

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

St John's Church of England VA Primary School, Bethnal Green	
Address	Peel Grove, Bethnal Green, London, E2 9LR

### School vision

In the book of St Matthew chapter 5 Jesus preaches his sermon on the mountain. There are the beatitudes where he blesses the crowd of people, then compares them to light from verse 14 where he says: "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill that cannot be hid."

Our school's focus verse is 15 "Let your light so shine before men so that they may see your good works and come to glorify your father in heaven."

Our school strapline is intertwined with the theological underpinning of all that we do: 'Let Your Light Shine' or 'Letting Our Lights Shine.' The idea of light resonates with who we are in St John's Primary, as we encourage our children to 'shine, flourish and grow' and linkage in with the Church of England's Motto and Jesus' promise of 'Living Life in All its Fullest'

### School strengths

- The school's desire, through its vision, to be a beacon of hope to its community, is a living reality. The vision is inspirational.
- Collective worship is central to the life of the school. Pupils and adults are inspired and develop spiritually during worship.
- The school is a harmonious community. Pupils and adults treat each other very well and celebrate the uniqueness of each individual.
- Pupils have a strong sense of justice and their voice is truly valued here. Pupils see acts of service for each other and the wider community as integral to the school's vision. This helps them to live out the school's values.
- Religious education (RE) is a flagship subject at the school. It is extremely well-led, is rigorous and is highly appreciated by pupils. Pupils' religious literacy is very strong.

### Areas for development

- Continue to enhance the approach to spiritual development through the curriculum, by developing a shared language and understanding for spirituality. Use this to plan opportunities that nurture spiritual development across the curriculum.
- Continue to embed the new RE curriculum so that pupils can further deepen their analysis and evaluation of sacred texts.

### Inspection findings

Inspired by St Matthew 5:14, this school community lives out the vision with courage and conviction. This diverse, multi-cultural and multi-faith school is served well by a vision that is life-affirming. Pupils and adults let their 'light' shine without apology. They understand that their individual flourishing positively impacts on each other and the wider community. Leaders, including governors, know their school exceptionally well and have high expectations and aspirations for the pupils they serve. They monitor and evaluate the impact of the vision consistently. Pupils and adults are inspired to action. The school, as a collective, is also a light that helps others to find and use their

gifts. All pupils, including those who are vulnerable and have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are supported to ensure they flourish. For pupils, letting their light shine is doing good deeds and remaining humble. They continuously excel in all they do- academically, socially and spiritually. Adults also thrive at this school. They feel the vision gives them a sense of purpose and they develop very well professionally.

Inspired by an aspirational vision, pupils are given multiple opportunities to develop through the taught and wider curriculum. They readily represent the school in the wider community, winning sports tournaments and art competitions. Pupils flourish through creative arts and were winners of the 'Imagination' Architecture Award in the Young City Makers 2023 contest. Pupils are furnished with a number of social and cultural experiences that help prepare them for the next stage of their lives. Trips to Southend, residential to Mountfitchet in Standsted and public speaking training are powerful examples of this. More able pupils and those who need additional support are taught and nurtured effectively so that they thrive in their learning. The autism outreach team at the school supports pupils with SEND, allowing them to shine in transformational ways. They are confident and achieve successful outcomes. Informed by the vision to 'shine, flourish and grow', pupils enjoy special curriculum days where they are immersed in learning that enables them to develop spiritually. Pupils created 'Dove of Peace' and 'Angels' installations on Advent Day, deepening their understanding of the Christmas story and its significance. On Vision Day, at the start of the school year, pupils and adults reflect on their identity, dreams and talents. Days like these develop an understanding of faith and religion for the school community. The curriculum offers opportunities, as they arise, for pupils to reflect more deeply on life's meaning and purpose. However, a whole school shared understanding and language of spirituality is at its early stages. Thus, some opportunities for spiritual development are missed as they are not planned across the curriculum.

Collective worship is a highly valued expression of the vision. The impact of singing and music during worship is powerful and supports pupils' spiritual development. A transformational example of this is Choir Church, an after-school club in partnership with the local church. Pupils learn to sing and appreciate real traditional church music, partaking in Evensong and Choral Mass. These new experiences allow them to reflect spiritually while singing. The partnerships with local churches are highly fruitful and help to develop pupils' biblical literacy. Worship is effectively varied, with the use of drama particularly inspiring pupils. The school's 'Worship Councillors' are pupil leaders that influence change in the school and wider community, primarily through collective worship. They passionately lead the school in prayer and reflection and serve as ambassadors and role models for other pupils. Pupils truly flourish in worship.

The relationships that are formed between pupils and adults alike are life-affirming and flow out of the vision. The school is a calm sanctuary for adults and pupils. Everyone feels safe here. Wellbeing is a genuine priority. The community treats one another with the utmost care and respect, even in the most difficult times. Grief and bereavement are dealt with exceptionally well at the school. Pupils with additional needs are offered tailored support. This includes bespoke counselling and use of relatable stories that help them process their emotions. For pupils' and adults' lights to shine brightly, the school effectively promotes wellbeing so that the community thrives. St John's Church of England Primary School was greatly impacted by a visit from HRH The Princess of Wales. This was for the launch of an early childhood development film about adult and children's mental health. This reflects the status that wellbeing and emotional flourishing has at the school.

Pupils actively serve others in the local and global community. They initiate conversations within school centred around justice for those who are less fortunate. Shoebox gifts are sent around the world to support children in need. Pupil voice informs change and development at the school. Pupils lead in charity efforts that respond to natural disasters and humanitarian appeals. The school's food bank – The Felix Project – powerfully shows compassion and care for the community. For pupils, 'the



world has a lot of hate’ and so ‘we need to shine our light’ to bring good. From learning in the RE curriculum about Sewa (Sikhism), pupils inspired a Sewa Day- a day of selfless sacrifice. Gifts were given to local people in the community. This helped pupils appreciate the diversity and needs of their community in a powerful way.

RE profoundly opens the minds of pupils to different religions and faiths and is a testament to the school’s vision. The subject is well-led. Although the curriculum that the school is using for RE is relatively new, it is already having a powerful impact on pupils’ learning. All can shine in RE, regardless of their faith or belief. Pupils learn about, and from, a wide range of world faiths. Trips and visits to religious places of worship, such as the gurdwara, mosque and synagogue, are an integral part of the curriculum. Pupils are inspired by these. The ways in which religious vocabulary is used and taught, even for the school’s youngest pupils, is highly skilled. It deepens their learning. Arts, crafts and drama are intertwined to make the subject engaging and impactful. As part of the RE curriculum, religious sacred texts are understood clearly but their analysis and evaluation is less developed. Pupils do, however, make powerful connections between faiths and their own personal beliefs. Teachers model discussions and debates extremely well for pupils. These oracy skills equip pupils to achieve well. Robust assessment systems are used that inform next steps for pupils. As a result of high quality teaching and assessment, pupils across the school make very strong progress in RE.

The inspection findings indicate that St John’s Church of England Primary School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
School	St John’s Church of England VA Primary School	Inspection date	1 February 2024
URN	100953	VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary Aided
Diocese	London	Pupils on roll	
MAT/Federation			
Headteacher	Darren Rubin		
Chair	Dr Robin Precey		
Inspector	Andrew Wignal	No.	2118