

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

St James Church of England Primary School			
Address	Wolverley Crescent, Oldbury B69 1BG		
Date of inspection	6 March 2020	Status of school	Voluntary controlled primary
Diocese	Birmingham	URN	131673

<b>Overall Judgement</b>	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Additional Judgement</b>	The impact of collective worship	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

### School context

St James is a primary school with 481 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Many pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is above national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages. 32 different languages are spoken and mobility is very high.

### The school's Christian vision

Our vision, 'let us love, let us thrive' is underpinned by our core values of love, respect, friendship, peace, honesty and endurance. It is built on a biblical foundation drawn from the book of James. 'Love your neighbour as yourselves. (James 2:8) 'But the wisdom that comes from heaven is pure, it loves peace. It thinks about others. It obeys, it is full of mercy and good fruit. It is fair. It doesn't pretend to be what it is not.' (James 3:17)

### Key findings

- The vision and values of the school are the foundation on which school leaders build caring relationships. These nurture and inspire all to aim high and love each other equally. Leaders are proactively committed to the community and 'go above and beyond' transforming the lives of those they serve.
- The sense of 'team' is tangible, passionately uniting all in a common purpose to be a guiding light and a safe haven. Here adults and children learn to love and thrive, following in the footsteps of Jesus.
- Worship is a vital part of daily life that wonderfully engages the whole school family in raising their voices, enthusiastically praising God and reflecting on the vision and values guiding their spiritual lives. The CREW (Collective Religious Education Worship) team and ethos ambassadors lead and evaluate worship weekly. However, these roles are relatively new and there has not been sufficient time to fully harness the pupils' ideas to further develop them as worship leaders.
- Religious education (RE) is a very popular subject that is effectively led and taught. Consequently pupils of all ages display an impressive knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other world faiths. Pupils are empowered, through enquiry-based approaches, underpinned by the vision and values, to actively consider diversity, faith and culture across a range of religions.
- The commitment and total dedication of the chair of governors ensures that governor monitoring is rigorous and regular. It effectively drives the Christian distinctiveness of the school. He also forges strong links with the Church. Currently, his work is guided through discussion with the headteacher and is driven by need.

### Areas for development

- Harness the enthusiasm of the CREW team and ethos ambassadors to enable them to fully support the spiritual life of the school.
- Formally structure the work of the governors to make best use of their time for monitoring the school's vision, values and distinctiveness.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

### **Inspection findings**

St James school is a guiding light and a safe haven for the community it serves. The vision and values of the school are the foundation on which school leaders build caring relationships that transform lives. The sense of 'team' is tangible. The total dedication of the headteacher ignites this team to 'go above and beyond' for each other and the families which attend. Consequently, relationships are forged that nurture and inspire all to aim high and love each other equally. Mirrored in the words of one member of staff, 'We live out the vision first. We love and thrive and breathe this into the lives of the children.' The 'you've been mugged' award illustrates how staff, 'look out for each other'. Anyone going through difficulties emotionally receives a 'mug' full of chocolate to raise their spirits. This passion to love and care is described by parents as, 'ingrained in the bones of the building'. The vision, complemented by the core values, daily invites all to 'live life in all its fullness, following in the footsteps of Jesus', as many say. Thus staff, pupils and parents are empowered to overcome barriers in their lives. As a result, relationships are strong and enduring. Staff are equipped to flourish, through training and professional development. They invest their skills and expertise in the lives of pupils and their parents, to relentlessly address need. Pupils enter the school displaying skills well below expected levels. Targeted intervention, often on an individual level, ensures all pupils, particularly the vulnerable are supported effectively to cultivate their success. Their learning is accelerated bringing them in line or above national standards by the time they leave school. In addition, they are challenged, by the values, to make good choices in their daily interactions with others. All pupils questioned endorse the view that, 'The school values help us to make good choices. We are rewarded and learn what is right and wrong.' It is clear that the vision and values are the rich soil in which the pupils prosper and grow, as unique children of God. From this they learn to love, respect, persevere and thrive as responsible young citizens. They are fully engaged with social action projects, 'to make our school and the world a better place'. They passionately campaign for a 'smoke free' school gate and to greatly reduce the use of plastic daily. In addition, they have, through non-uniform days, donated Easter eggs and gifts to be shared with children less fortunate than themselves.

