

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



St. John's Roman Catholic Primary School  
Melbourne Road  
Tiverton  
Devon  
EX16 5LA

**URN 140762**

Head Teacher: Mrs Caroline James  
Chair of Governors: Simon Coombs

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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

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**Date of Inspection: 14-15<sup>th</sup> June, 2018**

Inspectors:  
Miss Sarah Adams  
Mr. Mark Brown

## Context of School

St John's Catholic Primary School is slightly smaller than the average primary school and is part of the Plymouth Catholic Schools Trust. The trust was formed in April 2014. Since the last inspection there have been three changes of Head Teacher. The current Head Teacher was appointed in February 2017. There have also been a significant number of staffing changes with three new members starting at the beginning of this academic year.

## Context Data

NOR: 194 Girls: 93 Boys: 101 Disadvantaged: 22.3% EAL: 13% SEN: 16% FSM 16%

<b>Over-All Effectiveness:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
The School as a Catholic Community:	Good	Grade 2
Leadership and Management:	Good	Grade 2
Word (Curriculum RE)	RI	Grade 3
Worship and Spiritual Life of the School	Good	Grade 2

## Summary of Key Findings

St. John's is a Catholic school which is **Good**.

### The school has the following strengths:

1. St. John's is an inclusive and welcoming school, striving to live out its Mission and vision as a Catholic school.
2. The school understands Gospel values and places these at the heart of its decision making and desire to continually improve and move forward.
3. Relationships within the school are highly positive. Adults are supportive of one another and children believe that this is a school where everyone is safe and well-cared for.
4. The Head Teacher is a long-standing member of staff, with a passion for the school and committed to enabling it to become the very best it can be. Her own humility and willing to accept challenge and the need for change provides the school with a true model of leadership, reflective of the model which Christ offers us.
5. The Governing body is growing in confidence and recognises the need to be consistently supportive but also challenging. They will become increasingly effective the more that they respond to what they see and hear with challenging and incisive questioning.
6. Curriculum RE has a high status in the school and is valued and seen as important by teachers and the leadership, but is yet to be a strength of the school. This is partly due to changes in staff and a lack of confidence in the teaching of RE, assessment and delivering dynamic and engaging lessons.
7. Induction is a strength of the school with all new teachers being supported to develop their skills, embrace the Catholic nature of the school and receive appropriate training.
8. Children enjoy their RE and produce some good work when they are enabled to do so. The work in their books is presented well and reflects a positive attitude to the subject.

9. Support staff provide valuable assistance to the teachers, particularly with the most vulnerable children. They are sensitive to the children and respond well to their needs.
10. Pastoral Care in the school is outstanding. There is a genuine commitment on the part of all adults to see the unique potential of every child. In particular, vulnerable children receive excellent care and attention. The Sendco and ELSA lead practitioner are highly effective in identifying the needs of children and putting in place appropriate courses of action to ensure that such children are kept at the fore-front of people's minds.
11. Safeguarding is effective and clear policies ensure that it remains a strength of the school.
12. Parents are increasingly supportive and positive about the school. This is because the school offers many opportunities for them to meet with staff and invite them into the school whenever it is possible and appropriate.
13. All aspects of school life contribute to the spiritual development of pupils. They are open to God's presence in all that they encounter.
14. The school's relationship with the parish is excellent. Strong links ensure that both the parish and the school have a sense of being a part of each other.
15. The school liturgies and worship enable pupils, staff, parents and carers to reflect on and be grateful for the gifts they have received from God.

#### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

1. The school has identified the need to develop a new Mission Statement which gives everyone the opportunity to contribute and make it their own. With a number of staff joining the school this is an important opportunity to enable everyone to understand what it means to work in a Catholic school.
2. For all in middle leadership roles to be supported to understand and develop skills of monitoring with rigour and high expectations for outcomes.
3. For Governors to continue in their work of supporting the school and be clear about the need to challenge effectively and rigorously.
4. Provide a clear programme of development for staff in relation to their RE subject knowledge so that all can grow in confidence for delivering the curriculum.
5. For the subject leader to have training and support to develop the capacity to challenge and where necessary to have difficult conversations.
6. Develop assessment in line with Diocesan and National guidelines so that teachers understand the framework for assessment and the expectations these hold for teaching and learning outcomes.
7. Develop further the skills of teachers to provide children with meaningful experiences of liturgy and prayer.

