



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St James' Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Address Hallfield Lane, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS22 6PR

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

Overall grade **Good**

The impact of collective worship **Good**

School's vision

Our vision is to be a happy and healthy place to achieve and believe.
I came to give life – life in all its fullness.
(John 10:10)

Key findings

- The school vision is the foundation for all policy and practice in this school. As a result of the highly effective leadership of the head of federation, every strategic decision is considered through a Christian lens. The impact this has at St James' and across the Sphere Federation, is exemplary.
- The vision lies at the heart of the school's ambitious curriculum, which inspires pupils to believe that they can flourish and achieve. Leaders are beginning to develop meaningful spiritual opportunities within the curriculum, but these are not embedded.
- Leaders value and believe in each and every member of this community and the nurturing support they provide for individual parents, pupils and staff is transformational.
- Collective worship is highly valued by pupils and adults. It has regained its important place in school life following the pandemic although leadership opportunities for pupils are still limited.
- Pupils have a secure understanding of Christianity as a living faith, but their knowledge of a range of religions and worldviews is not as well developed.

Areas for development

- Embed the school's approach to spiritual development, so that it provides creative and inspirational spiritual opportunities across the curriculum.
- Create opportunities for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate worship, so that it offers richer opportunities for the school community to grow together spiritually.
- Develop the school's approach for the teaching of world religions to support pupils in knowing more and remembering more about the religions studied.

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

The school's vision of creating a 'happy and healthy place to achieve and believe' is passionately lived out by the entire school community. Through his inspirational example of servant leadership, the head of federation is transforming this school, day by day, into a place where everyone is nurtured and supported to enable them to live 'life in all its fullness'. The federation's shared governing body challenges leaders to ensure that the distinctive needs of St James' as a Church school continue to be met. In doing so, they are beginning to see that the vision and values of St James' are leading to the mutual flourishing of adults and pupils across the federation.

Partnership working is a strength of this school and lies at the heart of its success. The federation is now highly effective and the creative way in which distributed leadership is used has enabled this small school to flourish. The school has actively engaged with diocesan support and training and, as a result, both its effectiveness and distinctiveness as a Church school have improved significantly. The head of school has worked tirelessly since her appointment to develop the school's partnership with parents and carers. Exceptional care and support have been provided for individual parents when needed and, for some, the school has become the first point of contact for those facing adversity, particularly during the pandemic.

This is a school which believes not only in its pupils, but also in its staff. Through the living out of their vision, leaders have created a team who care for each other as deeply as they care for the community they serve. This nurture and care reaches out across the federation and has supported staff through the most challenging of circumstances.

Working closely with the head of school, the federation curriculum leader is determined to implement a curriculum which creates hope and aspiration, enabling each and every pupil to believe that they can achieve. The school is at the beginning of its journey to develop a spiritual framework for pupils across the federation. The opportunities for staff and pupils to begin to experience this new framework at St James' have been truly inspirational. Spiritual reflection has been skillfully and purposefully woven into different activities such as a visit to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park in art.

Leaders have been courageous in their decision making when seeking to develop their provision for vulnerable pupils. Their ambition for every pupil to be happy and healthy within their school has led them to make brave financial decisions in terms of staffing. As a result of these decisions, all pupils are able to flourish.

Leaders and staff know each child and parent as an individual and they are therefore able to quickly recognise any barriers or challenges their families may be facing. This swift recognition enables compassionate and effective support to be arranged whenever it is required. The impact of specialist work completed by the school's learning mentor is now being seen in terms of parental engagement. Such has been the impact of her work, that this approach is now being implemented across the federation.

Pupils at St James' are becoming increasingly more aware of the importance of their stewardship of God's world. This is as a result of carefully planned curriculum opportunities which engage them in courageous advocacy, such as when learning about the plight of those affected by deforestation. 'Big questions' are used to great effect to enable pupils to develop, discuss and debate their own personal views on global issues. Pupils are supported in identifying causes which they personally believe in and, as a result, they are now beginning to play a greater role in selecting the charities which the school supports.

Bullying is rarely seen as a result of the deeply embedded Christian values which weave their way through all aspects of the school's work. When supporting pupils in managing any minor disagreements, staff refer pupils back to the vision and values of the school to enable them to effectively practise forgiveness and reconciliation through restorative strategies. Significant work has been undertaken in recent years to enable pupils to firstly identify and secondly to celebrate diversity. This work has been transformational and has enabled pupils to celebrate their differences, safe in the knowledge that they are cherished, unique and wonderfully made.

Collective worship is highly valued by staff and pupils alike. It is a time when the community comes together to pause and to reflect on the day at its close. Pupils recognise the strong links made to their school vision during worship, which they see as a moment to 'connect with God' and to truly 'believe in yourself'. For staff, worship is a moment of peace, providing clarity and focus at the end of a busy day. Worship is led by a range of staff and also by representatives of St

James' Church. Pupils are currently involved in some organisational aspects of leading worship, such as preparing the space and looking after sound and vision, however, leadership opportunities do not extend much beyond this.

RE is exceptionally well led and the leader has a clear and ambitious vision for the future development of teaching and learning in RE. Recent training in the delivery of the 'Understanding Christianity' resource has had a significant impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity. Pupils are able to not only recount, but also to explain recent learning about key Christian concepts such as 'Creation' and 'The Last Supper'. Children enjoy learning about world religions in addition to their work on Christianity and the recent introduction of 'key facts' for world religions is beginning to have an impact in terms of their knowledge and understanding. However, this is a new initiative this year and is not embedded across the school.

This is a school which has a living, breathing vision at its heart. The school's gift to its pupils of 'achieving and believing' is life-long, life-giving and widens horizons.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	16 June 2022	URN	107995
Date of previous inspection	19 October 2015		
School status	Federated, voluntary controlled primary school	NOR	110
Name of Federation	Sphere Federation		
Diocese	Diocese of Leeds		
Headteacher	Head of Federation: David Roundtree Head of School: Natalie Beatson		
Pupil profile	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.		
Additional significant information (if needed)	The Sphere Federation consists of three schools, two of which are community schools. There is one shared governing body across the federation, with two of the governors being foundation governors.		
Inspector's name	Kathryn Savage	No.	C1813