

DIOCESE OF PLYMOUTH

Department for Formation



Queensway Catholic Primary School
Chelston, Torquay TQ2 6DB
URN: 113741

Head Teacher: Mr. Mark Shaw
Chair of Governors: Mr Alan Dunn

Record of Diocesan Review
30th March 2011

Introduction

The school was inspected by Ofsted in March 2011 and was judged to be good school with outstanding features. A new Section 48 Inspection process is currently being developed for use in diocesan schools. Pending finalisation of this process and as an interim measure, Bishop Budd has given his approval to a formal review to be conducted jointly by a diocesan officer and the school, to meet the requirements of Section 48 of the Education Act 2005. This document is an agreed statement of the outcomes of that review, to be shared with governors, parents and other stakeholders as the school wishes. It identifies some of Queensway's key strengths and also areas of focus that have been agreed to further strengthen the life and work of the school. The review covered a wide range of issues and as a process it sought to be creative and to support the school in its ongoing development as a Catholic community.

The review was conducted by Sarah Adams (Diocesan RE Adviser) working closely with the head teacher and staff. The outcomes of the review were agreed on the basis of:

- contextual documentation provide by the school
- scrutiny of pupils' work;
- observation of lessons;
- discussion with the members of staff, including the RE Co-ordinator;
- meeting with the School Council which has pupils representing all ages within the school;
- meeting with parents;
- Participation in Key Stage 1 Act of Worship;
- Meeting with parents
- Meeting with representatives from the governing body and one of the chaplains from one of the school's parishes.

Strengths of the School

A significant number of key strengths were identified in the context of Queensway's distinctive identity as a Catholic school, as factors in its educational success and its contribution to the Church's mission in education. The list below is intended to be illustrative, not comprehensive.

Leadership

A key ingredient in the success of Queensway Catholic School is the strong spiritual and pastoral leadership of the Head Teacher and his senior leadership team. The Head's own particular faith commitment is not only significant but appreciated by pupils, parents and the staff. On a number of occasions individuals commented on this and the children in particular were unanimous in their affirmation of him. They

would 'definitely not want to change him' was their response, when asked about what they could change to make the school better.

The governors with the head teacher and the parish chaplaincy team, consisting of the two local parish priests, a resident seminarian and members of the governing body are totally committed to providing the best possible education for the children of Queensway within the context of a caring and supportive environment. The promotion of high standards goes hand in hand with a desire to fully develop each child and nurture faith and moral understanding. The shared vision rooted in Gospel values strives for children to live as children of the 'light'. The school's motto 'You are the light for the world' is central to the life of the school and it is to be seen around the school along with many other beautiful and meaningful expressions of the school's catholicity.

The newly appointed RE leaders are also bringing a new energy and enthusiasm to the role. As classroom practitioners they have a keen sense of what teachers need and a clear vision with the Head Teacher and the chaplaincy team of how they want to take the school forward. They are growing in confidence and appreciate the support that they are given by the parish clergy and the Head Teacher.

Religious Life

Queensway, in line with the suggestions made at the last S48 has worked hard to develop and continues to develop a shared chaplaincy team from the clergy of the two parishes which serve the school. This has helped to support the Head Teacher in his commitment to the religious and spiritual life of the school. The school is now in a better position regarding the provision of Masses for the children both in school and in the Parish. In addition the school holds liturgies of reconciliation in the seasons of Lent and Advent which provide opportunities for children in years 5 and 6 to go to confession.

As a consequence of the Head Teacher's role modelling in the whole school 'Acts of Worship' on a Monday, the other adults have a sound grasp of the elements that go to creating their key-stage acts of worship. There is a clear commitment to providing meaningful liturgies which reflect what the children have been learning in RE as well as being liturgically appropriate. Children are given excellent opportunities to participate in liturgy and to grow in ritual competency. During a key-stage one act of worship children were involved and interacted well in a very creative and age-appropriate prayer time for Lent, taking the idea of recycling and applying it to ourselves. The use of music, physical objects (including a large recycling box) and ICT made this an engaging and rich experience for the children. The children showed their capacity to sing with joy and enthusiasm as well as be still and contemplative when the moment was called for.

Prayer is central to the school's life. The beautiful prayer boards and focal points in each of the classrooms give expression to this. They are eye-catching and interactive as well as age appropriate and up-to-date. Children care for them and respect them and see them as an important part of life, to the degree that parents reported the children creating their own focal points at home. The value that children

place on coming together as a community in prayer was reflected when a child from year 6 was able to say that she was going to miss this aspect of life at Queensway when she moved to the local grammar school in September.

The school is keen to further develop the quality of its prayer time both in the classroom and in key-stage acts of worship so that children become more involved in the preparation and planning of liturgies. Parents are also keen to support the prayer life of the school and developing opportunities for their involvement would further enhance this important part of the school's life.

