

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St James' Church of England Primary School

Address	Merestones Road, Cheltenham, GL50 2RS		
Date of inspection	28 February 2019	Status of school	Primary Academy - VC Diocese of Gloucester Academy Trust (DGAT)
Diocese	Gloucester	URN	144089

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

School context

St James' is a primary school with 412 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages. The school joined the Diocese of Gloucester Academies Trust (DGAT) in April 2017.

The school's Christian vision

Inspiring and Growing for Fullness of Life

'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.' John 10:10

All are inspired to fulfil their aspirations through the twelve shared values of generosity, love, courage, forgiveness, friendship, respect, co-operation, trust, perseverance, humility, responsibility and honesty.

Key findings

- The exceptionally skilful headteacher has created a vibrant Christian learning community which lives out its vision enabling every member to flourish.
- The partnership between the school and church is exceptionally strong and is having a tangible impact on the whole school community and beyond.
- A highly original approach to spiritual growth, embedded in the whole curriculum is having a strong impact on learning, personal development and well-being: thus contributing to the school's vision of 'fullness of life'.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of their roles as leaders of worship which is ensuring its high quality development at the heart of the school's vision.
- St James' is a centre of excellence, sharing its vision by leading innovation across the diocese.

Areas for development

- Deepen pupils' understanding of Christianity and other religious traditions by extending their experiences through challenging philosophical and theological approaches.

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' has a vision which is deeply rooted in the school's local community and biblical teaching. It is driven by the school's strong partnership with the church which is at the heart of its success as a church school. It is integral to school improvement plans and policies, particularly its admission policy which prioritises pupils with specific additional needs. Collective worship and religious education (RE) are given the highest priority in development plans. Leaders' strong commitment to continuous improvement is demonstrated by the decision to join the DGAT. The very positive impact on training and curriculum development has resulted in mutual benefits for all involved. Senior leaders are working in key roles within the trust and diocese, supporting other schools, sharing their expertise. School leaders' contributions are invited at conferences at diocesan and national level. Governors have established an exceptionally rigorous Church school self-evaluation process which is a key role for their ethos committee. The school has an exceptionally deep understanding of spiritual growth. This is the result of a high quality study, undertaken by the deputy head, to address an issue for development from the last inspection. Spiritual growth at St James' is represented by a spiritual wheel and plays a central role in the curriculum. As a result, reflection has a significant impact on learning across the curriculum, through which Christian values are seamlessly threaded.

The school's own creative curriculum is a highly innovative and holistic expression of its Christian vision. It has a transformational effect on pupils. Extra-curricular and playtime activities are fully engaging and enhance pupils' very positive experiences of school life. It is continually enhanced by visitors and visits, which deepen their understanding of other cultures and faiths. Other visits, such as to the Space Centre in Leicester have a powerful impact on promoting pupils' aspirations. Standards of attainment and progress are consistently above the national average for all pupils including disadvantaged. These standards have been sustained for a considerable period of time. Vulnerable pupils and those with additional learning and personal needs are extremely well supported. This is because the school is relentless in its pursuit of meeting the needs of each and every child.

St James' curriculum empowers pupils to be confident, skilled learners who challenge themselves to be the very best they can be. The Christian values of perseverance, courage and responsibility, in particular, have a significant impact on pupils' personal development. A philosophical, questioning approach is embedded in the school curriculum. This enables pupils to explore and respond to global and ethical issues in an exceptionally secure setting. As a result, pupils are able to develop and justify their viewpoints and disagree politely. They are passionate in their adoption and pursuit of causes which support their vision and challenge social injustice. Pupils show a high level of respect for their peers. For instance, they have a good understanding of current global issues of disadvantage and deprivation.

The vision creates a strong sense of belonging to the community of St James'. This was reflected in the highly compassionate and powerful way the headteacher and vicar supported the school community following the sudden death of one of its youngest pupils. The child's legacy is embedded in the school's daily life and has a significant impact on its spiritual life. It can be seen in her symbol of a rainbow on which the school's Christian values are displayed. Charitable causes, nominated by other pupils are linked to her name. High quality teaching is continually targeted to meet the needs of all pupils. This is recognised and valued by pupils. They say it is reflected in the way they work in fluid learning groupings which enables them to interact in wider social settings. Disagreements between pupils are usually resolved by themselves in a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation. Pupils benefit from a very wide range of opportunities for creative play across the age groups, such as in the playpod. Older Year 6 'buddies' naturally mentor the youngest pupils and are admired as inspirational role models. As a result, relationships between pupils are outstanding. The school's vision enables all to live life to the full. Staff feel welcomed and supported and their individual needs, including spiritual, are nurtured and met. They benefit from extremely well-targeted professional development which not only benefits themselves but also the DGAT and diocese. As a result, staff morale is extremely high.

The open respectful culture, promoted by the vision, is apparent in pupils' acceptance of difference and diversity, such as pupils from non-traditional family structures. Learning through a theological approach is underpinning biblical teaching. For instance, linking the parable of the Good Samaritan with the need to respect and understand that God loves all people. The school's participation in the Bishop of Gloucester's liedentity project on self-image has raised pupils' self-esteem and reinforced the message that all are made in God's image.

Collective worship is the heartbeat of the school community. Pupils' attitudes are extremely positive because they feel included and involved. Worship promotes Christian values exceptionally well, rooting them in biblical teaching. Pupils particularly value the varied and supportive opportunities to be still, reflect and pray which are available throughout the day as well as during the daily act of worship. Pupils are highly enthusiastic and passionate about

their roles as worship team leaders. They are exceptionally skilful and adept at adapting their plans to suit the needs of the classes' different age groups. They recognise how the central Christian message infuses and sustains the school's vision. As a result, their views for improving worship are insightful and highly valued. This was evident from their suggestion to hold key stage worship in the round because they recognised it symbolised that everyone is 'equal in God's eyes'. Pupils are developing a good understanding of the Trinity from a form of liturgy used at the start and ending of worship. There is a rich and varied programme of worship which includes times in church for Christian festivals and joint family Sunday services which include the Eucharist. The church's music director leads singing in worship in school and church. The vicar plays a major role in the life of the school, regularly leading worship and supporting planning and developments.

Religious education is recognised as an important and exciting core subject which strongly reflects the school's vision by contributing to 'fullness of life'. The curriculum is appropriately balanced and in line with the Church of England Statement of Entitlement. Teaching is highly motivating and challenging. It enables pupils to be fully engaged, reflect deeply and critically explore their own beliefs and those of others. Consequently RE makes a substantial contribution to pupils' spiritual growth. Assessment systems are robust and exemplary. The deputy head has set up the school's own RE hub to support teachers in local community schools. This leadership role has now been delegated to another teacher within St James' who is now sharing her expertise and passion at a wider level. The role of RE is now at the centre of the school's ongoing drive to improve and further live out its vision. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

Headteacher	Lisa Harford
Inspector's name and number	Daphne Spitzer No 37