

DIOCESE OF PLYMOUTH

Vicariate for Formation



Diocese of
Plymouth

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School
Marnhull, Dorset
DT10 1JX

URN: 113825

Record of Diocesan Review

Head Teacher: Mrs Angela Heriera
Chair of Governors: Mrs Louise Huxley

Introduction

The school was inspected by OFSTED in January 2012 and was judged to be 'satisfactory'. 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 by a diocesan officer 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. It identifies St. Mary's key strengths and also areas of focus that have been identified that will further strengthen the life and work of the school.

The review was conducted by Sarah Adams (Diocesan RE Adviser) working closely with the head teacher and RE Leader. The outcomes of the inspection are based on:

- observation of lessons across the key stages.
- meeting with the School Council which has pupils representing all ages within the school;
- participation in an Act of Collective Worship;
- participation in a class time of prayer
- discussions with Head Teacher
- meeting with Parish Priest
- discussions with RE Leader

Strengths of the School

A significant number of key strengths were identified in the context of St. Mary'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

Since the last inspection, St. Mary's has gone through a change of leadership and since April 2010, three Head teachers have been supporting the school at different times. A new substantive Headteacher took up her post in September 2011. Since her appointment the leadership of the school has taken on a new dynamism with the school gradually developing its focus and having a clear sense of purpose. From September the school will experience further challenges with a significant number of changes to the teaching staff, including a new Assistant Head. The Head teacher is very committed to developing a dynamic leadership team that can work together to fully develop the school's Catholic mission and ethos and to provide a spiritually nurturing and prayerful environment.

Religious Life

Throughout this visit the capacity of the children to reflect and be still, particularly during prayer times was very evident. In the whole school Act of Worship, children participated well, singing with enthusiasm and responding well to the prayers and

questions for reflection. At present Acts of Worship tend to be adult led but there is a commitment to moving this forward so that children are enabled and encouraged to develop their own liturgical skills.

Links with the parish involve a different class each week participating in a parish weekday Mass most weeks.. Currently children are not given the opportunity to contribute to these Masses but it is hoped that in time this will also change. The Parish priest is a welcome visitor to the school and the children enjoy his company.

Around the school displays and focal points are being developed. As yet these tend to be fairly static but reflect very well some of the creative work that is being done in RE. For example the work children have produced through the topic of Pentecost has produced some lively and engaging artwork. It will be helpful and important for new teachers coming into the school to have the opportunity for guidance and training in leading and supporting children to lead class Acts of Worship and for them to learn about the principles for creating living, dynamic focal points.

Teaching in RE

The school has embraced the Diocesan strategy for teaching RE with enthusiasm and energy. As a consequence lessons are generally well planned and engaging. All lessons observed ensured that children could access the topic and many children demonstrated average or above average levels of knowledge and understanding. For example in one lesson the teacher's clear learning objective and success criteria ensured that the children remained focused on the activity she had given them and achieved the learning objective very well. In this lesson the teacher had built on the children's previous learning and took several opportunities to assess how the children were learning and helping them to take the next step.

In another lesson the children were given many opportunities to recall previous learning and apply this to the work they were doing on the Mass. With a focus on the sign of peace, the teacher used a variety of methods to engage the children including a reflective use of power-point. The lesson helped to developed the children's understanding of what it means to be at peace and to make peace. In pairs children were encouraged to reflect on a personal situation which could cause them to feel worried and to help one another find solutions to this. The lesson developed to engage the children in looking at and devising their own symbols/signs for peace. The teacher encouraged peer assessment to gauge the success of the learning objective.

Across all of the lessons teachers demonstrated their capacity to set clear learning objectives, check for outcomes and ensure that they had a sense of how each child was achieving. Children expressed their enjoyment for the subject and said how much they liked RE because it was varied and interesting.

It would further enhance all lessons if there is a common marking policy which focuses on the religious content and that differentiation of work is based on religious knowledge and understanding.

With a new group of teachers joining the staff from September it will be important for the school to look at how all the teachers are supported to deliver RE and in particular to develop their own knowledge and understanding of the subject. In addition teachers will need to ensure that planning takes into account the need for activities that will enable children to achieve in both AT1 and AT2. As a policy, time needs to be built into the staff meeting programme to allow for comprehensive discussion of each topic as it arises to increase confidence and to identify any training needs. The support of local clergy or others with expertise in these areas is to be recommended.

Pastoral Life of the School

St. Mary's has a higher than average number of children with special needs. The willingness of the school to absorb and work with these children has continued to be a significant part of the mission of this school. The caring and compassionate nature of the whole community to support these children is to be commended.

For the most part children speak positively about the manner in which they are treated and feel confident about how the adults deal with difficulties when they arise. The children like to feel involved the wider community and enjoy the opportunities that they have to raise awareness and money for local and distant charities. In addition to their support for CAFOD the school supports several charities including the shoe-box appeal, the Poppy appeal and a school in Kenya.

Focus for Development

With the arrival of several new members of staff and new governors it is a timely opportunity for the school to plan its development in the following areas:

- To invest time in ensuring that every member of the adult community is clear about the nature and purpose of the Catholic school and in particular the school's contribution to the mission of the Church.
- To develop all teachers to be able to deliver the RE curriculum with confidence. This will require some training in how to deliver God Matters and on-going adult formation in an understanding of the theological concepts that the curriculum demands. In addition all lessons need to have a clear learning outcome evident for the children to see and focus on.
- To develop the quality and consistency of liturgy in the school with a particular focus on children being enabled to contribute to and lead Acts of Worship. For this to happen the adult members of the community may need to develop their own skills in this area. In addition the school needs to establish a clear pattern of liturgies that take place during the course of the school week.

Conclusion

St. Mary's is a school with the potential to become a thriving and dynamic community. With a new leadership team and a new group of governors the school has a genuine opportunity to move forward creatively and positively.

I enjoyed my visit to the school and would like to express my gratitude for all who helped to make it a positive experience.

Sarah Adams
Schools Adviser
July 2012