

DIOCESE OF PLYMOUTH

Department for Formation



**St Peter's Catholic Primary School
Brentford Avenue, Whiteleigh PL5 4HD**

URN 113492

**Head Teacher: Kevin Norris
Chair of Governors: Paul Watson**

**Record Of Diocesan Review
18th March, 2010**

Introduction

The school was last inspected by Ofsted in February 2010 and was judged to be a good school with outstanding pastoral care for vulnerable children and their families. Ofsted reported, *'In keeping with the school's ethos, the staff's excellent pastoral care includes outstanding support for vulnerable pupils and their families. Pupils' good attendance is assured by a welcoming environment, good links with parents and pupils' enjoyment of 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 Peter'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 (RE Adviser), working closely with the head teacher and the Maria Cumming. (RE Leader). The outcomes of the review were agreed on the basis of:-

- contextual documentation provided by the school
- observation of lessons;
- discussion with the members of staff, including the RE Co-ordinator;
- discussions school chaplain;
- Participation in an Act of Collective Worship;

Strengths of the school

This is a small but increasingly effective school where there is strong leadership and an enthusiastic staff team. Central to the life of the school is its catholicity which is evident throughout the school and makes a significant contribution to the Church's mission in education. What follows is illustrative of the commitment the school has to the education and care of the children who attend St. Peter's.

Leadership

The leadership at St. Peter's has made significant progress from the last visit in April 2009 to this one with a growing confidence developing within the leadership team. At the time of this visit the Head Teacher was leading in two schools on a temporary basis. This has meant that other members of the team, (Deputy Head, Paul Morse and RE Leader) have needed to take on more of the day to day running of the school. This they have done successfully and without loss to the quality of care and learning in the school. The enthusiasm of all the staff and a number of students present on the day reflect a high level of morale which emanates from the leadership and which filters down throughout the school to the children who came across as happy and secure. The commitment of the RE

leader at St. Peter's is to be commended. Her energy and enthusiasm to make things happen is beginning to bear fruit and as a member of the senior management team she has the potential to drive things even further forward as the school takes on a new RE curriculum. Her support to the staff and strong relationships with the parish and close liaison with the parish priest make her a valuable asset to the school.

The shared vision of the governors and leaders of the school ensure that the children experience a growing commitment to providing the best possible environment and opportunities for the children to grow and learn effectively. The parish priest, who is also a governor, is a welcome member of the school community. He feels proud of the school and enjoys visiting whenever he can. His commitment to the school is invaluable since he not only provides the school with a prayerful presence but his pastoral approach encourages people in the sharing of their faith and lives. Gospel values lie at the heart of this school and come alive in the wide variety of activities provided for the children. Daily prayer, collective acts of worship and many charitable events reflecting the liturgical seasons help the children to place Christ at the centre of their lives.

Religious Life and Worship

As has been stated St. Peter's has a strong commitment to its mission as a Catholic School. There is a growing confidence within the staff to reflect on matters of faith and to share a prayer life together. This is demonstrated by the choice they make to pray together in their own time within the course of the school day. This adds to the strength of a school which makes no apologies for giving priority to its Catholic life in terms of curriculum time and prayer time. Weekly Masses in the school and other acts of collective worship ensure that the children are offered spiritual experiences of quality. The Act of Worship experienced on the day demonstrated and desire on the part of the staff to involve the children as much as possible. The school has an award-winning choir and many are involved in liturgical ministries. The efforts that are being made here would be further enhanced by some development of skills in leading worship and helping the children to do that also.

Teaching and Learning

The confidence of teachers to engage with RE as a significant part of the school curriculum has grown significantly since the last visit. Lessons observed during the day showed that teachers are developing their skills in the use of IT within RE and in asking challenging questions for the more able children. There was evidence of teachers enabling children to review their own work, select work appropriate to their needs and engage in meaningful discussion. One year three class in particular worked hard to think about and imagine what it would be like to have Jesus wash their feet. They had a sound grasp of the story and showed a high degree of empathy and appreciation for the feelings of different characters. Their capacity to concentrate and stay with an abstract concept for quite a long time was a credit to the teacher. Whilst the use of IT within RE was evident there is a desire on the part of the school to develop this area. The school could also think about adopting the multi-sensory approach they have in other lessons within the teaching of RE, since this would enhance the good experience the children are already having. From displays and prayer centres around the school it was very evident that the children are encouraged to reflect on their own lives and the

lives of others in a way that encourages them to consider the needs of people around the world and in the local community. Links made between lessons and the liturgical season reinforce for the children the holistic nature of the faith life of the school. Of particular note is the way in which the teachers benefit from skilled teaching assistants who offer their time and talents generously. This is very evident in the creative work they do with displays and in the support they give to the needs of different groups within the classroom.

Pastoral Life of the School

Ofsted highlighted the outstanding nature of the pastoral life of St. Peter's and justifiably. The children who attend this school know that they will be safe and well cared for. Children with special needs are given full attention and supported with care by committed TAs, who are a great asset to the school. St. Peter's is an inclusive school where children and adults feel welcome and at ease. Students on placement at the school have appreciated this welcome and the support that they have been given. Currently the school has one student who having completed her placement continues to come to the school on a voluntary basis once a week because her experience at the school was so positive. The relaxed atmosphere within the staff room is coupled with a genuine respect for each person. This inevitably spills over to the children who are taught to treat each other with respect and dignity. The role modelling of the adults is crucial in this and important for the well-being of the whole school.

In addition to the pastoral care of one another the adults and children have a strong commitment to the well-being of others which is reflected in the many charities that the school supports. During this term the year 6 children raised money for CAFOD and the Haiti appeal by sleeping in the school hall, without any comforts. The purpose behind this successful event was to help the children to understand what it might be like to have very little and to raise money in the process. Helping the children to develop their capacity for empathy is very important within the school.

Agreed areas for development

At the last review it was identified that the school could afford to be ambitious in developing further its pastoral and spiritual mission because of the commitment of so many individuals within the school. The school has begun this process. It will be important for it to continue to do this as it is having a significant impact and the morale of the staff is very positive.

With regards to other areas for development the school has identified for itself the following areas which it would like to and would be advised to develop. These include:

- Developing the skills of all staff to use IT within the teaching of RE
- Developing the capacity of the staff and children to lead Acts of Worship and build on the quality already provided. Support for this can be obtained from the Department for Formation.
- Developing a multi-sensory approach to the teaching of RE.

Concluding Note

St. Peter's is a successful school which has much to offer the children and adults who form its community. Its strength lies in the strong commitment of the governors and leadership team to fostering the Catholic life of the school in all its diversity.

It was a pleasure to visit the school and to see the hard work and commitment of all the staff. My thanks to all who supported the visit and for the kind hospitality received.

Sarah Adams

Plymouth Diocese
Schools Adviser