

**DIOCESE OF PLYMOUTH
VICARIATE FOR EVANGELISATION CATECHESIS AND SCHOOLS**



St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Regents Gate
Exmouth
EX8 1TA

URN 140766

Head Teacher: Mrs Nicola Taylor Bashford
Chair of Governors: Mr. Paul Byron

Canonical Inspection under Canon Law 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Plymouth and
inspection of Denominational Education under S48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of Inspection: 17-18th June 2019

Inspectors:
Miss Sarah Adams
Mrs Helen Brown

Context of School

St. Joseph's is average primary school with 188 pupils on roll, serving the parish of Exmouth in East Devon. It is part of the Plymouth Catholic Schools Trust which was formed in April 2014. The Head Teacher has been in post since September 2016. This full inspection follows a s48 inspection in April 2016 when it was identified as requiring improvement. There followed an Ofsted inspection in October 2016 which also identified the school as requiring improvement.

Context Data

NOR: 83 Girls: 105 Boys: 42

Number children with a statement of special needs: 2

% of children on SEN register 15%

% of children with English as an additional Language (EAL) 10%

% of children receiving free school meals 4%

% of children in receipt of pupil premium (PP) 6%

% of children from British Service Families 7%

Over-All Effectiveness:

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| The School as a Catholic Community: | Good |
| Leadership and Management: | Good |
| Word (RE Leadership, quality of teaching and achievement) | Good |
| Worship and Spiritual Life of the School | Outstanding |

Summary of Key Findings

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop is **GOOD**

Key Strengths

- Gospel values are firmly embedded in the life of the school. Evident throughout, they underpin all activity pertaining to the life of the school. Children have a keen appreciation of them and can relate them to many areas of the school's life.
- The Head Teacher is highly effective and has brought cohesiveness and purpose to the school.
- The school consistently provides opportunities for children to grow spiritually, morally, academically and physically.
- The current mission statement is under review but the school's motto – '*Walking with Jesus to be the best we can be*' is central to the life of the school. Its' message lies at the heart of the school's vision and mission.
- Relationships in the school are highly positive.
- Pastoral care is rooted in gospel values, leading to systems and practice which ensure that all members of the community feel safe, cared for and dignified. The person

responsible for identifying the needs of children is extremely competent. She is committed to ensuring that every child receives whatever help they need to make progress.

- The relationship with the parish is strong. There is a genuine desire for the school, parishioners and the Parish Priest to work together. Since the last inspection there has been a notable improvement in the way the parish and school relate with each other.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Communication is strong between teachers and parents, with parents feeling confident that any concerns they have will be listened to and followed up with an appropriate response.
- Since the last inspection the teaching of RE has developed significantly. The school has been proactive in seeking external support to develop teaching. The impact of this has led to a confidence in the teachers to deliver creative and engaging lessons which challenge children and ensure progress.
- The monitoring of RE is good. The RE Leader with responsibility for curriculum RE is consistent in her approach and supportive of staff to deliver high quality lessons, with well-focused plans which ensure that most children are able to achieve.
- Governors, many of whom are new, are highly supportive of the school and recognise the responsibility they have in ensuring that the school is moving forward as a Catholic School. Despite the need for them to focus on bringing the school out of an RI judgement, they have done this without losing sight of the need to develop the Catholic Ethos.
- The spiritual life of the school is outstanding. Children speak positively about the many opportunities they have to explore their relationship with God and they are confident when speaking about this key element of what it means to be a Catholic School.

What the school can do to improve further

- Ensure that there is a tangible link between Scripture, Gospel values and British values so that the whole community can identify the integral nature of these elements.
- For Governors to ensure that the Catholic Life of the school is the starting point for all meetings and that this element is the font from which all decisions are made.
- The school has a strong leadership team which could be supported further by the development of more staff to be middle leaders.
- Continue to develop the quality of teaching so that children are encouraged and enabled to work at greater depth.
- The staff regularly meet to discuss new topics prior to teaching them. This is excellent practice which would be enhanced by developing the conversation to reflect upon the challenges and successes of the previous topic.
- Build on current excellent practice and develop the confidence of all staff to prepare and deliver whole school acts of worship.
- Revisit classroom prayer times to ensure that what children experience is not a lesson but reflection and time for prayer, rooted in the scriptures.