#### **Full Report**

#### **THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC COMMUNITY**

**Good**

- St. John's is a warm, welcoming and caring community where everyone is recognised as a child of God and where the unique potential of all is embraced.

- Behaviour in the school is excellent. Children are polite, courteous and friendly. They have a clear sense of right and wrong. The school's approach to behaviour is rooted in restorative justice, which the children understand and value.
- The school's current Mission Statement lies at the heart of decision making and expectations regarding the way people relate to one another. It is recognised that currently many staff have not been a part of developing this and the opportunity to do so would be advantageous to all.
- The school has a relatively high proportion of vulnerable children. The Sendco and ELSA Lead practitioner are highly effective, passionate about what they do and consistent in their approach. They understand the issues and through careful analysis of information, provide the most appropriate support packages for each child so that they can settle and participate fully in the life of the school. Pastoral care throughout the school is outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants respond well to the different emotional and social needs of the children. The atmosphere around the school is calm, purposeful and respectful.
- Children feel very positive about how they are treated and have a genuine faith in the adults to keep them safe and looked after. They are happy and appreciate the clear expectations that staff have of them.
- The school embraces diversity and promotes equality. Children are helped to appreciate the needs of others and enthusiastically look for opportunities to support a growing range of charities. They are able to speak eloquently about the different things they do and why they think it is important.
- Induction for new staff is a strength of the school. New teachers speak of the support they have received and the opportunities for professional development which have helped them to develop their skills. .
- The school embraces the love of Christ by promoting strong partnerships. These include developing positive relationships with parents, children supporting one another through the buddy system, engaging with the parish in a meaningful way and encouraging parents to feel confident about asking for support with their children.

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**THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC COMMUNITY (LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT)    Good**

- The Head Teacher and her senior leadership team are effective in their commitment to bringing about change in the school, set an example of service and humility, reflecting Christ's call to love one another.
- The Head Teacher, with her governors, is committed to sharing a Catholic vision of education which embraces all and reflects the mission of the Church. To this end they are determined to raise standards and ensure that every child is given the opportunity to become the very best that they can be.
- The adults in the school appreciate the desire of the leadership to move the school forward and the support that they receive to enable them to do this in line with

expectations. With increasing demands being made, most staff are responding well to the need for self-evaluation, monitoring and searching analysis. Where teachers need greater guidance or support this is being put in place.

- The school has a robust action plan for all aspects of the school life, including that of the Catholic life. However, there is a need to strengthen the capacity of middle leaders to deliver effective monitoring and feedback so that improvement is rapid and sustainable.
- The governing body has recognised the need to be more involved in the running of the school and make regular visits. There is a need for a systematic approach to these visits to ensure that each visit has a specific purpose which contributes to the over-all strategic direction of the school including areas relating to the Catholic dimension. Governors are supportive and challenge in some areas of school life. Consistent challenge with pertinent questioning will enhance the commitment they have to improving outcomes still further.
- Relationships with the wider community are strong. School and Parish links have developed significantly, with members of the Parish coming into the school on a regular basis and the school participating and being involved in a number of Parish initiatives.
- The school is actively involved in supporting the work of other schools both within the academy and in the wider community. The Primary Writing project which the school participates in has had an impact on the quality of the language which children use in their RE as well as in English.

