

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St James's Church of England High School, Farnworth	
Address	Lucas Road, Farnworth, BL4 9RU

School vision

In this Church of England School our core belief is that everyone is created in the image of God. Every member of our family is unique and equally valued.

Our mission is to ensure every young person is nurtured, challenged, and supported so that they go on to fulfil their full potential.

Our school motto is 'Caring for Others † Achieving Excellence' and our Christian vision underpins our St. James's 'Family Values' which are rooted in biblical verse, and are appropriate for our truly comprehensive context and community.

School strengths

- Leaders, including governors and the trustees of Bishop Fraser Trust have established a school community with God at its heart. The school's Christian vision is universally understood by adults and students. Consequently, there is a singularity of purpose that is enabling all to flourish.
- Relationships at all levels are a palpable strength of this harmonious school community. They encourage both adults and students in their personal resilience and enhance their skills for living. Strategies to support mental health and wellbeing are extensive and inspired by the intentions of the Christian vision.
- Collective worship is the core of each school day. Carefully planned, it enables personal reflection, a knowledge of God and an experience the breadth of Christian worship. It contributes to students employing the school's values in daily life and their personal interactions including, beyond the school community.
- Students within St James's experience planned learning and additional opportunities that are exceptional in range. This ensures that everyone can grow academically, spiritually and in their interests and talents. This leads to students who are encouraged and aspirational for their futures as learners and citizens.
- Religious education (RE) is an asset to students' learning journey in all years. The subject leaders and teachers ensure that lessons are purposeful and challenging. This results in students who take responsibility for their achievements. The department contributes significantly to the Christian life of the wider school community.

Areas for development

- Pursue opportunities to share the school's extensive expertise across Bishop Fraser Trust and beyond. This is so that the power of the Christian vision to transform lives has extended impact upon adults and students.
- Implement and embed desired changes to the curriculum in RE. This is so that learning remains interesting and challenging for students and professionally fulfilling for teachers.

Inspection findings

The well-established, collaboratively developed, Christian vision infuses policies, practices and decisions in this welcoming, nurturing Church school. Leaders consider its impact as key to transforming opportunities for all. Leaders, including trustees and governors, understand their community and those of the schools that they generously and expertly support. There is potential for this expertise to be shared more widely and therefore transform more lives. Leaders' responses to pastoral and academic needs are highly personalised. Therefore, all can thrive. Regular, robust, and threaded through all aspects of the school, effective monitoring and evaluation includes students and adults. Analysing the impact of the vision and associated values is the bedrock of this process. This creates a reflective community able to adapt quickly, and wisely, to changing circumstances and obligations. Staff professional development is prioritised for personal fulfilment and to support students in their learning. Excellent partnership working exists with Manchester Diocese. This supports staff development, mental health and wellbeing and an exciting project helping students transition from primary to secondary school. Trust wide collaborations support leadership, chaplaincy and subject development to positive effect.

The Christian vision to 'achieve excellence' is at the heart of the students' experiences. They access outstanding, rich learning and opportunities. Through formal lessons and numerous additional clubs and groups, students develop, expand, nurture and challenge their knowledge, interests and talents. Occasions for students to explore their spirituality are woven through learning and students identify experiences of awe and wonderment. A student expressed this as, 'the mysteries of creation, the power of science and the magic of the arts.' Students mix well within and between age groups. This strengthens the school as a single community flourishing together. Older students organise activities and clubs for younger students acting as mentors and coaches. Year 7 students quickly embrace the learning culture and opportunities of the school. The St James' Entitlement ensures they experience valuable cultural and character-building visits. Aspire assemblies encourage students' hard work and ambitions for their futures. This is frequently the school of choice for parents whose children have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Parents expressed their appreciation of the care and expertise that embraces the whole family. The school expertly identifies vulnerable and/or disadvantaged students and provides the requisite bespoke support. Nurture and sensory spaces enable this culture of personalised care. In its varied approaches, the school is a beacon within the locality and to the trust.

