sharper focus. This is so that leaders, including governors can evaluate the school's Christian vision and distinctiveness ensuring continuous church school improvement. The recently reviewed broad and balanced curriculum has the vision of love at its core. It is complemented by a myriad of exciting enrichment activities. These include artistic, cultural, and sporting activities which indicate the aspirational, holistic, and inclusive view of education running through the school. Staff understand the limited horizons of some pupils and ensure that time in school raises ambitions for the future. At present, there isn't a common understanding of the concept of spirituality. This means that times when spirituality might be developed tend to be in the moment rather than planned for. Consequently, planning does not foster a progressive understanding of how spirituality can be built on in all areas of the curriculum as the children mature.

As a direct outworking of the vision, pupils instantly recognise and are keen to challenge inequality and injustice. As a result of a weekly generation changers project, older pupils speak with remarkable insight of the issues facing Palestine and Ukraine. They recognise with maturity, the rights of people to have a voice and be treated with humanity. Pupils are clear that they can support those in need through prayer, fundraising and personal action. Thus, the seeds of courageous advocacy are being sown in their hearts and understanding.

Parents recognise that staff go 'above and beyond' for their children to meet individual needs. Leaders cite that love for the community was strengthened during the pandemic. School staff provided food parcels to those in need. Work packs were delivered to pupils with no internet and some pupils read their books to staff over the phone. Weekly wellbeing checks were carried out with every family. These actions exemplify the all-embracing strength of the school's Christian vision. Life for many pupils can be complex so the school is a haven, providing love, security and structure in their lives. The pupils feel safe and happy and are keen to learn. Several parents commented that their children 'love coming to school' because 'staff have got time for the pupils and know each one of them as an individual.'

Collective worship explores and celebrates a range of world faiths and festivals. As a result, pupils talk confidently and respectfully about similarities and differences between different faiths. The collective worship programme is inclusive and invitational. This means that pupils and adults from various faith and non-faith backgrounds feel comfortable joining in and benefit from it. Engagement in worship is consequently strong. Collective worship affirms the school's Christian vision and values. This is demonstrated in the beautifully presented reflection logs. These clearly evidence the impact of collective worship on the living out of the

vision in the pupils' everyday lives. Regular opportunities for prayer and reflection support and develop pupils' personal and spiritual development. The worship council attend meetings where they influence, direct, and organise whole school worship events. They discuss matters of faith and promote the school's vision, values and ethos. In addition to this, they also resource and run the reflection area that can be used by the whole school. When the children need some space and quiet time to think or maybe say a prayer, they can visit this area. St James has strong links with the local church. There are several school services held in church, such as Christmas and Easter. One of the after-school clubs takes place in the church and the school choir have performed at a Sunday service. Pupils take responsibility for aspects of worship, however at present do not regularly independently plan, lead and evaluate worship.

RE is given a high status within the school and is well led. Regular monitoring and self-evaluation lead to improvements in provision. Through sharing their own rich knowledge and life experiences, pupils gain a deep understanding of the faiths in their community. They feel safe to express their own beliefs and convictions in lessons. Throughout the engaging RE curriculum, children are encouraged to be creative, imaginative, curious, debate, have discussion and show independence. RE plays an important role alongside other subjects in promoting social awareness, British values and making them aware of their rights and responsibilities as global citizens. Well-presented work and discussions with pupils provide evidence of high quality and inspirational teaching. Pupils bubble with enthusiasm when talking about their learning in RE. Their age-appropriate knowledge and understanding is strong. Effective assessment procedures inform planning. There is a positive relationship with the diocese. St James engages in training opportunities and guidance from the diocese that support and positively impact the Christian distinctiveness. St James' family is a truly special multi-faith community where everyone grows and flourishes together with love at the heart of everything.

### Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	06 May 2022	URN	103401
Date of previous inspection	13 March 2015		
School status	Voluntary controlled	NOR	419
Name of Multi Academy Trust or Federation			
Diocese or Methodist Circuit	Birmingham		
Headteacher	Sarah Cross		
Proportion of pupils deemed to be disadvantaged	Above National Average		
Proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	In Line with National Average		
Additional significant information (if needed)	Pupils on roll are from richly diverse backgrounds and cultures. A high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.		
Inspector's name	Kerry Geddis	No.	0955