The School as a Catholic Community

Good

- St Joseph's is a joyful and engaging Catholic Community with several outstanding features. It has a strong sense of its identity as a Catholic School and is committed to developing this further.
- Hospitality is a strong feature of the school's ethos. St. Joseph's has a strong sense of welcome where people have open hearts, are honest and committed to inclusivity. People genuinely care for one another and children speak highly of the adults for the attention they receive.
- Children feel safe and enjoy coming to school. They behave well and enjoy learning. Throughout the school there is a calm sense of purpose. Playtimes are well managed so that children are enabled to develop positive relationships.
- Children 'own' their school and are keen to take opportunities for leadership. They have many opportunities to do this. A notable development has been the introduction of Pupil Mental Health Awareness Ambassadors. Although a new idea, the children have embraced their training with enthusiasm and can articulate with confidence the purpose of their role.
- Pastoral Care in the school is a high priority. St. Joseph's has a commitment to working with and enabling children from a wide variety of backgrounds. The teacher responsible for SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) has excellent insight into their needs. All children who need additional support have a link TA and MTA who, with the class teacher, monitor and support their learning and integration. The integrated approach to pastoral care within the school is ensuring that no child's needs are over-looked, and parents are confident that their child receives the care and attention he or she needs.
- Parent surveys show that they are happy with what the school offers their children. Parents believe that communication is significantly better. They feel welcome in the school and appreciate how staff are readily available to them before and after school. The Head Teacher's open-door policy means that parents can raise concerns easily and have them dealt with quickly. Parents are regularly informed by newsletter of the work their children are doing in RE and parents believe that RE has a high profile in the school.
- New staff experience a genuine welcome by the school. Their induction programme enables them to feel confident and supported in their role. The open and generous nature of the staff ensures that new people feel that they can turn to anyone when in need of extra support or guidance.
- Engaging with the wider community is a growing strength of St. Joseph's. In addition to stronger links with the parish, the school is committed to the engagement it has with the local community and the wider world. The school has strong active links with other CAST schools and values the opportunities these provide for the sharing of ideas and developing resources. In addition, the school is a key member of other local school partnerships which further enhances opportunities for children.
- At St. Joseph's the all-round education which the children receive is enabling them to become successful learners, confident individuals and most importantly informed and compassionate members of society. A particularly successful project for one class focused on The Lakota, a Native American tribe. A local priest spent several weeks working with the children and teaching them about their life. This, along with a new partnership with a school in South Africa, is broadening the experience and knowledge of the children in a very tangible way.

- The school engages in a range of charitable and outreach activities which are helping the children to see beyond themselves and giving them an awareness of those less fortunate than themselves. A new academy for the Deaf is opening locally and the children have been keen not only to raise funds for them but to learn sign language so that they can communicate with children who may ultimately become their friends. These opportunities to see and respond to the needs of others locally and globally is ensuring that children leave the school aware of the needs of others and ready to take their place as global citizens.

The School as a Catholic Community (Leadership and Management) Good

- Leadership in a Catholic school is demanding and challenging because it relies on people who are prepared to go the extra mile to ensure that children not only reach their potential academically but are exposed to the full richness of the Gospel and enabled to pursue their journey of faith with confidence. To be a real leader in a Catholic school is ultimately about service as much as it is about directing. It requires of leaders to be people who understand what it means to follow the ways of Christ and see the innate dignity in every human being. This ethos lies at the heart of the leadership of St. Joseph's.
- The Head Teacher has made it her personal goal to ensure that St. Joseph's is a school firmly rooted in the Catholic tradition and models for the community the beliefs and values to which the school aspires. She is a dedicated leader with a clarity of vision and drive to move the school forward both academically and spiritually. In doing so she enables others to embrace the ethos. Supported by an equally dedicated senior leadership team, she has worked tirelessly to develop a staff team which works well together and is committed and effective in providing the very best for the children in their care. Staff feel valued and have responded well to the challenges they have faced over the last few years. They are able and willing to accept appropriate challenge because they believe in the vision which the Head has for the school.
- Although some staff are engaged in middle leadership, this is an area which could be grown to ensure that there is a depth of leadership running through-out the school.
- Many of the school's governing body are relatively new but it is growing in stature and confidence. Governors meet regularly and, through regular visits to the school to conduct learning walks and have conversations, they have a clear understanding of the direction in which the school is moving. They have taken a keen interest in the Catholic life of the school, particularly in relation to the s48 inspection. It will be important for them to keep this at the forefront of their minds at each of their meetings.
- RE leadership in the school is excellent. The role has been divided so that two members of staff take responsibility for the Worship life and Curriculum RE respectively. This approach has had a significant impact on the development of both areas. Both members of staff are highly respected by the rest of the staff team, who feel supported and confident in the leadership of RE. It is this leadership which has led to much improved outcomes since the last inspection. RE is seen as a core area of the curriculum with consistently regular CPD time being allocated to the discussion of topics prior to teaching. This is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and lesson preparation which teachers are doing.

The School as a Teaching and Learning Community (Word)