Inspirational collective worship allows moments of calm, reflection and prayerfulness to punctuate the school day. Meticulously planned by the chaplaincy team and routinely involving students, weekly worship themes mirror the church and secular calendars. Using the Bible, music, drama and silence, worship considers the impact upon believers' lives of responding to God's plan. Themes, explored through worship and reflection times, enable individuals to engage with God's message at their own pace. Students explain that this deepens their understanding and appreciation of how to reflect God's plan in their own lives. Voluntary prayer gatherings are available to all. The Eucharist is a cherished school celebration. All attend and clearly understand its importance to Christians. Its celebration is possible because of the close relationship with local clergy. Carefully worded, the school prayer enables all, without compulsion or compromise, to pray together. Remembrance Day services that include the playing of the Last Post and wreath laying, leave lasting impressions. Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter celebrations empower all in recognising the work, example and sacrifice of Jesus. Students speak of applying 'what would Jesus do?' considerations to their actions. Harvest encourages all in their generosity towards others. Inclusive and inviting, worship enables all to experience the breadth of the Anglican traditions.

Rich and powerful, the vision is experienced through the school's important values of patience, service, love, forgiveness and truthfulness. Biblically rooted and known as 'family values', they

shape interactions enabling the building of supportive, respectful relationships. Daily, adults model desirable behaviours. This builds the harmonious community where each person is recognised as made in God’s image. Mistakes are acknowledged, explored, addressed and fresh starts effectively supported. Students appreciate this approach saying they feel safe because adults and students put caring for others above all else. All realise that prejudicial language and actions are unacceptable. Students recognise the school as a place of esteem for all, irrespective of background and lifestyle. Knowing their opinions count, students proudly serve as ambassadors, councillors and school leaders. Support for good mental health and wellbeing is explicit and available to everyone. Trauma informed responses, adult mental health first-aiders and student mental health ambassadors, emphasise the importance leaders place upon emotional support. Highly effective pastoral work and the chaplains’ open-door policy add significantly to this care. School and trust leaders see these as increasingly necessary provisions to maintain the wellbeing and flourishing of all.

St James’s is a just and responsible community. Nurtured, expressed and celebrated through the systems, opportunities and relationships within the school, this culture extends to the wider community. Often in partnership with local churches, students respond to others’ needs. Collaborations with the local Urban Outreach initiative is a particular example. Important issues are highlighted through formal learning, awareness raising activities and interesting, thought-provoking artwork, displays and installations. This includes Holocaust Memorial and International Peace days and Black History Month. The annual 'Spirit of St James' award recognises students who exemplify the school’s values in action. For example, supporting education in a Zambian school and fundraising for a Multiple Sclerosis charity. This typifies students’ independence as agents for change within different contexts. The school’s approach to charitable works of ‘go local, go national, go global’ enables all to respond to needs beyond their own.

RE is a popular subject with students. Teachers, using their specialist subject knowledge and professional skills, design challenging, engaging learning. Lessons bring world religions and worldviews to life. Students respectfully consider the religious beliefs and practices of others and rightly consider RE a safe space to discuss their own beliefs. Programmes of study are carefully sequenced, well balanced and relevant. Students, including those with SEND, achieve good outcomes in the GCSE course they complete in Year 10. This is because they receive good and frequently excellent teaching. Rigorous assessment supports students’ progress. Receiving timely feedback on their work empowers students to make sustained improvements. Post GCSE, Year 11 students embrace the opportunity to explore religious issues and topics. The progressive subject leader has recently adopted the new diocesan syllabus for Key Stage 3 although it requires implementing. Students are expected to think and write like theologians. They use religious terms with ease and accuracy and apply philosophical reasoning to discussions. Students of different faiths and none explain that RE expands their knowledge and understanding of similarities and differences between religions and denominations. This contributes to their appreciation of difference and diversity in society. Creative curriculum organisation and the close liaison with the chaplaincy team results in worship themes and RE learning supporting each other. The department contributes significantly to students' wider school engagement through, for example, the World Peace Day café and enquiry week activities promoting stewardship.

The inspection findings indicate that St James's Church of England High School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
Inspection date	9 October 2023 - 10 October 2023	URN	144046
VC/VA/Academy	Academy	Pupils on roll	1055
Diocese	Manchester		



MAT/Federation	The Bishop Fraser Trust		
Headteacher	Catherine Anderson		
Chair	Lesley Durosomo		
Inspector	Fiona Ashton	No.	860