

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St James' Church of England First School and Nursery	
Address	Park Lane, Alderholt, Dorset, SP6 3AJ
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	Requires Improvement
The impact of collective worship	Good

School's vision
<p>Make great choices. Be our best. The Wise and Foolish Builders, Matthew 7:24-27</p>
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's Christian vision encourages pupils to make good choices. However, it is not effectively driving policy and practice. The local school committee do not ensure a rigorous or systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating the school as a church school. • The school receives good support from their linked parish church and the local chapel. This enables pupils to experience a range of Anglican traditions and styles of worship which they look forward to and enjoy. • The school is a warm, welcoming, supportive community with strong relationships across the school. Although pupils are encouraged to 'be their best', there are limited opportunities for them to look beyond their school community and understand how they can challenge injustice in the wider global society. • There has been some initial work around the provision for spiritual development by school leaders. However, there is limited shared understanding or common language for spiritual development and no cohesive links within collective worship and the curriculum. Consequently, the spiritual flourishing of adults and pupils is not well supported. • The planning for religious education (RE) has been reviewed and developed to ensure better coverage of Christianity and world faiths. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to learn about Christianity as a world faith.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leaders and local school committee members need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - deepen their understanding of the school's Christian vision ensuring it drives and shapes policy and practice - establish and ensure a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating the school as a church school. • Plan high quality opportunities, using a shared definition and common language, that enable pupils to flourish spiritually in collective worship and the wider curriculum. • Ensure that pupils have opportunities to learn about global diversity and the differences within the world in which they live. Support and equip them to confidently challenge injustice, enabling them to become agents of change.
Inspection findings



St James' First School and Nursery has been on a journey of change over the last few years with almost a complete change of staff since the last SIAMS inspection in 2016. Staff have worked hard to create a warm, welcoming and inclusive school. The addition of the nursery has been particularly successful in establishing the school's place in the local community. Parents speak very fondly of the school describing it as safe, kind and considerate. Families are grateful for the support they receive in times of need and appreciative that worship continued online during covid. Pupils are friendly, respectful of each other and play well together. All staff and local school committee members speak passionately about the school and care deeply about the pupils in their care. Looking after the mental health of pupils and their families is a priority for staff.

The school's Christian vision was established after covid. Staff wanted a vision that was easy to understand and pertinent to the lives of the pupils. Staff, local clergy and the local school committee were involved in the process of choosing the associated Bible verse and creating the vision. Pupils and their parents know the strap line 'Make great choices. Be your best'. Pupils are also able to link the vision to the Bible story of 'The Wise and Foolish Builders'. Parents and teachers report that the vision works well for discussing the choices pupils make. Pupils are also encouraged to 'be their best'. They behave well and use the school's vision to question choices their peers make and encourage them to make wiser choices. However, the vision is not explicit in any of the school's policies, even those most closely linked to church school education: collective worship, RE, spiritual development and relationships and sex education. The vision is not driving school development.

There has been some initial work around the provision for spiritual development by school leaders. A weekly big question is discussed and reflected on by pupils. Incidental moments, such as forest school activities, and 'wow moments' in topic planning, are recognised by the school as spiritual moments that lead to 'awe and wonder'. The school has a spiritual development policy although their chosen model: self, others, world and beyond, isn't widely known by staff. Consequently, there is limited shared understanding and common language for spiritual development amongst staff. There are also no cohesive links with spiritual development within collective worship and the curriculum. As a result, the spiritual flourishing of pupils and adults is not well supported. Opportunities for reflection in collective worship are brief and not intentionally planned, and therefore don't encourage pupils' and adults' spiritual growth.

Pupils who are pilgrims describe themselves as standing up for what they believe, serving as helpful ambassadors for the school. The big question 'What do we stand up for?' inspired some pupils to want to make a difference. Some pilgrims raised money for the RSPCA and visited a local centre to meet staff and animals. A non-uniform day raised money for PE equipment and Harvest contributions are collected annually. Occasionally, a pupil is motivated to want to bring about change; one suggested a litter pick after learning about plastic polluting oceans although this has not taken place yet. Although pupils are encouraged to 'be their best', most social action is currently limited to fund raising activities. Pupils have limited opportunities to understand how they can engage in social action to help the wider global society by challenging injustice and inequality.

There are strong links between the school, the parish church and the local chapel enabling pupils to experience a range of worship styles and Anglican traditions. The parish church generously provides transport so pupils can attend services in church such as Christmas, Easter and the school's fortieth anniversary. Festivals like Harvest and Pentecost, are celebrated in school with clergy. Messy church and church summer clubs are brought to the school to make it easier for families to attend. Pupils are inspired by the regular clergy visits to school to lead collective worship and look forward to them visiting. They remember the Bible stories told and enthusiastically talk about participating in them. Pupils also look forward to celebration worship. Although pupils enjoy participating in worship they don't have opportunities to lead it or to generate the big questions that they discuss weekly.

Although the school's Christian vision is said collectively at the start and end of worship, the main emphasis is on the school values. Anglican traditions, such as music, song, liturgical responses, candles and prayer, are all features of the worship. Pupils are also familiar with the Lord's Prayer and have been taught to do it in sign language. They listen respectfully in worship and there is a quiet, calm atmosphere. Spontaneous prayer is well used; pupils confidently lead prayers and feel privileged to be asked. Older pupils diligently support worship by doing the words for the song and pilgrims light the candles. Although children enjoy worship, there is no clear invitational aspect to it; all children are expected to pray rather than it being invitational. Each act of collective worship is a separate entity. There are no clear threads (such as vision, Bible story, aspect of spiritual development or big question), that link the week's worship planning.

Regular time is dedicated to teach RE. The RE curriculum has been developed this year to achieve a better balance between Christianity and the world faiths taught. Pupils talk confidently about their learning in RE and there is a good balance between the three religions studied: Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. However, the study of Christianity as a world faith needs to be developed to be more inclusive and prepare pupils for the world in which they live. Resources used don't reflect Christianity as a world faith; in all images used by the school, Jesus is depicted as white. Pupils have a good understanding of words such as gospel, trinity and creation but are unsure of key concepts such as salvation and incarnation. Although there is a lot of work in RE books and curriculum coverage is achieved, the expectations for recorded work aren't high enough.

There is some evidence of occasional, informal monitoring by school leaders of the school as a church school. However, the local school committee does not ensure a rigorous or systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating the school as a church school. The school buys into the Partner Service Agreement (PSA) support from the Salisbury Diocese, local providers of continuous professional development (CPD). Staff and local committee members haven't accessed any CPD this year, apart from SIAMS training. As a result, leaders and staff are not fully aware of current developments in church school education. There are gaps in the knowledge and understanding of staff and consequently pupils and adults are not flourishing to the extent that they should be.

Information			
School	St James' First School and Nursery	Inspection date	7 July 2023
URN	142506	VC/VA/Academy	VC
Diocese/District	Salisbury	Pupils on roll	101
MAT/Federation	The Heath Academy Trust		
Headteacher	Jo Hudson		
Chair of Governors/ Trust Board	Justine Horn MAT CEO		
Inspector	Jo French	No.	C.21/22