

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St James' Church of England Primary School, Farnworth

Vision

"With God, there is no limit to what you can do. There is no obstacle you can't overcome. Through Him all things are possible." Matthew 19:26

St James' Church of England Primary 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 distinctive Bible-based vision, and its associated Christian values, have been skilfully developed. They are highly relevant to the school's setting and context. They permeate every aspect of the life and work of St James' and are transformative for the school community.
- The curriculum is infused by the vision and opportunities for spiritual development are integral to the plans of each subject. Inspired and motivated in their studies, pupils experience rich opportunities to develop their spirituality.
- Religious Education (RE) is skilfully led and provides creative learning experiences that are valued by pupils. The curriculum enables pupils to demonstrate strong religious literacy and good understanding of worldviews and world faiths, including Christianity.
- Relationships with the trust are highly productive and mutually beneficial. This enables best practice and effective leadership skills to be fruitfully shared.
- Carefully planned, well-led, daily Christian worship provides a vibrant and inclusive environment where faith can be explored. These times are valued by pupils and adults and contribute to their spiritual flourishing.

Development Points

- Further enrich RE by developing a programme of visits to the places of worship of a range of faiths. This will build opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding of the ways in which believers practice.



Inspection Findings

Passionately driven, and inspired by its Christian vision, St James' is rightly said to be a beacon of hope, aspiration and peace. There is an unwavering ambition for pupils and adults to be motivated by and embrace its vision and underpinning values. Consequently, there is a highly positive atmosphere and environment in which pupils and adults are known, nurtured, inspired and loved. In an area with many challenges, this school is an oasis where lives are transformed and in which there is much flourishing. The vision and values are proudly and prominently declared throughout the school. These challenge and remind the community to have the highest aspirations, determination and a positive mindset. Highly committed, effective leaders are supported by a dedicated staff team. They understand and own the significance of the vision. Governors, along with Archbishop Temple Primary Multi-Academy Trust, are deeply invested in the work and future of the school. Their robust evaluation of the impact of the vision helps to guide and support leaders' work and direction.

The Christian vision inspires leaders in their design of the curriculum. This focuses on developing high aspirations, building resilience, overcoming challenges and aiming high. There is a drive to ensure that all pupils are able to access the curriculum effectively. This includes the high number in the school who have English as an additional language and/or are disadvantaged. A highly committed pastoral and special needs team know, support and nurture every individual in their charge. This ensures that everyone has the opportunity to access their learning and is able to flourish in their studies. In this caring environment, pupils enjoy lessons, behave well and are motivated in their work. Subject leaders identify and incorporate rich and varied opportunities that bring a significant focus to spirituality. Consequently, pupils regularly encounter moments of awe and wonder, and navigate themes including empathy, life after death, truth, morality and compassion. A clear, shared understanding and language of spirituality means that pupils explore their own and others' spiritual experiences. The importance of personal growth alongside academic achievement means that there is a range of engaging extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils respond well to this provision that enriches their lives and broadens horizons.

Worship at St James' is lively, active and vibrant, bringing the school together to learn, reflect and pray. Pupils are keen to be involved in this significant, strongly valued part of each day. All are invited to participate and respond to a range of opportunities including joyful singing, Bible readings, drama and reflection. These keenly support and enrich the community's spiritual development and strengthen the understanding of the school vision and values. A weekly 'doors challenge' enthuses pupils and adults to take the impact of these times into the school and wider community. Key events of the church year are observed enabling the community to grow in their understanding of Christian belief and practice. Well used prayer spaces, and worship areas in classrooms, inspire moments of prayer, stillness and reflection at any time. Meaningful links with the trust, diocese and parishes enrich times of worship and support the spiritual life of the school. Through engaging singing, storytelling and exciting activities, Wiggle Worship in early years provision, helps children to understand the significance of worship.

Because of the vision, leaders have established a strong culture in which the school community flourish by living well together. Robust policies and practice ensure that pupils and families are welcomed. They are treated with dignity as valued children of God. To sustain this, a number of highly motivated pupil groups work effectively to ensure that everyone can feel included. Their foci involve such areas as neurodiversity, ethnicity, gender and mental health. As a result, relationships and behaviour throughout the school are strong and contribute to the positive, purposeful environment. Difference is embraced and celebrated, and pupils and adults are accepted, whatever their background, way of living, ability or disability. A strong sense of fairness and emotional wellbeing is



evident throughout the school. On occasions when things go wrong, forgiveness, a new start, and the restoration of relationships happen effectively. Recognising their importance, leaders are unswerving in their determination to protect and support the mental health and wellbeing of all. Where needed, effective support is quickly given in recognising and responding to needs. As a result, those who may be experiencing difficulties are noticed and supported. A trust-initiated Staff Flourishing Charter underscores a passionate belief that the wellbeing of staff is paramount. Its effective implementation benefits pupils as well as adults.

Because of the vision, leaders recognise the importance and benefit of meaningful partnerships. As a result, strong, productive, mutually beneficial links with the trust, diocese and a variety of agencies are well established. Thus, the school is outward looking in promoting a broadening of pupils' horizons and building staff expertise. In addition, the considerable knowledge and experience of the school's own leaders is shared to benefit others. At St James', pupils learn about the differences of lives and experience beyond their own. Through opportunities to explore matters of justice and responsibility, they are motivated to respond in practical ways. This is particularly achieved through the significant range and variety of effective, impactful pupil leadership groups. As with so much at the school, their key Bible verse, 'Through God, all things are possible,' underpins their efforts. This brings about a remarkable culture that understands the importance of challenging and overcoming injustice, discrimination and inequality.

RE at St James' is successfully led with great commitment and a strong vision for the subject. The updated curriculum is designed to be academically rigorous. It fosters intellectual engagement and curiosity and enables pupils to develop a clear understanding of major religions and worldviews. An appropriate proportion is devoted to exploring the global and diverse nature of Christianity as a living, vibrant faith. RE meets requirements for the subject as a Church school. There is no programme of visits to the places of worship of a range of faiths. This means that pupils are not given the opportunity to experience this aspect and context of believers' practice. Leaders and governors are effective in their monitoring and evaluation, thus ensuring an appropriate focus and priority on RE. Pupils view these studies as relevant, engaging and interesting. They enjoy and are motivated by opportunities for safe debate and deep thinking. The subject leader is actively engaged with worthwhile, supportive trust and diocesan RE networks. These help to inform in-school training that enables teachers to be confident and up to date in their teaching.

Information

Address	Hillside Avenue, Farnworth, Bolton. BL4 9QB		
Date	10 June 2025	URN	142944
Type of school	Academy	No. of pupils	397
Diocese	Manchester		
MAT	Archbishop Temple Primary Multi-Academy Trust		
Headteacher	Lisa Belfield		
Chair of Governors	John Waring		
Inspector	Peter Coates		