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## **THE SCHOOL AS A TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMUNITY (WORD)**

### **REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT**

- Teachers and support staff have warm and positive relationships with children. They engage positively with them and are encouraging.
- Children talk about enjoying their lessons but they cannot always talk about their learning. Some lessons do not ensure that all children are consistently on task. As a result their desire to do well is limited by the opportunities they are given to make progress and apply themselves to the tasks they are given.
- All classes receive their 10% entitlement to RE. Working walls for RE are used in some classes to support learning and in most classes these show the learning journey that the children have been on. In some classes RE displays are more evident than displays which show the learning and which children can turn to for support.
- Teachers work hard in the delivery of their lessons. However, too often children are not allowed to show their capacity to develop their thinking and application of concepts. As a result they lose concentration and are easily distracted from their learning. Teachers need to think about their questioning to ensure that they ask open questions and challenge the children's thinking.

- Teachers use the teaching resources provided by the Diocese but do not adapt these sufficiently to meet the needs of their own children or their own teaching style. Differentiation needs to be given greater prominence in lessons to ensure that children who are more able are allowed to flourish.
- Monitoring of RE is not yet sufficiently embedded to ensure that teachers know how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Teachers need to be given clear messages about their strengths and areas for development so that they can adapt their teaching to meet the needs of the children.
- Assessment for learning (AFL) is not a strength. In order for lessons to be effective and challenge all children, differentiation based on AFL needs to be embedded.
- Ensuring that all teachers are supported to be confident about the theology they are teaching is essential. Equally teachers need to take responsibility for seeking guidance in areas which they feel insecure.
- Teaching assistants work supportively to enable children with particular needs to access lessons and stay on task.
- Work in books shows progression across the year groups. However some work shows that sometimes there is a disparity between the learning objective and the written activity given to children.
- The school's marking policy is not yet embedded and as yet is not having an impact on the progress children could make. Teachers need to ensure that religious language and theology is marked and children given the opportunity to extend their thinking.

### ***THE SCHOOL AS A CELEBRATING COMMUNITY (WORSHIP AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT)***

***Good***

- The spiritual development of pupils is enabled by the school offering a range of experiences for prayer and worship.
- Children are open to the presence of God in the lives and the lives of others. The commitment on the part of all in the school has contributed to this.
- Whole school acts of worship have recently been developed so that they follow the liturgical year and ensure that the mission of the school is developed through engaging with the Gospel of the Sunday.
- Some acts of worship tend to be wordy and would be improved with more silence and time for reflection. However, it is clear that Scripture is seen as both important and relevant.
- Parents, carers and parishioners respond positively to invitations to participate in school liturgies and the numbers of those attending is gradually growing.
- The school has a positive relationship with the local parish. Links are strong and there is a shared sense of school and parish belonging to each other. Both share information about what they are doing so that more people can feel involved in the life of both.
- The school community actively participates in the traditions and practices of the Catholic Church, which influence the worship in the school and positively impacts on the spiritual development of the children.

- Each classroom has a prayer focus which is engaging and well-established, reflecting the liturgical season and the work of RE.
  - Around the school a variety of displays, focal points and artefacts point to the Catholicity of the school.
  - As the liturgical life of the school develops more, opportunities for children to learn the skills of leading worship will be a natural outcome.
  - Pupils would benefit from more opportunities for spontaneous religious experiences outside of the formal arrangements in class and school.
  - In all aspects of the life of the school the spiritual and moral development of the children is clear to see. Children are taught and nurtured to understand the difference between right and wrong. The school has a restorative justice dimension to its behavioural policy. As a result pupils understand the concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation and demonstrate a genuine desire to overcome conflict and be a community of peace.
  - Pupils relate worship to their everyday lives and are sensitive to the needs and beliefs of others. They can talk about why they choose to support one another and how important it is to live the Gospel in their local community and further afield.
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## **Conclusion**

St. John's is a school with the potential to be a very strong Catholic School, rooted in the Gospel and committed to developing its' Catholicity. Although there is work to be done in the areas of teaching and learning, a stable staff group and on-going professional development in the teaching of RE should bring about the changes needed. The school needs to proud of the achievements that they have made and confident moving forward.

Sarah Adams  
Mark Brown