

DIOCESE OF PLYMOUTH

Department for Formation



**St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Barn Lane
Bodmin
Cornwall
PL31 1LW**

URN 112020

**Head Teacher: Mr. K. Storey
Chair of Governors: Mr. K. Linsell**

**Record of Diocesan Review
15th July, 2010**

Introduction

St. Mary's was inspected by Ofsted in July 2010 and was judged to be a 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 St. Mary'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 for Schools) working closely with the Kevin Storey (Head Teacher), Deborah Lewis (Leader of RE), Jane Bond (Governor) and Canon Rev. Keith Mitchell (Parish Priest). The outcomes of the review were agreed on the basis of:-

- observation of lessons
- documentation made available in school;
- participation in class act of worship
- participation in a whole school assembly
- meeting with the school council
- meeting with leader of RE within the school
- meeting with Parish Priest and school governor
- meeting with Head Teacher

Strengths of the School

As a Catholic School St Mary's has many key strengths which highlight its distinctive identity as a Catholic school and which demonstrate the commitment it has to educational success and to the mission of the Church in the world. The list below intends to be illustrative, not comprehensive.

Leadership

This is a school with strong spiritual, pastoral and organisational leadership. The Head teacher in particular has a genuine commitment to developing his own faith and ensuring that the staff and children are supported in theirs. The Head will talk openly and humbly about his own faith journey and fosters an atmosphere where others can do the same. This in itself helps the adults in the school to feel at ease when sharing faith with each other and the children. The pastoral care which the adults show to the children emanates from the conviction the school has to living out the Gospel message. The understanding that everyone is unique, special and loved by God permeates the life of St. Mary's and ensures that procedures and support structures are developed with this thinking in mind. This was evident in the staff room conversations concerning individual children, the special room allocated for

supporting individual children with special needs and the excellent way in which teaching assistants supported children in the classroom.

Religious Life

Although there are very few Catholic children at St. Mary's the spiritual and religious ethos of this small community underpins the life of this warm and friendly school. Throughout the school, wall displays, focal points and meaningful artefacts provide a clear indication that the Catholic faith is taken seriously. Plenty of children's displayed work reflects this. The school has strong links with the local parish priest who visits on a regular basis to celebrate the sacraments and to be a presence to the children and adults of the school. The children and staff have a very good relationship with him and throughout the school people expressed their appreciation of him. The children said that they 'like him coming into the school'.

On the day of the visit the prayer life of the school showed how important prayer is. The whole school Act of Worship, led by the Head teacher, was thought provoking and meaningful. The children participated well, listening attentively and confidently answering questions. The Head teacher's quiet and reflective manner from the outset ensured that the children were also reflective and calm. The theme for the Act of Worship emanated from the RE topic, 'Treasures' and allowed the children to prayerfully share some of their work on the psalms, which they had created and which reflected their enthusiasm for the work. Throughout the Act of Worship the children listened well and sang with enthusiasm.

Once a fortnight Mass is celebrated in the school and all the children participate. The parish priest has helped to ensure that this is a meaningful experience for both the adults and children. He works closely with the RE leader and the teachers are growing in confidence about what they need to do to help the children prepare. A different class each time takes on the responsibility for the various ministries which ensures that the children take a full and active role in the Mass.

With the liturgical life of the school growing there is a desire to develop the prayer life to build upon this strong dimension of the school's practice. The parish church is visited by all the children in year one and again in year four to help them grow in their familiarity with the building as a place of prayer and celebration. At the time of the visit the year six children were in the process of producing a booklet about the Church for the children in year one.

Teaching in RE

During the visit the children were coming to the end of their topic on 'Treasures'. The quality of work that had been produced reflected a sound understanding of the material that the teachers had used. The reception class were involved in a variety of multi-sensory activities to help them build on their understanding. The teacher's lead into the lesson was gentle and engaging as she asked them pertinent questions which many of the children were keen to answer. She engaged them in one-to-one sharing and small group discussions that helped those less confident to participate.

The children's answers reflected their knowledge and understanding of the importance of treasures, the difference between human made treasures and God's treasures including the truth that the children are also God's treasures. During their independent activity time the children were fully engaged and confident in the tasks that had been set which included using play dough to make some of God's treasures, creating a large map with God's treasures using ICT and a visually impaired child demonstrating how his special machine helps him to see some of the special treasures that other children had made. The lesson ended with a calm and reflective time of prayer during which the children were invited once more to name some of their treasures.

Children in year one were celebrating the end of their topic and did so in a profoundly reflective manner. The liturgy that they engaged in revealed a high level of understanding and their ability to be still and listen to one another was impressive. The structure of the celebration with its reading from the scriptures, sharing of children's own prayers and written thoughts gave a very clear picture of the quality of teaching that had gone on during the previous weeks and the manner in which the children had assimilated the idea that the world is full of God's treasures.

In another lesson there were some lively discussions as children considered different pieces of scripture to see what in them would have inspired CAFOD workers to want to do what they do. Although this was a challenging task for the children to grasp they seemed to enjoy the activity and by the end of the lesson they had experienced a variety of scripture passages. This activity led into a whole class act of worship which the children had previously prepared. This was a meaningful liturgy involving all the children who participated with sincerity and respect for one another.

From September a new curriculum for RE is being introduced within the Diocese. Although some natural anxiety was expressed about this the school seems more than able to engage with the material and deliver it with creative confidence. Taking the time to explore the topics in advance with each other will help the teachers to be confident about the theological content they will be delivering. The creative skills of the teachers at St. Mary's, evident in other subjects, will be the key to delivering RE as a dynamic and engaging lesson for the children.

Pastoral Life of the School

The quality of care and commitment, shown to the children at St. Mary's, is very high. This is an inclusive school where everyone feels welcome and respected. The warm and open welcome as one arrives at the school from both adults and children is to be commended. The children expressed their appreciation for the way staff deal with issues and know that they always have someone to turn to if they are in difficulty. The school buddy system which the children spoke of is clearly appreciated and effective.

The school is committed to spreading the care they show for one another with people from outside of the school. The children regularly raise money for CAFOD and understand the principles behind CAFOD's work. In addition the children involve

themselves in community activities where possible and enjoy working with the local community school.

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. *Building upon and enhancing the prayer life of the children through training for staff and support in developing other forms of liturgy.*
2. *By developing opportunities for parents to gain in their knowledge and understanding of what it means for their children to attend a Catholic school and to help them to understand more fully Catholic practice.*
3. *By looking at ways for staff to develop their own faith/prayer life by offering opportunities for prayer and reflection.*
4. *Ensuring that staff take time to reflect at their own level on the theological content of the teaching topics prior to each topic.*

Conclusion

St. Mary's is a school that is growing in confidence and stature under the leadership of a thoughtful and reflective Head Teacher. His vision of what the school can be and where it can go is energising and ensuring. He has worked hard with the staff, who are equally committed, to provide the children with a safe, creative environment where everyone matters.

The school's commitment to serving the mission of the Church is being fulfilled in many ways through the compassion and care shown to each person at St. Mary's. The strong ethos with Christ at the heart and gospel values central to the mission of the school ensures that this school is a joyful and thriving community. The Head Teacher, Parish Priest and governors are not complacent but determined to develop and nourish the potential that this school is already showing and has the capacity to become. This is a school of which the Bishop and the Diocese can be very proud.

On a personal note I would like to express my gratitude for the very warm welcome which I received during my visit. I would also like to thank all those who participated so openly in this visit and for making such a clear commitment to on-going progress.

Sarah Adams
26th July, 2010