

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St James' Church of England Primary School, Bermondsey			
Address	Old Jamaica Road, Bermondsey, London, SE16 4SU		
Date of inspection	13/03/2019	Status of school	VA primary
Diocese	Southwark	URN	100829

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

School context

St James' is a large primary school with 569 pupils on roll, including those in the nursery. The majority of pupils are of mixed heritage, reflecting the diversity of the area. Many pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is well above national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above national averages. The school is housed on two sites, a short distance from each other. The school was very recently judged by Ofsted to be good.

The school's Christian vision

St James' is a caring family that offers a stimulating, inclusive and nurturing environment where all children feel safe, cared for and valued – made equally by God. We aim to be a constant pillar of support, kindness and love within the community.

Key findings

- Leaders and governors share and articulate an exemplary Christian vision that is focused on transforming lives and meeting the academic, spiritual and physical needs of all pupils and their families in and beyond school.
- There is a wide range of innovative practice that includes all, including the most vulnerable, pupils. As a result, they make excellent progress from their starting points, grow in confidence and flourish as individuals.
- Pupils explain how the school's Christian values relate to their lives and to their learning. They gain confidence to listen, question and explore. They quickly learn that Christian love requires a compassionate response and so they develop a genuine sense of community, recognise injustice and look for ways in which they can make a difference.
- Collective worship is the heartbeat of the school. Irrespective of their own faith or belief, all who attend worship know that they are there because they are invited and because they are valued. Pupils and adults say that they are affirmed by worship, challenged by its content and encouraged to action.
- Religious Education (RE) is given very high priority in the school's curriculum. Teachers' innovative practices and generally good subject knowledge ensure that it is consistently well taught. Pupils are enthusiastic about RE and many say it is their favourite subject.

Areas for development

- Review the provision of RE so that world faiths are encountered in a more progressive and developmental way and that teachers are even better equipped to teach them with accuracy and precision.
- Develop more ways to deepen pupils' thinking in RE so that they better learn the skills of enquiry and analysis.

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' is an excellent Church school. Leaders, clergy and governors share an ambitious Christian vision, biblically grounded and focused on transforming lives. It weaves through every aspect of the school. Pupils' support and guidance is not limited to school but is holistic, extending into homes, families and community. There is a powerful partnership with the parish church where clergy, leaders, staff and governors work tirelessly for the wellbeing of the whole school community, whatever their faith or belief.

There are excellent systems for evaluating the school's work. Governors have intimate knowledge of its Christian mission, working closely with leaders to drive further improvement. Because they know that their children are loved and valued individually, parents universally celebrate this 'happy, harmonious school'. This is a popular school and parents of all faiths and none send their children here because they know all are welcomed and will flourish.

For pupils, the vision is represented as 'character traits', or an understanding of how we should live. They internalise these biblically based values, explaining how they relate to their lives and their learning. Whatever their starting points, they gain confidence to listen, question and explore. Therefore, they enjoy school and this is demonstrated by their regular attendance and excellent behaviour.

A highly-developed understanding of spirituality underpins all aspects of the school. It influences the decisions of leaders, the work of adults and the lives of the pupils. Leaders confidently drive innovative practice to secure the very best personal, academic and spiritual outcomes for all pupils. Teachers use creative approaches that engage pupils and help them to learn. They enjoy school, learn well and make excellent progress that is generally much greater than expected. There is particularly successful support for those pupils who need it most. Leaders at all levels benefit from the effective support of diocesan officers and from attending the many diocesan networking and training opportunities available to them. The curriculum is thoughtfully personalised to excite pupils and engage them with questions of meaning and purpose. Teachers are skilled at encouraging this profound thinking across the curriculum. This includes a rich RE programme through which pupils experience a broad range of world faiths and cultures. RE has a high priority in the school and many pupils say it is their favourite subject because of the interesting questions they encounter.

