

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St James' Church of England Primary School, Thornham	
Castleton Road, Royton, Oldham, OL2 6XT	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Manchester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Oldham
Date of inspection	19 January 2018
Date of last inspection	October 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 105692
Headteacher	Margaret Johnson
Inspector's name and number	Gillian Rhodes 657

School context

St James' Church of England Primary School is a voluntary controlled school situated in a semi-rural area on the outskirts of Oldham. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for additional pupil premium funding is well below national and local averages.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St James' as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The dedicated headteacher and whole staff team effectively model and instil in the school family an ethos deeply rooted in the Christian values of love, trust and respect.
- Care and nurture permeate all aspects of school life and ensure that relationships between all stakeholders are positive. Pupils' excellent behaviour and responsible attitudes are directly attributable to the Christian character of the school.
- Numerous links between the school, the church and families are well established and all groups benefit substantially from strong community bonds.
- Collective worship and religious education (RE) are central to the life of the school. Their impact on the school's Christian ethos and character is significant.

Areas to improve

- Deepen the impact of collective worship on pupils' personal spiritual development by providing a wider variety of opportunities for pupils to independently plan and lead worship.
- Seek responses to collective worship from a wider range of members of the school family in order to fully understand and maximise its influence on the life of the community.
- Identify and include specific opportunities across the whole curriculum to develop pupils' spiritual experiences and awareness.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners

St James' is a school with a distinctively Christian character and ethos. Christian values of trust, respect, forgiveness, courage and, above all, love are deeply embedded in 'the St James' way'. Numerous references are made by all members of the school family to the care and nurture provided for pupils by the dedicated school leaders and staff. A parent wrote in thanks to say, 'My children are being well educated, valued, taught right from wrong but, more importantly, loved.' From starting points in line with national age-related expectations, pupils make good progress and attain above local and national standards.

Pupils are very proud of their school. One pupil described it as 'a close-knit community' and others explained how coming to school is fun and makes them happy. As a result, attendance is consistently above the national average. High expectations for conduct are rooted in the school's Christian ethos and ensure that pupils behave exceptionally well and have very positive attitudes to learning. Relationships across the school community are always respectful. They are rooted in the Gospel teachings of God's love and support the well-being and achievement of pupils.

Collective worship and RE are central to the promotion of the Christian character of the school. They illustrate and reinforce the school's core Christian values and provide opportunities for pupils to develop socially, morally, culturally and spiritually. Pupils and parents value the school's reputation for high quality provision for sport and music. This is accessed by large numbers of pupils and enhances their cultural understanding. School leaders are reviewing opportunities to enhance pupils' spiritual awareness and experience across the whole curriculum.

Pupils recognise the importance of RE, finding it interesting and for the most part challenging. They have a high degree of understanding and respect for diversity and difference in Christianity and in other faiths. Pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural global faith is effectively developed through RE and through pupils sharing their experience of different churches and denominations. In RE, pupils study Islam, Judaism and Hinduism and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of these world faiths. A Year 6 pupil explained, 'Our school is inclusive and we are all proud of our faiths.'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship has a central and significant position in the life of St James' school. Through the emphasis on Christian teachings and values, worship has a direct and significant impact on behaviour, attitudes and relationships. Pupils respond positively and participate willingly in worship, especially through singing and prayer. Collective worship regularly includes biblical material and pupils have excellent knowledge of Bible stories. They are able to relate these to their own lives and the values of the school. A Year 5 pupil explained that worship 'shows us how God wants us to behave and be a good person'. Worship encourages a high level of reflection. A pupil offered an explanation for Jesus' raising of Lazarus from the dead by saying, 'It was not his time and he was a good man, needed by his family.'

Pupils understand the purpose of prayer as communication with God, expressing thanks and at times worries and concerns. The school day provides opportunities for prayer in collective worship, through graces said at lunchtime and a prayer at the end of the school day. Pupils know and use the Lord's Prayer and are familiar with aspects of Anglican liturgy. Pupils speak with pride of the prayers they write themselves being included in school services held in church. They would relish the opportunity to contribute their own prayers to worship more regularly. Year 6 pupils enjoy the responsibilities they have for setting up the school hall for worship. They do not yet have the opportunity to further enhance spiritual understanding by planning and leading worship independently.

All pupils speak enthusiastically of the services held in St James' church to celebrate Harvest, Christmas and Easter and to wish Year 6 leavers well as they move on to secondary school. These services and the well-planned themes for collective worship ensure that pupils have excellent knowledge of the festivals and seasons of the Anglican Church's year. Pupils are knowledgeable about the life and teachings of Jesus and are able to describe God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The parish vicar and curate lead worship in school each week. Senior leaders and teachers lead whole school and class based worship. Pupils and staff take part in worship in the local community, for example, on Remembrance Sunday and as part of the local hospice Light for Life service. As a result, pupils experience a variety of worship leaders, styles and settings.

Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship includes pupils and staff. They describe the positive impact of worship on their lives. A member of staff declared, 'I have the opportunity to share my faith freely.' However, processes for the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of worship are generally informal and do not yet fully include all members of the school community. Parents demonstrate their positive views of worship by attending school worship in church in large numbers. They comment, 'It's very good. The children love it and love taking part.' The school does not yet systematically gather evidence of these positive responses and impact.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding

Christian values are lived out, modelled and promoted by the headteacher and senior leaders. The headteacher is described by parents as 'warm, caring and enthusiastic'. Her example of Christian love is followed by all members of staff. As a result, pupils understand and use the Christian values of love and respect to guide their own conduct. A parent explained, 'Children go out of their way to make sure everyone is looked after, happy and safe.'

Evaluation of the school as a Church of England school is carried out by the headteacher, supported by governors, and results in action plans for development. The headteacher leads RE and collective worship and consequently both areas have high status in the school. Strategic plans include the role of RE subject leader. Staff are supported in their roles through training and in-house development opportunities.

School links with families, the community and the church are extensive and of mutual benefit to all groups. Parents feel welcome in school and involved in their children's education. They are kept up to date with their children's progress and say that any concerns are dealt with swiftly and sensitively. The parent support group organises a wide range of social and fund-raising events and is keen to do more to help fund additional pupil visits to support exciting learning.

Pupils are involved in supporting local, national and international charities such as the Rotary Club Shoebox appeal and School in a Bag. As a result they develop deeper understanding of the lives of other communities and children in difficult circumstances. Year 6 pupils choose the charity which is supported by their annual leavers' service. At present pupils' views and ideas are sought informally and social and moral development is not currently promoted through more systematic pupil voice opportunities.

St James' has mutually supportive links with other schools through networks and local collaboratives. Links with the nearby Church of England secondary school are particularly strong. Pupils benefit from opportunities in sport and music and at transition from Year 6 to the next phase of their education.

The vicar and curate of St James' Church are regular visitors to school, providing a reassuring presence for pupils, staff and parents. The vicar also leads circle time each week with pupils across the school. This provides opportunities for pupils to discuss and meditate more deeply on aspects of faith and values. A Year 6 pupil commented that circle time 'is more based on God and helps us to learn'. The school and church communities come together at shared events such as the summer and Christmas fairs. Large numbers of pupils attend St James' Sunday school and belong to uniformed organisations at the church. Members of the congregation are welcomed to school concerts and shows, reinforcing the very strong sense of St James' as a unified church and school community.

SIAMS report January 2018, St James' CE Primary School, Thornham, Oldham, OL2 6XT