Good

- Curriculum RE has a high status and is valued by children, staff, parents and governors. Teachers are growing in their confidence to deliver engaging lessons where children consistently make progress.
- Senior leaders take an active interest in the subject and specifically the SEND co-ordinator ensures that children who may have a talent for RE are able to access lessons appropriately so that they can flourish and achieve their true potential.
- A range of rigorous monitoring activities are having an impact and lead to improved outcomes and on-going progress. The quality of work in books reflects the quality of engagement in lessons by both teachers and children. Some of the work in books is outstanding.
- Lessons observed across the school were consistently well-delivered. For the most part children engaged with interest and enthusiasm. Children have no time to get bored, behaviour is good and the methods employed by teachers ensure that children are ready for learning, remain on task and are pleased when they achieve. Teachers generally have high expectations and challenge children to go deeper in their learning with appropriate questioning and activities which lead to good outcomes. Lessons are well paced, draw on previous learning and employ a variety of activities including group and pair work to facilitate learning.
- In almost all lessons children were able to achieve age-related expectations. Teachers recognise that for children to achieve at greater depth they need to differentiate further and provide activities that challenge children. As teachers grow in confidence with the new National Guidelines for Assessment they should have no difficulty in developing their lessons to stretch the most able.
- Teachers mark children's books with care and encourage children with pertinent comments. Time is given for children to respond to these comments. Tracking of progress is possible to see in the back of children's books although these are not consistently completed by all staff. Maintaining this record could help teachers to see where they need to move children forward and help with their planning.
- Children speak positively about their learning in RE. They think teachers 'work very hard' to make their lessons interesting. They are confident when talking about their learning and can make links with Gospel values and their acts of worship.
- Relationships between children and adults in the school is excellent. Support staff work unobtrusively and have a clear understanding of how to support children. They are highly professional and understand the different needs of children so that their interactions are positive and build children's sense of self.
- Teachers are supported by regular CPD and value these opportunities to understand units before they teach them. This is an important element of their preparation and crucial in ensuring that they have as much theological understanding as they can. The RE leader has a robust monitoring programme and feedback is given individually to staff. At present identified action points with a time-scale attached is not recorded. This is something to develop to ensure that guidance is not lost but followed up as needed.

- In addition to observing lessons, pupil conversations and reviewing books, a learning walk showed how working walls and focal points add to the engaging environment which supports learning.

The School as a Celebrating Community (Worship and Spiritual Development)

Outstanding

- There is no doubt that the spiritual life of St. Joseph's lies at the heart of the school. Since the last inspection the Head and the RE leaders have made a considerable effort to visit other schools and seek out best practice. This has led to a renewed energy and the development of an engaging approach to the celebration of liturgy within the school.
- A wide variety of prayerful experiences contribute to the spiritual development of the children. These include formal and informal opportunities for prayer and reflection. Children particularly value the permanent prayer space which has been developed within the communal space of the school, where they can be quiet and reflective.
- Children come to whole school acts of worship calmly and respectfully. They appreciate that they are entering a time of reflection and celebration. They like being involved and play an active part by reading, singing and responding to prayers. They are confident in their ability to do this regardless of age. They sing with enthusiasm and enjoy the opportunities given to them to be still and silent.
- Each week children are sent out from their whole school liturgy with a commissioning for the coming week. Teachers draw upon these in lessons and at other times of the day so that they become integrated into the whole life of the school.
- The next step with regard to key stage and whole school acts of worship would be for the development of all staff to be able to prepare and deliver these acts of worship with the children participating as fully as possible.
- Classroom prayer is peaceful and engaging but teachers tend to feel the need to be 'teaching' something before praying. Consequently, it can become over-complicated. This is an area which could be developed so that it becomes a time for contemplation on scripture and a simple prayerful response.
- The improved links with the parish has led to a greater number of class Masses for children and opportunities to celebrate the sacramental life of the Church. The school and the parish are working increasingly well together. The Head Teacher has a highly positive relationship with the Parish Priest and feels supported by him. His presence in the school is welcomed by all and his desire to integrate the school more fully into parish life is bearing fruit. An example of this is the inspiring development of an annual 'sleep-in' at the church. Children from Year 6 participate in several faith activities including prayer by candle-light and then sleep within the church building. They rise very early the next morning and go to the beach where members of the parish provide them with a fish and bread breakfast, cooked on a barbeque. This example of the engagement of the school with the parish is a sign of how far the school has come in recent times.
- Since prayer and liturgies of all kinds pervade the life of the school there is no question that children are being given outstanding opportunities to develop their own faith and relationship with God, personally and communally. Their openness to

God's presence is encouraged and facilitated on a daily basis. Parents are invited to join with their children for prayer times and the numbers doing this are growing.

- Emerging from all of this are children who have a strong moral code. They are compassionate, kind and loving in their relationships with one another. They have a healthy respect for adults and appreciate the opportunities they are being given.
- The school's Catholic ethos underpins its commitment to inclusivity. This is a school which values all of God's children, dignifies everyone and celebrates individuality. All aspects of the school life contribute to the spiritual and moral development of the children and consequently this is a school where people, adults and children are flourishing.

Conclusion

St. Joseph's has worked exceptionally hard to regain its identity as a thriving Catholic School. They can be justly proud of the efforts they have made and the courage they have had to face the challenges presented by two inspections which cast doubts on what they were doing. Now the school is going from strength to strength. It reflects the desire of the Head Teacher and the whole community to be a school where every parent would want to send their child. The school is truly *'Walking in the way of Jesus to be the very best we can be'* The children are its greatest ambassadors and it was a privilege to spend time with them. Bishop Mark and the Catholic Community of Plymouth Diocese can be confident that this school is one which is a true witness to the Gospel and striving to serve the mission of the Church in all its fulness.

Sarah Adams
Helen Brown