

DIOCESE OF PLYMOUTH

Department for Formation

**St Mary's Roman Catholic First School – Swanage, BH19
2BH**

Record of Diocesan Review 7th December 06

URN 113829

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Introduction

The school is **overdue** an inspection as it was last inspected by Ofsted on 22-24 October 01 and was judged at that time to be a very effective school. 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 Mark Shaw (Diocesan Schools Officer) working with the headteacher; and the religious education co-ordinator. The outcomes of the review were agreed on the basis of:-

- contextual documentation provide by the schools in advance or held at the Department Offices
- further documentation made available in school
- visits to all classes
- discussion with the members of staff and pupils
- observation of worship.

The school through its self-evaluation processes had requested that the review include the following areas as an opportunity for support and guidance (Part 2)

- Review of the work of teaching assistants and their support for the religious life of the school
- Support and guidance for the co-ordinator on the effective monitoring of teaching and learning and worship opportunities
- Time to share thoughts with headteacher and religious education co-ordinator on:
 - SEAL and its use within the school.
 - How to further develop the process of self-evaluation within the school.

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, its educational success and its contribution to the Church's mission in education. The list below is intended to be illustrative, not comprehensive.

1. Teaching and Learning in Religious Education

Standards of attainment in religious education are very good. The headteacher and her staff are highly committed and enthusiastic about teaching and learning in religious education and this is clearly reflected in the pupils' attainment, their enthusiasm in lessons and in the display work around the school. Teachers at St Mary's have a very clear focus on promoting high standards and the pupils' response is excellent. The pupils' books show a wide range of learning opportunities and clear sense of curriculum coverage. Well directed teaching assistants reinforce and support learning very effectively (see part 2 notes) Pupils achieve well in their lessons, they are confident, willing to contribute and show very good understanding.

2. Worship

The school considers the opportunities for worship and spiritual development to be a strength of the school and this is confirmed by this visit. Pupils enjoy all forms of liturgy and worship and are being effectively supported in the development of their personal relationship with God. They are prayerful and reverent in both small and large gatherings.

3. Leadership

The school leadership team has a clear vision for the school which is understood by the school community. There is a very strong focus on all pupils achieving their potential and it is evident that pupils of all backgrounds and abilities have equal opportunities for success in all areas of school life. The staff team is united and all play a significant role in the personal development of pupils and adult members of the school community. The governing body supports the school well and is ambitious in its plans for further development on the school site.

4. Relationship with the Parish and Local Community

There are highly productive links between school and parish, both formal and informal. The school works in close partnership with the parish to support parents in developing the faith and spiritual life of their children. There is a high regard for the school and its pupils in the local area which has obviously developed from the many opportunities taken to support local events.

5. Partnership with Parents

Parents are very supportive of the school and express very positive views on the care of their children. Staff are viewed as approachable and parents value their high expectations of pupils to work hard and achieve their best. They consider that they are made to feel welcome and many play an active part in the daily life of the school e.g. helping in classroom, with school clubs etc. Parents also contribute very well to the school's prayer life attending assemblies and liturgies.

6. Pupils' Pastoral Support and Development

Care for pupil is excellent. The ethos of trust and respect for each individual person is evident throughout the day. The quality of relationships is very good and this makes an important contribution to the quality of school life for pupils and staff. All pupils are valued and given equal opportunities to work and play. Success is recognised and celebrated. Pupils have a mature and responsible attitude to learning and are well behaved.

7. Contribution to the Common Good

Fund-raising for charity is an important part of the life of the school. Pupils regularly organise events and fund-raise both for local and world wide charities. They have entertained local senior citizens with concerts and carol singing, and they distribute their harvest gifts in the local community. Through their charity and community experiences the pupils are gaining a better understanding and sense of responsibility of supporting needs of others.

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 further develop the school's self evaluation strategies and support for the co-ordinator in all aspects of her monitoring role
2. To undertake a self-review of liturgy and worship and to continue to promote excellence in the development of pupils' spirituality
3. Strengthen and embed quality assurance systems, to include sharing of good practice across the school and the marking of pupils' religious education work
4. To explore the possibility of formulating a comprehensive PSHE (personal, social, and health education) programme to include SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning)
5. To further develop the assessment of learning and tracking of pupil progress in line with the diocesan and national developments