

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

<b>St James Church School, Taunton</b>	
Address	Cranmer Road, Taunton, TA1 1XU
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
<p>'Love God, Love Others, Love Ourselves'</p> <p>As a Church school we want our community to learn from the Bible and other books. (Luke 10: 27) We want children to love, respect and care about others. (Corinthians 13: 4-6) We want children to love themselves and be proud of what they have achieved. (Genesis 1: 31)</p>
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong leadership provided by the Headteacher is well supported by senior leaders and governors. Together, as an expression of the school's vision they work hard to create a welcoming, loving and secure environment in which pupils and their families can flourish.</li> <li>• The school's vision is implicitly, rather than explicitly lived out. This loving community places pupils at the heart of school life. Leaders and staff are committed to teaching pupils how to live well together and work hard to equip them to be good citizens. Pupils have yet to discover how they can make a difference to their wider world.</li> <li>• The school enjoys a strong partnership with St James' Church. Members of the congregation, working with the charity Transforming Lives For Good, make a positive difference to the wellbeing of pupils.</li> <li>• Teachers know their pupils well and ensure that active learning in religious education (RE) enables a greater level of pupil participation. However, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop skills such as analysis, interpretation and evaluation.</li> <li>• Pupils are active participants in collective worship which supports their spiritual development. However, there are less opportunities available to support the spiritual flourishing of adults within the community.</li> </ul>
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the planning of the RE curriculum to ensure that pupils are given regular opportunities to engage more deeply with their work. Build in regular opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of analysis, interpretation and evaluation.</li> <li>• Develop pupils' awareness of the wider world, supporting them to identify and respond to injustice so that they may become agents of change.</li> <li>• Extend opportunities for the spiritual flourishing of adults within the school community.</li> </ul>



## Inspection findings

The strong leadership provided by the headteacher is well supported by senior leaders and governors. Together as an expression of the school's vision they create a welcoming, safe and loving environment in which pupils and their families can flourish. The whole staff team know the community they serve extremely well. The school's vision 'Love God, Love Others, Love Ourselves' is implicitly, rather than explicitly lived out within this rich and diverse community.

The vision is evident in the daily life of the school. This is a loving community that places pupils and their families at the very heart of school life.

All staff share the desire to really make a difference, particularly to the most vulnerable. Clear systems of support are in place to strengthen the emotional wellbeing of pupils such as that provided by emotional literacy support assistants and a school-based counsellor. Pupils appreciate the individualised support given and speak openly of strategies they use which help them. They respond particularly well to the token system which supports the behaviour policy. Pupils explain how it serves as an incentive to work more collaboratively with one another and helps them to understand how their behaviour impacts others. 'Love others' plays a significant role within the life of the school life, impacting upon relationships and so enabling all to live well together.

Parents feel known, cared for and well supported by the school staff. Although parents do not confidently articulate the vision, they clearly experience the vision in the life of the school. One parent, very new to the country, spoke passionately of the overwhelming love and support that both her and her child have received. The church also works effectively with the school to provide much needed support for the wider community, including the provision of food parcels during the pandemic. Some church members work with the charity Transforming Lives Group (TLG) as volunteers to serve as mentors for individual pupils. Parents speak positively about the impact of this support. They also appreciate the opportunity to regularly attend church services with their children. The school feels well supported by the church. Some staff choose to attend the prayer group run by the church and appreciate the prayer support provided.

The school enjoys a positive relationship with both the Diocese and the Bath and Wells Academy Trust. The trustees know staff well and utilise their strengths to support the flourishing of others, seen for example, in the way the headteacher serves as a mentor to new headteachers. Governors also know their school well and have some mechanisms in place to ensure that the impact of the school's vision is monitored, although this could be formalised to ensure greater rigour.

Driven by the vision to 'love others and love ourselves' staff work hard to promote their Christian values, supporting the character and moral development of pupils to equip them for adult life. This includes regular support by police community support officers who provide a positive role model both to pupils and wider community. Older pupils enjoy the opportunity to act as 'mini police officers', helping to make a difference within the school community. Pupils also have opportunities to contribute and make a difference to the life of the school through various action groups established to support wellbeing, eco matters, ethos and active lifestyles. They enjoy the responsibility and potential influence this brings, although development of these groups seem to still be in their infancy and consequently their impact seems limited. Pupils do not readily identify and challenge injustice within their wider world and require further support to equip them to become agents of change.

Collective worship is engaging and effectively supports the moral development of pupils. It



provides some support for their spiritual flourishing. Worship is invitational and inclusive, giving them opportunities to participate and lead aspects of worship. Pupils also enjoy the opportunity they are given to contribute to the development of worship through being part of the ethos action group. Pupils are familiar with some Anglican traditions of worship including the lighting of a candle at the beginning of worship, serving as a visual reminder of the light of Christ. Pupils recognise the importance of prayer as part of their worship and regularly use the Lord's prayer and their own school prayer. They also enjoy contributing to worship by writing their own prayers to use. Each class has their own reflection area which provides an opportunity for pupils to think and reflect upon a big question. The school is beginning to explore other means of supporting the spiritual development of pupils.

Staff feel very well supported and nurtured in their roles. This has resulted in several members of staff confidently stepping out into new roles within the team. There is a high priority placed upon the wellbeing of staff who are invited to access a range of support if they wish, such as meeting with the school counsellor. Although prayer support is readily available for staff from the church prayer group, other opportunities to support the spiritual flourishing of staff are somewhat limited.

The RE curriculum ensures coverage of Christianity and a range of major world religions. Planning is built around the 'Understanding Christianity' resource and the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils enjoy RE lessons and know that it is important to learn about the diverse world in which they live. Teachers know their pupils well and ensure that active learning in religious education enables a greater level of pupil participation. Work in floor books demonstrate that pupils have many opportunities to practically engage with aspects of their learning. However, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop and deepen skills such as analysis, interpretation and evaluation. Staff are supported by the school's own RE subject leader, but there have been limited opportunities for teachers to receive high quality, external professional development in RE.

Regardless of background or ability, love, dignity and respect are shown to everyone in this school community. The vision's strapline 'Love God, Love Others, Love Ourselves' is fully embedded in the life of this school, creating a rich and truly supportive environment in which all are able to flourish.

Information			
School	St James Church School, Taunton	Inspection date	21 October 2022
URN	139324	VC/VA/ Academy	Academy
Diocese/District	Bath & Wells	Pupils on roll	382
MAT/Federation	BWMAT (Taunton Hub)		
Headteacher	Nigel Johnson		
Chair of Governors	Bath and Wells Multi-Academy Trust		
Inspector	Jayne Pavlou	No.	628