

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St James Church of England Junior School, Whitehaven	
Address	Wellington Row, Whitehaven, CA28 7HG
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
With exploring minds and faith, we grow and learn together. All here follow The St James' Way: Be Kind, Be Respectful, Give Your All which is rooted in the Christian Values of Peace, Compassion, Friendship, Forgiveness, Thankfulness and Endurance. Using Psalm 119v105 we use 'Your Word' as a light to guide children on their paths through life.
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Christian vision very effectively meets the needs of the pupils and adults it is designed to serve. The 'St James' Way' and its biblical underpinning are well known and understood by the school community. This is despite it not always being referred to in school policies. Pupils are inspired to choose the right path in life. • Pupils and adults are given multiple opportunities to explore, grow and learn. The school is on a journey of encouraging and supporting the spiritual development of pupils and adults. • Pupils are articulate ambassadors for their school and for God's world. They speak with eloquence about the impact of the Christian vision on their learning. They live well together and celebrate difference and diversity. • The provision of inspirational and impactful collective worship means that pupils and adults encounter the teachings of Jesus, reflect on their way of living and grow spiritually. Clergy from St James' Church make a very valuable contribution to the worship life of the school. • Religious education (RE) has high priority. Leadership is strong and takes due account of diocesan advice. Teachers ensure that lessons provide a safe space for pupils to articulate a balanced and respectful understanding. Currently the school has not paid visits to places of worship other than church nor had visitors from faiths other than Christianity.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the Christian vision is referred to in all policies so that everyone continues to know how it underpins and drives the work of the school. • Ensure that the recent work on spirituality continues to be developed further, embedded and sustained. This is so that all pupils are supported in their spiritual development. • Following the COVID pandemic, ensure that pupils' knowledge of Christianity as a living and diverse faith and of a range of religions and world views are further enhanced by visits and visitors.



Inspection findings

This is a school where pupils and adults flourish as a result of a Christian vision that is deeply rooted in biblical teaching. It is the foundation of and at the forefront of school life. It unites, bonds and weaves through everything. The words of the vision are part of the ordinary everyday language of pupils, families, staff and governors. They refer to a guiding light for their paths through life and to 'The St James' Way' as the way that things are done in school. They know the scallop shell on the school logo derives from the pilgrimage routes followed to the shrine of St James. Each of the school's Christian values has been chosen carefully and is exemplified through a bible story, so pupils easily remember the messages. The Christian vision drives the work of the school but is not always referred to in policies. Parents are given opportunities to engage with the vision, values, spiritual development and RE through their children's homework tasks. Parents say the school 'sets pupils up for life'. Governors make a strong Christian contribution to leadership. They are frequent visitors in school and monitor and evaluate school effectiveness.

Pupils enjoy coming to school, as evidenced by the above average attendance figures. They are afforded a wide variety of rich experiences and benefit from an abundance of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils are enabled to explore, grow and learn together, both in and out of school. In the words of the vision, they are guided on their path through life. Pupils have a positive opinion of the school and talk about growing mentally and physically. Staff care for, support and encourage pupils, and adapt to meet individual needs. There is a love of learning, pupils are engaged and enthusiastic and make good progress. Pupils say, 'all staff like hearing our opinions.' Those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and their families, are well supported by a strong and approachable team. A parent described how, if necessary, staff 'will reach out and take pupils' hands to help them into school'.

In line with the 'exploring minds and faith' words of the Christian vision, pupils are given numerous opportunities to develop spiritually. Training for staff and governors has enhanced provision for spiritual development and 'spirit trees' have been introduced. The healthy, nourishing roots of the trees are made up of the multiple organisations and partnerships the school engages with. The trees bear leaves and fruit, which pupils say are experiences such as beautiful sunsets. They describe how sharing these experiences uplifts the spirits of everyone. Leaders are currently engaged in activities that will further develop spiritual opportunities.

Pupils and adults grow, learn and live well together. There is a great deal of happiness, kindness, friendliness, excitement and joy in school. Pupils are keen to tell visitors about their school and are articulate in their conversations. Parents are very positive about this popular school. Pupils know how good behaviour will benefit them and that there is a collaborative approach to succeeding. There is a remarkably wide variety of outdoor play and social activities for pupils. One result of the outworking of the Christian vision is the deep respect pupils have for all people. This includes those who may be different from themselves. It was exemplified on the day of the inspection by pupils being excitedly engaged in wheelchair basketball. Pupils learn about past and present individuals who have had a profound impact in the world. This inspires everyone to engage in social action and to challenge injustice. Examples of this are projects to remove plastic from the harbour and to help the local pine marten population. Pupils say, 'we must be the change we want to see in the world'. There are multiple opportunities for pupils to take on leadership responsibilities. These include, class ambassadors, lunchtime helpers, librarians and the Craze It Crew. Pupils' understanding of future career opportunities is enhanced through planned events. These

also teach children to ask ‘big questions’ about global life. Leaders are exploring opportunities to develop a global link which will further enrich pupil comprehension of global issues. A range of mechanisms are in place both within school and through outside agencies to ensure that everyone’s mental health and wellbeing is sustained. Staff enjoy working as a team and new members feel very well supported. They are given every encouragement and opportunity to successfully develop their careers.

Daily collective worship is part of the rhythm of school life. Through a wide variety of activities, pupils are very familiar with the teachings of Jesus. They enjoy worship and are inspired to share their own ideas, reflect and act by following in his footsteps. Joyous singing uplifts the spirits. Weekly class worship provides time and space for exploring, reflecting and developing spiritually. Pupils talk about how much they enjoy this special time. During Friday worship, pupils are delighted to receive certificates for living out the Christian values. A remarkable and memory-making worship occurred on the summit of a Lakeland Fell. The school population climbed it to raise money for The Countryfile Ramble for BBC Children in Need. The pupil collective worship committee play an active part in the worship and prayer life of the school. They regularly evaluate worship and relish providing prayer and reflection opportunities in the outdoor gazebo. Prayer is a natural part of school life. The former vicar was a very valuable member of the school community. Now, despite a current vacancy for a vicar, a deep relationship with the church continues through a lay reader. Pupils compete to design artwork for the parish magazine cover. The church is used frequently and regularly for services, workshops, displays and events. When they join the school, the church presents each pupil with a Bible to keep for their journey through life.

There is a strong relationship with the Diocese of Carlisle. School leaders engage well, listen to and act on advice. Examples of this are evident in RE which is well-led and meets the Statement of Entitlement. Class teachers have been provided with training and support to ensure the lessons they deliver are very effective. They make connections across the curriculum. Pupils learn about similarities and differences between faiths and know that belief and practice differs within faiths. Members of the school population with a range of beliefs happily contribute to learning. Everyone’s opinions are valued and respected. Local and global links that will further enhance pupils’ knowledge and understanding are yet to be re-established following the covid pandemic. Assessment shows that pupils make good progress.

There is a very strong feeling of family, of being welcome and of belonging at St James’.

Information			
School	St James Church of England Junior School, Whitehaven	Inspection date	25 April 2023
URN	112298	VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary controlled
Diocese/District	Carlisle	Pupils on roll	161
Headteacher	Andrew Beattie		
Chair of Governors	Jonathan Spencer		
Inspector	Janet Tringham	No.	2134