The curriculum, guided by biblical teaching, enriches and inspires pupils to become successful learners. Curriculum BRICKS drive the pupils to be brave, responsible, independent, communicators (who are) knowledgeable (and) self-motivated. Staff and pupils are excited by the curriculum themes, which offer visitors, visits to places of worship, residential visits and extra-curricular clubs, throughout the year. RE is one very popular subject that is effectively led and taught. Pupils of all ages display an impressive knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other world faiths. They are empowered, through enquiry based approaches, underpinned by the vision and values, to actively consider diversity, faith and culture across a range of religions. Planning effectively follows the Sandwell Agreed Syllabus together with Understanding Christianity resources. Innovative, skilled teachers challenge pupils to think deeply when considering questions such as. 'Why would God allow his son to die?' Theme days ensure pupils gather rich, enduring memories, whilst researching the Incarnation or when visiting a synagogue or St John's and St Peter's Church. Monitoring is regular and rigorous ensuring quality and consistency across the school. As a result, learning outcomes in RE are very strong. Marking is thorough and focuses on giving verbal feedback to pupils to strengthen their understanding and keep teachers' workload balanced.

School leaders have tirelessly focused on the wellbeing of all. Pastoral support for staff, pupils and parents is an on-going priority, which creates a harmonious environment, founded on trust and honesty. The 'wellbeing team' is empowered to proactively take steps to resolve issues that arise daily. Mentoring for pupils and emotional coaching for parents provides rapid intervention to identify and target social and emotional need. Partnerships formed in this way build bridges, restore relationships and raise aspiration, living out the vision and values. The school works closely with a range of agencies effectively sourcing appropriate support. The dedication of the team has driven them to look beyond the school. They have forged links with schools across the local authority to share expertise and create support networks.

Worship is a vital part of daily life that wonderfully engages the whole school family. The passion to grow the spiritual life of the school is innovatively achieved, through the rich and vibrant experiences offered. The chair of governors' and headteacher's dedication to drive this aspect of school life is awe-inspiring. All pupils and staff engage wholeheartedly, as an inclusive community, in their praise of God. Uplifted voices enthusiastically and

joyfully sing worship songs , which reflect their vision to love and care. Prayer is central and engaging. An outpouring of their faith and trust in each other and their growing spirituality. Pupils explain, 'Prayer is important, because we show God we know he is with us. Our school prayer led to our vision'. The CREW team features strongly in daily worship. They lead in prayer, action songs and acting out Bible stories. The ethos ambassadors evaluate worship weekly. They have created evaluative 'worship logs' to record their views, to share widely with the community. These pupil leaders are totally committed to planning with the chair of governors to bring Jesus' teaching into worship. They are extremely keen to expand their roles. They relish the challenges they face helping everyone to learn more about Jesus. However, there has been insufficient time to fully harness their ideas, to further develop them as worship leaders.

The commitment of the chair of governors ensures monitoring by governors is rigorous and regular. The findings lead to actions which are effective in driving the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Currently, this work is guided through discussion with the headteacher and is driven by need. However, there are plans to further harness their commitment through a more structured approach of timetabled and targeted intervention. The chair of governors is also the 'Youth and Community Regeneration Worker', based in the Church. He is the key person uniting the Church and school in their support of the wider community. In school he leads acts of collective worship weekly, which are inspirational. His innovative approaches create many 'wow moments' and fun, engaging and enabling everyone to thrive spiritually. Parents questioned emphasise, 'We enjoy attending special services at Christmas and Easter at Church. These are really important services uniting the community.' The 'open-door' policies which exist at school and Church extend a welcome that is gratefully answered by many. On 'pancake day' nearly 400 pancakes were cooked and served at Church. In addition, 'Mums and Toddlers' groups weekly share a free breakfast. These are two of numerous examples where the community's needs are served by simple acts of kindness extended from the Church and school. In so many ways, in partnership they courageously and actively live out the vision proclaiming together, 'let us love, let us thrive.'

Headteacher	Camilla McGregor
Inspector's name and number	Marianne Phillips 586