

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### St James' Lower Darwen Church of England Primary School

#### Vision

At St James CE Primary School, we aspire to inspire children and young people, nurturing their spiritual, moral, and intellectual growth. As a beacon of faith, learning, and community, the school is committed to providing a transformative and holistic educational experience. We live this daily through our values of; love, forgiveness, truth, justice and compassion alongside our foundation scriptures and our mission statement. We want our children to know that God has a plan for them that means that they are able to trust in this and are able to live life in all its fullness.

'Building one faith, one family, our future'

I came that they may have life and may have it abundantly.' John 10:10

'For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.' Jeremiah 29:11

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

- Leaders at St James are fully invested in and committed to the school. Strongly motivated by the Christian vision they go to exceptional lengths to create an inspirational place where pupils and staff feel welcome.
- Pastoral care is exemplary. Leaders ensure that proficient and committed staff are equipped to serve pupils and their families well. Disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils are at the forefront of decision making.
- Thoughtful collective worship provides valuable opportunities for pupils to grow and flourish spiritually. It is highly inclusive and pupil voice groups play a central role in this.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the school's vision and values. Pupils and staff show one another a high level of dignity and respect. This has created a community where pupils are listened to very carefully. Previous pupils and staff return frequently to show support.
- Religious education (RE) is effectively led. The curriculum is broad and relevant which enables pupils to develop a deeper understanding of worldviews and faiths, including Christianity.

#### Development Points

- Build upon opportunities for pupils to act upon issues they see as unfair. This is so that they are equipped to make ethical choices and be change makers more widely.
- Develop more opportunities for pupils to pause and ponder. This is to deepen their thinking and understanding about questions of meaning and to enhance the breadth and depth of their responses.



## Inspection Findings

A strong sense of welcome and belonging is evident the moment you walk in to St James. Reflective of the firmly embedded vision, staff and pupils have high aspirations rooted in 'God's plans for us.' Strong leadership models the vision and values through unwavering commitment to pupils, staff and parents. They know their community well and intentionally create policies and practices to help pupils live 'life in all its fullness.' Pupils understand the values and use them confidently in daily life. They nominate each other for 'you made me smile slips' to reward the use of values. Dedicated governors are regular visitors, engaging with staff and pupils. They support leaders through robust monitoring and evaluation and have an accurate working knowledge of the school. The importance of the vision is a testament to the school's inclusive approach. Leaders are fully committed to the flourishing of both pupils and adults. Open and encouraging communication enables pupils and adults to feel confident to ask for help when needed.

Leaders have crafted a curriculum around the unique context of the school, reflective of the vision. It is effective in offering opportunities for pupils to 'have life in all its fullness.' It is underpinned by the values and the skills and attitudes programme, which contributes to pupils' development. A consistent approach by staff leads to high expectations. Pupils have a full understanding of these, and as a result show excellent behaviour and positive attitudes towards learning. Teaching is adapted for those with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) so that they can access the curriculum readily. Consequently, pupils thrive. Careful consideration is given to texts and inspirational characters so that pupils appreciate diversity and inclusion. There are chances across the day for pupils to experience moments of spiritual development. Classroom reflection spaces offer areas for pupils to take time to reflect. However, opportunities to pause and ponder at other times are limited. Enrichment opportunities offer further experiences for flourishing.

Collective worship is a special time to meet. It is highly valued. Pupils use this opportunity to consider the wider world, big questions of meaning and to reflect on their own actions and behaviours. Music plays an important part. Worship is carefully planned and invitational. Weekly worship in church is appreciated and ably supported by the clergy. Exceptionally strong partnerships exist with the church which plays a very active part in school life. Prayer is very important to pupils and even the website has a space for prayer requests. Pupils write prayers which are used in collective worship. One example of this is through the Bible study group. As a result of a discussion around vision and values, pupils wrote a prayer that links to each value. Pupils in the 'worship warriors group' lead prayers. This helps the whole school to grow spiritually. Worship is fully evaluated.

Pupils thrive in this nurturing community underpinned by the vision and values of love and compassion. Around the school there is a quiet, calm and caring atmosphere. Parents recognise the wide range of ways that staff support them and speak highly of the school and its values. Meeting and greeting families at the start of the day cements positive relationships with them. Wellbeing is a high priority. The school has developed bespoke strategies to assist individuals. For example, as pupils enter the classroom, they indicate how they are feeling by choosing a smiley or sad face. Staff then act on this. Staff and pupils have the space to share any concerns or worries. This promotes the vision of being part of the St James' family. Unwavering help is given to those in need by dedicated pastoral staff. Disagreements between peers are dealt with efficiently and resolved with dignity and forgiveness. Staff are valued at St James. They know leaders care about their wellbeing. They speak highly of the excellent encouragement they receive. The gratitude board in the staff room is an open sign of the vision and values of the school.



Leaders provide pupils with a wide range of opportunities which develops their sense of responsibility well. Pupils actively lead groups in different aspects of school life. They are good role models and care for each other. The peer mentor programme is an example of this. This helps pupils with their wellbeing and their ability to manage their emotions. The courageous advocate group and worship warrior group are both involved in 'prayer friends'. They exchange letters with people from the church and meet annually for a tea party. This supports the vision of nurturing pupils' spiritual and moral growth. They make a positive contribution to the community, as well as to a range of charities. The choir actively engages with opportunities beyond the school, for example, singing in the local community and joining services at church. This reinforces to pupils the importance of being kind and using their talents to help others. Making a difference in the local area is important. Pupils also look at how to make a difference in the wider world. They explore global themes within the curriculum. By studying the lives of different inspirational people, pupils' knowledge of justice is growing. Pupils are working hard in the neighbourhood to make a difference. Currently pupils' understanding of ethical issues and how to make changes beyond the local community is less well developed.

RE is well led. It meets the requirements for a Church school. The curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to gain an understanding about a range of religious beliefs. Thoughtful planning has ensured a curriculum that is engaging and well sequenced. Pupils confidently articulate knowledge of the Bible and respond to 'big questions' in RE such as 'Is God actually real?' One pupil stated, 'I enjoy discussions. It's good to hear what other people think and what I can learn from them'. They speak enthusiastically about RE and are proud of their work. Spirituality days in church provide opportunities for further exploration of key areas of learning. For example, pupils explore various artistic interpretations of Jesus to understand how Christians view him. Such enriching opportunities deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity as a world religion.

Staff enjoy using current resources, which assist a creative teaching approach. This results in lessons which are highly engaging and encouraging to pupils. Regular monitoring of teaching and learning ensures tasks have a clear purpose and build upon prior learning. Pupils are encouraged to improve their work, and this helps them to make consistently strong progress. Robust assessment and evaluation effectively support planning and future learning opportunities.

## Information

Address	Off Stopes Brow, Lower Darwen, Darwen		
Date	3 December 2024	URN	119503
Type of school	Voluntary Aided	No. of pupils	193
Diocese	Blackburn		
Headteacher	Melissa Tindall		
Chair of Governors	Andrew Cole		
Inspector	Tina Astley		