



Diocese of Plymouth
From the Office of the Bishop

Ref: BMOT/EK1974

5th December 2016

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you may be aware, OFSTED recently undertook a focused inspection of 10 schools within Plymouth CAST, as part of a review of the Trust. That inspection raised a number of concerns about the performance of the Trust and the performance of some schools under its care.

I want to begin by reassuring you that I am committed to working with the agencies which have highlighted the weaknesses of Plymouth CAST and I am addressing the changes which are called for immediately.

Plymouth CAST is founded on the vision of putting our children at the heart of everything we do. I am deeply disappointed that weak leadership, combined with the lack of transparency and accountability identified during the inspection, has not served our children well.

I share your justifiable concerns and know that you will agree that the foundation of our Catholic schools is our primary mission that each child should be able to encounter the living God, who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth. This mission rests on three interdependent objectives: to provide an environment in which children are enabled to build and deepen their relationship with God; to foster a rigorous academic culture aimed at the pursuit of truth; and to actively promote the development and growth of virtue in each child.

In order to address the concerns raised by Ofsted about the academic development of our children, I have already authorised changes to the Governance of the Trust and have appointed new members of the Board. Additional leadership support has been provided to our schools and a new Chief Operating Officer has been recruited.

We are working closely with the Regional Schools Commissioner and are developing a comprehensive action plan to ensure every school in the Trust improves its performance. We are providing additional resources to the schools to support their development plans.

As your Bishop, I am well aware of the sheer hard work and commitment of Head Teachers, Teachers, Support Staff and Governors. I am grateful to so many for the service that they provide in enabling our children to reach their full potential. I believe we have

made a good start in addressing the issues raised by OFSTED. We are building deeper partnerships with all those who have already committed themselves to helping us. I include especially the Regional Schools Commissioner, the Catholic Education Service and St Mary's University in that number. We are also looking to others for examples of good practice; we can learn from them and I am sure they will assist us in all that we must now do.

I have no doubt that with the right kind of support, focus, and application to what needs to be done, we can turn things around, so that our Catholic Schools and CAST can be something of which we are rightly proud. I know you all want this too.

I assure you that I will do all I can so that we redress the criticisms of the Ofsted report and, with your continued support in sending your children to our schools, the best will be assured for them at all levels.

With my kindest wishes and prayers.

Yours devotedly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Mark O'Toole". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Rt Rev Mark O'Toole
Bishop of Plymouth