Teaching in RE

Plymouth Diocese has recently changed its curriculum from 'Here I Am' to 'God Matters'. This has been a major transition for the teachers in the schools and of its nature challenging. Queensway has managed this transition very well. The teachers have embraced the new strategy with enthusiasm and energy. They have engaged fully with the Diocesan INSET opportunities and been given support from the chaplaincy team to engage with the theology of the topics at their own level. This will continue to be an important element of on-going formation for teachers.

Lessons observed were of a very high quality with children fully engaged and interested in what they were doing. The knowledge and recall of children was particularly impressive. Standards are improving all the time and evidence for this could be seen in the quality of work produced both in exercise books, in the displays around the school and in the class record of work books where these were being used. Most of the teachers are using the marking of work as an opportunity for fully developing the thinking that children do in RE. A consistent approach across the year groups to this kind of questioning at the end of marking and time allowed for children to respond, is to be encouraged.

Children in year 6 commented on the 'challenging' nature of RE as they are now experiencing it and said how much they enjoy RE. The variety of methods being employed by teachers in the delivery of RE which includes role-play, hot-seating, art work and ICT is to be commended. Through 'God Matters' the children are developing a rich appreciation of Scripture. Their knowledge of bible stories reflects thorough teaching. Within the topic of Judaism the children in year 6 were learning about Moses and how significant to the life of the Jewish people. The detailed knowledge of his life went beyond a basic outline of his story and in the lesson the children showed a high level capacity to recall and to express their ideas orally and in written work.

Children in year 5 had been looking at the letters of St. Paul to the Colossians and the Corinthians. Through this work they were able to talk about the qualities of discipleship and relate this to current day situations. In addition they were able to articulate the importance of applying these qualities in Lent. The teacher had a very calm approach to the children and succeeded in engaging them for most of the lesson. Differentiated tasks helped the children to succeed and to develop their confidence through successful outcomes.

Pastoral Life of the School

Queensway is a school with many children who have challenging behaviour and other special needs. It is apparent that all children are treated with respect and that adults in their turn are also treated with respect. The school has a very clear commitment to inclusion and community cohesion. A number of different nationalities are present in the school including children from other faith backgrounds. That all are welcome in the school is evident in the warm atmosphere and sense of calmness that pervades the school. Staff and children have an excellent relationship. In particular it is worthy of note that children who do present with difficult behaviour are supported with great care and integrity. Support staff have an excellent manner with the children, gently sitting alongside them and guiding them so that they too can achieve and be successful. There is no sense of children being policed and when a child is struggling to manage their behaviour the adults are sensitive to their needs and respond appropriately.

Both parents and pupils spoke positively about the care and compassion within the school. One parent spoke of her experience of her three children moving from another school to Queensway and what a marked difference it had made to their lives. When asked what they would like to change about the school or make better the children were unanimous in saying, 'nothing'. They expressed their sense of safety and confidence in the adults to deal with any difficulty that they might have. The children commented on how they feel they are listened to and know who they can turn to if they have a need.

The school has high standards and the children respond well to the expectations that adults have within the school. The adults are consistent in their approach and as a consequence children know their boundaries and are clear about what is asked of them. Children from different cultures feel welcome and accepted as part of the community. The adults consistently model appropriate behaviour and their own warm personalities contribute to the general atmosphere of the school. Equally the parents feel that they are respected and that they are listened to when they have concerns.

The school is committed to many charitable activities often initiated by the children, who have an excellent sense of being connected to a wider community. They are given many opportunities to think about others. Links with the local community and the local Catholic secondary school provide further ways for the children to grow in awareness and acceptance of others. Currently links are being forged with children in Africa, Australia and in year 5 the children have become pen-pals with children in France.

Agreed Areas of Focus for Development

It was agreed that the school's mission as a Catholic School would be further enhanced by focusing planned development in the following areas.

1. To continue to develop the liturgical life of the school through formation of the adults to consistently deliver quality experiences for the children and to work

towards involving children in the preparation and planning of key-stage 'Acts of Worship'.

2. To maintain and develop a consistent programme of formation for the teachers so that their confidence in teaching the theology of 'God Matters' can be enhanced. Continued attendance at the Diocesan INSET, engagement with the local clergy and the use of other appropriate resources will help this.
3. To explore ways of encouraging parents to engage more fully with the spiritual life of the school beyond that of attending school Mass, for example: parent prayer group, liturgical season groups and opportunities for thinking about what it means to be a Catholic school. In addition it would be helpful for governors to see more of what is being taught in RE so that they can more fully appreciate the important nature of the RE co-ordinators role.
4. To begin, in conjunction with the local cluster and Diocese, to develop a systematic approach to assessing the teaching and learning of 'God Matters'.

Conclusion

Despite going through a substantial building programme and dealing with the effects of having builders on site for many months, Queensway has continued to flourish and develop. It is a successful school with much to commend it, not least its' deeply spiritual character and nature. This is a genuinely warm and caring school which not only makes a significant contribution to community cohesion but is a true example of what it means to be at the service of the world. It is a school of which the Diocese can be very proud.

Sarah Adams
31st March, 2011