

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

### St James Church of England Primary and Nursery School

#### Vision

##### **‘Ignite, Explore, Believe... Together’**

Like the rock upon which the wise man built his house, (Matthew 7:24-28), St James Church of England Primary and Nursery School is the strong foundation for our school community. We ignite a love of learning to enthuse pupils to take action and explore the world around them with resilience and determination to succeed.

Working together, we believe that all children will flourish; high expectations provide the strong foundations in all areas of their development and education. The St James shell represents the journey of the pilgrim, the grooves as journeys to success from the strong foundation.

St James Church of England Primary and Nursery School is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. It has the following notable strengths.

#### Strengths

- The school’s vision has been refined and strengthened by the new leadership team. This drives a Christian culture where the community is made welcome and pupils are valued. The school is a strong foundation for its pupils.
- Staff work effectively together with families to support them in a variety of ways. Valuable academic, personal and behavioural help is offered. This enables pupils to become confident to work towards achieving their best.
- Inspired by the Christian vision, the curriculum has a focus on developing every pupil. Pupils’ learning is ignited by exploring topics in depth, using active learning strategies. They are taught to believe in themselves, making them resilient learners.
- A shared understanding of the nature of spirituality is embedded throughout the school community. Collective worship, alongside reflection opportunities during the school day, give pupils quality opportunities to grow and develop their spiritual lives.
- Pupils enjoy religious education (RE). The curriculum is inspiring. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to discuss and debate their own ideas and beliefs. In this way, RE is an important vehicle for their spiritual development.

#### Development Points

- Further strengthen the RE curriculum to embrace a wider range of people’s beliefs and practices. This is so that pupils appreciate the diversity that exists within and between religions and non-religious worldviews.
- Provide more opportunities for spiritual experiences within the wider, enrichment curriculum. This is to nourish pupils’ spiritual growth through deepening their connection to others in communities beyond the school.



## Inspection Findings

School leaders and staff have developed a vision that drives a strong Christian culture, following some difficult challenges in recent years. Thus, the vision is based on the parable of the wise man who built his house on strong foundations (Matthew 7 24-28). It is known and understood by the school community. Leaders and staff are committed to ensuring that the Christian vision improves school effectiveness. Central to this are the close working relationships with parents, carers and families. Staff provide extensive support and loving care for those who experience difficulties. Thus, the school is providing pupils with a strong foundation of learning to take them into their future lives. The local governor (advocate) successfully works with school leaders to evaluate the impact of the school vision. Some improvements are made as a result. Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is highly supportive of the Christian foundation of the school. The MAT provides effective advice, networking and training opportunities for staff and liaises closely with Exeter Diocese. However, the current structure of a sole advocate governor does not have the capacity to give fully effective feedback to trustees. This makes it difficult for leaders to accurately evaluate how the school lives up to its foundation as a Church school.

Inspired by the Christian vision, the curriculum ignites a love of learning. Pupils are settled, curious and focussed on their work in lessons. There is a strong emphasis on oracy, including specific strategies teaching pupils to have the confidence to discuss and debate. This work, underpinned by the school's Christian vision, enables pupils to effectively explore the world around them. The school provides a strong foundation of learning, support and caring for pupils and families. This means that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are given the tools and support that they need to succeed. Leaders focus on the individual needs of pupils, arranging for extra provision so that they can learn effectively. In this way, they flourish and grow, including those who are more vulnerable to underachievement. Staff recognise the importance of their role, saying, 'We can be that difference for our pupils. This school is a firm foundation for them.' The concept of spiritual development is important to staff and leaders at St James. Pupils and staff thoughtfully articulate what this is. Opportunities for pupils to reflect, think about themselves, others, the world and beyond are skilfully woven into lessons and collective worship. Leaders provide a range of opportunities that deepen spiritual growth. These help to develop spiritual awareness. However, experiences that help pupils extend their sense of connection with others beyond their school community are less developed.

Collective worship is carefully planned to teach pupils about the biblical basis of the vision. The school community, including parents and carers, are welcomed to worship times. Pupils who have SEND are given space and support to join in. The local church makes a strong contribution, with local clergy leading worship weekly. This brings a depth of understanding to biblical teaching. Pupils are inspired by taking part, including singing the school song, which strengthens a sense of togetherness and community. Stories from the Bible help them to reflect, act or think about changing an aspect of themselves. For example, pupils think about being more caring in response to the story of The Good Samaritan. In this way, during these times together, pupils and adults grow well in their spiritual lives.

RE has a high priority within the curriculum, and the subject is well led. Leaders have devised a curriculum that is well sequenced in its coverage of core concepts within Christianity and a range of other world religions. Pupils are inspired by their RE lessons and value the insight into different lives and beliefs that it offers them. The highly effective opportunities to discuss and debate offer challenge and depth of learning. Pupils are able to develop their own views and opinions, for example in discussions about the nature of God. RE is well resourced and quality



training is given to all those who teach the subject. Thus, teachers have the subject knowledge that they need to deliver the curriculum effectively. However, the curriculum does not have a sufficient focus on diversity within and between religions and worldviews. Thus, pupils have a limited understanding of the range of beliefs and practices that exist.

Enabling the wellbeing and good mental health of staff and pupils is central to the school's vision. Staff work skilfully with pupils, teaching them how to regulate their emotions. This helps them to successfully manage their own behaviour, promoting the calm atmosphere that is in evidence around the school. Thus, pupils feel safe. Staff and pupils are well supported by leaders who have an open-door policy for staff to share any problems. Professional mentoring and peer-review sessions result in improved wellbeing for staff, who are happy and feel safe at the school. Pupils, too, are confident that staff will help them in difficult situations. This means that everyone can live well and learn well together. Leaders and staff make extensive efforts to ensure that pupils have the support that they need. Parents and carers value how well the school is able to meet the individual needs of their children. Accordingly, pupils thrive at school socially, emotionally and academically. They are taught specific strategies on how to be resilient in their studies and their emotional lives. This results in pupils who say that they 'believe in themselves' and their ability to learn and achieve well.

The school's vision inspires staff and pupils to work collaboratively to encourage responsibility and provide justice. Pupils show responsibility in helping their peers who need support in the classroom or in social times. The school council successfully acts to develop the warm welcome that the school offers to visitors. The school works alongside the local community so that pupils know how to protect their local environment. This contributes effectively to pupils' personal and spiritual development. For example, they organise litter picking and work with a local sustainable farm to grow produce for the community. Pupils understand how they can act to make the local area a safer place. For example, they work with the police to reduce the speed of traffic outside the school. Thus, through fruitful local partnerships, pupils know how they can make a positive difference to the lives of others.

## Information

Address	Fort Road Off Crediton Road, Okehampton, EX20 1GJ		
Date	4 February 2025	URN	145912
Type of School	Academy	No. of pupils	247
Diocese	Exeter		
MAT	Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust		
Headteacher	Maria Hazelwood		
Chair of Governors	Emma Neath		
Inspector	Judith Larrington		