

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

St James Church of England Primary Academy, Longdon	
Address	Brook End, Longdon, Rugeley, WS15 4PL
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>'Growing and learning together with faith'</p> <p>Together through faith we will aspire to grow in our understanding of ourselves, in our abilities and in our knowledge of God's wonderful diverse world.</p> <p>'Planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish.' Psalm 92:13</p>
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>St James is characterised by an inclusive, caring culture, where all are nurtured and flourish as precious children of God. The distinctively Christian vision and associated values inform decisions and practice, making a tangible difference to the whole school community. However, the vision is not explicitly communicated through key policies or evaluated by governors. Consequently, the impact is not fully realised.</li> <li>Driven by the Christian vision, the school's curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and is a strength of the school. However, opportunities for spiritual development are sometimes missed as a shared view of what spirituality means is not evident.</li> <li>Pupils are valued and their voice is heard. The Christian vision and values give pupils confidence to challenge injustice and make a tangible difference in their community and beyond. They think deeply, ask 'big questions', and build meaningful relationships.</li> <li>Collective worship, springing from the Christian vision, is highly inclusive and is enriched by strong opportunities for pupil leadership. This embeds the school's Christian values, influencing the lives of both pupils and staff and enabling them to flourish.</li> <li>Challenging and engaging religious education (RE) supports the development of the whole child through questioning, enquiry and creativity. However, this is not formally monitored and evaluated by governors. Pupils have a strong respectful understanding of religion and apply meaning from this to their own lives.</li> </ul>
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop opportunities for the Local Academy Committee to formally evaluate the impact of the vision, worship and RE through robust monitoring.</li> <li>Strengthen the impact of spirituality through a shared understanding of spiritual development in RE, collective worship and across the curriculum.</li> <li>Embed the Christian vision across the whole life of the school so that key policies and practices reflect the vision. Through this, ensure the whole school community fully understand the vision, enabling all learners to flourish.</li> </ul>

## Inspection findings

At St James, the Christian vision, to grow through faith, builds a tangible sense of community and belonging. This vision is driven primarily through the school's Christian values, which are infused into the whole life and work of the school. However, key policies and practices do not explicitly reflect the vision, so this is not fully owned and understood by everyone. Leaders at all levels are highly engaged in building on the school's Christian foundations. This informs strong mutually supportive partnerships with the local community, parish, diocese and Trust, enriching the life of the school. Through this, senior leaders make a significant impact on other schools within the Trust. Shared governance across two schools maintains the distinctiveness of St James school, whilst benefiting from collaboration and a common strategic overview. Governors, as the Local Area Committee, are highly involved in the life of the school and monitor provision and progress regularly. However, governors do not currently evaluate the impact of the vision, collective worship and RE though this rigorous monitoring cycle. Priority is given to staff development and wellbeing, though a well-managed workload and access to high quality training and support.

A commitment that, 'no-one is left behind' ensures all pupils are supported to thrive within an embedded culture of high attainment. This is articulated as a clear expression of the Christian vision that, 'planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish'. Staff know every child 'inside out' as individuals and share a passionate commitment to meet their needs. Consequently, Christian love is consistently modelled to the pupils through high expectations and the support to achieve them. Pupils are empowered to be the best possible version of themselves and are proud of what they achieve. Whilst opportunities exist that support pupils' spiritual development, the school lacks clarity on what spiritual development really means for them. Therefore, they do not take full advantage of opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to question and explore spirituality. Staff strengths and expertise are used to develop a cohesive and relevant curriculum. This impacts positively on attitudes to learning, with pupils engaged and hungry to learn.

St James is characterised by the tangible care that pervades the whole school community. In line with the Christian vision, pupils grow in their understanding of themselves. Through this, their perspectives are widened so they routinely put others before themselves. The school has embraced Fairtrade and pupils are passionate about challenging injustices through this. As a child rightly noted, 'this isn't just an award; it's something we live because we want to make our world fair'. Pupils are 'outraged' by what they see as gross inequality nationally and globally and want to make a difference. They regularly identify causes themselves and this has recently included Water Aid and the Ukraine appeal. This culture of social action is modelled by leaders, who serve the Trust on the environmental sustainability group.

Pupils know that all staff are available to guide and nurture them. They appreciate, and benefit from, the compassionate support available to foster a culture of positive mental health and wellbeing. This is firmly rooted in the Christian vision, with everyone given the care, encouragement and opportunity to, 'grow and learn together with faith'. Through a deep rooted culture of love and care for one another, pupils treat each other well. Opportunity to reflect on their actions ensures positive behaviour is a strength of the school. However, the way this is underpinned by Christian distinctiveness is underdeveloped as the behaviour policy is not rooted in the vision.

At St James, an all-encompassing culture of love and acceptance stems from the Christian vision. Its words, 'grow in our knowledge of God's wonderful diverse world', reflect the powerful culture of openness and mutual respect. All pupils, including those with special

educational needs and/or disabilities, are valued and accepted by the whole school community. Through an effective curriculum, pupils understand choices in relationships and celebrate difference and diversity. As a pupil rightly commented, 'no matter who you are, you are always welcome because our school represents God'. Pupils feel respected as individuals and, therefore, are respectful of others as a natural outworking of the school's values.

Collective worship is given great importance as the cornerstone of the school day. All staff participate and feel valued as part of the school community. Worship flows from the Christian vision and supports pupils' biblical understanding. Regular reference to news and events enriches pupils with wider perspectives and gives opportunity to apply meaning to their own lives. For example, National Bravery Week is linked with the story of Daniel, showing we should do the right thing, even when afraid. Worship councillors regularly lead provision for classes of younger pupils, modelling the Christian vision and values and leading by example. Pupil questionnaires, used to evaluate collective worship, have led to changes including increased pupil leadership and more topical content. Deeply embedded opportunities for prayer are valued by pupils and staff. Provision, ably supported by local clergy, includes playdough prayers, sorry prayers that are washed away and class prayer bags. A recognition that faith is personal leads to invitational and individual prayer provision. This nurtures the spiritual development needs of the whole school community.

RE at St James is a natural articulation of the Christian vision to grow in knowledge and understanding through faith. An engaging, active curriculum is built on opportunities for pupils to question, think deeply and form their own beliefs. Activities in church are used effectively to reinforce pupils' concrete understanding, such as through modelling baptisms and weddings. An annual faith week and program of visits engenders a secure respectful understanding and appreciation of religious belief and practices. Activities are followed up, and effectively reinforced, through 'thinking questions' stickers, where pupils reflect later on what they have learned. RE is exceptionally well-led by a specialist whose passion for the subject is infectious. Astute monitoring significantly improves provision in RE, including recent work on flow and progression. Staff are well supported by the Trust and diocese, so regularly benefit from high quality support and opportunities for development. This includes supporting other schools through contributing to RE hubs and a Trust 'quality learning circle'.

Information			
School	St James Church of England Primary Academy, Longdon	Inspection date	27 June 2023
URN	143347	VC/VA/Academy	Academy
Diocese/District	Lichfield	Pupils on roll	100
MAT/Federation	St Chad's Academies Trust		
Executive Head Teacher	Chris Dobson		
Chair of Governors	Karen Taylor		
Inspector	John Clapham	No.	775