Governors' innovation extends to the high quality professional development opportunities offered to staff. Because they are so well supported and encouraged, staff express great loyalty to the school and frequently go beyond expectations. The school leads a partnership of teaching schools, which widens opportunities for staff engagement and provides a source of future Church school teachers. Across the five schools, it makes an excellent contribution to new teachers' RE training.

There is an extraordinarily close relationship with the parish church. This extends beyond clergy contribution to worship and the pastoral support the incumbent provides. School and church work together to support families in need in the community so that they can overcome disadvantage. The church is also a key partner in the school's work with many local, national and global charities. Pupils quickly learn that Christian love requires a compassionate response and so develop a genuine sense of community, recognise injustice and look for ways to make a difference. Apart from fundraising, this includes their involvement in community action, such as voluntary work with senior citizens. Pupils value and appreciate local diversity but also understand that they are global citizens. They frequently have opportunities to communicate with schools abroad and speak knowledgeably about differences and similarities.

The school's Christian vision is evident in the deep, caring relationships between and among adults and pupils. Leaders have worked relentlessly to secure high standards of behaviour. Pupils now recognise that they behave well, not for reward, but because they live out the school's Christian values. There is a high focus on the Christian principles of forgiveness and reconciliation with skilled staff to support pupils' ability to resolve differences. Pupils know that they matter as individuals, are always treated fairly and that bullying is vanishingly rare. Adults speak of the personal support and guidance they receive from both school and church when they need it. Many say that this "makes all the difference" and is why they would not want to work anywhere else. The systems for supporting pupils' wellbeing and mental health are exceptional. The school's pastoral staff include trained psychology staff who work with pupils to help them deal with their feelings and circumstances. The school's physical provision includes monitored spaces, where pupils can be calm, quiet and reflective, and a dedicated officer works to support and advise parents and families. This underlines the school's declared commitment to support, kindness and love, impacting on families as well as individuals.

Collective worship is the heartbeat of the school. Irrespective of belief, all know that they are there because they are invited and valued. Worship is rooted in the person of Jesus and the Christian belief that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The regular involvement of church staff adds significant capacity. Joint planning ensures that pupils

experience worship that is both Christian and distinctly Anglican. Pupils and adults say that worship is both reverent and inspiring. From the moment they join the school, pupils learn about the nature and purpose of prayer. There are many opportunities for collective prayer and pupils spontaneously use reflection opportunities for their own private and personal prayer.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to worship, both through leading many aspects and through the Junior Faith Team. This pupil group plays a key role in evaluating worship, identifying aspects for development and so has a real impact on planned, sustained improvement. Pupils and adults say that they are affirmed by worship, challenged by its content and encouraged to action. Pupils agree that worship is inclusive of all faiths and report how sensitively pupils of other faiths are treated so that their own faith is strengthened. There are excellent opportunities for pupils to experience corporate worship in the church when the whole school family comes together. Adults say they like the way they can join in worship like this and many find these services to be deeply moving at their level.

Since the last inspection the skilled and knowledgeable subject leader has helped to develop marking and assessment in RE and has ensured that it is consistently well taught. She benefits from the committed strategic support of leaders and governors and works with them to ensure that standards in RE are as high as they are in other subjects.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

RE has a key place in the school's curriculum and its status reflects its contribution to the school's Christian vision. There is a good balance of other faiths taught alongside Christianity, in line with diocesan expectations, based on national guidance. However, this is a new programme of study and the times when pupils currently encounter these other faiths does not always match the level of their thinking skills. Therefore, while they leave the school with a strong understanding of Christianity, they are not always as secure in the key points of the world faiths they study. Innovative teaching sustains pupils' interest and they secure high standards overall. Nevertheless, there are aspects of written work and teachers' feedback that do not always build the skills of reflection and analysis as strongly as they might. The subject leader is ambitious to elevate RE to the high quality of the whole curriculum.

Headteacher	Karen Willis
Inspector's name and number	John Viner NS144