



PLYMOUTH CAST NEWSLETTER

Term 2 2018/19

“First and foremost the Church offers its educational service to ‘those who are poor in the goods of this world or who are deprived of the assistance and affection of a family or who are strangers to the gift of faith.’”

The Catholic School (1977)

Board of Directors

Our new Chairman of the CAST Board is Rt Hon Lord Burnett, a Lib Dem peer with extensive experience in public life. John served in the Royal Marines before going on to a distinguished career in law and politics. For much of his working life John and his wife have run a family farm. He was appointed Chair by the Board on 6 July and is looking forward to leading CAST into a confident new era, inspired by our new vision and values. John would like to thank all the staff and governors in our schools for their exceptional hard work and dedication to the education and formation of our children and young people

We were pleased to welcome two new Directors to the Board at the September meeting: Ann Harris and Jacqui Vaughan. Some of you will know Ann as the Chair of Governors at St. Mary’s, Poole. Ann has extensive experience in education, as a Headteacher of two primary schools and as a National Leader of Governance. Jacqui also has extensive experience in education, as a senior leader in secondary schools, with particular experience in safeguarding. Jacqui is currently Operations Manager and Education Lead at the CSW Group.



Rt Hon Lord Burnett

Link Directors

Each Director on the Board is also a Link Director for one of our schools. A revised list of Link Directors will be sent out to schools in due course. The revised list will accommodate our new Directors and new responsibilities for other Directors. We will also be able to confirm before too long the Lead Directors for RE and Catholic Life, SEND, Safeguarding, Statutory Grants and Health & Safety.

Plymouth CAST

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CEO's Updates

Vision and Values

The feedback from the vision and values consultation process was highly positive. I'd like to thank our Headteachers who led their communities through the process. Feedback was received from all of our schools, which is an exceptional return and shows your commitment to our core purpose, our mission, our 'why'. The Board considered the final Vision and Values paper on 26 October. There is a final round of amendments to be signed off by Friday 2 November and then the Vision and Values paper will be sent out to you on Monday 5 November.

A new Scheme of Delegation has been approved by Bishop Mark and will also be published next week. Since the Scheme of Delegation contains the vision and mission statements, we will have to wait until the Vision and Values paper is signed off before the Scheme of Delegation can be published.

The other document which was sent out for consultation was the CAST Staff Code of Conduct. Many of the points raised by schools and the unions have been incorporated in the final version which was approved by the Board on 26 October. This is attached with the newsletter. Can you please distribute this Code of Conduct to all your staff and ask them to return to you a declaration that they have read, understood and agree to abide by the Code of Conduct. I would then like each Headteacher to return to me a single declaration that all members of staff have read and will abide by the Code. I will send out a declaration proforma in due course. **The deadline for return of these is Friday 23 November.** The Code will be reviewed annually, so if there are still issues which are not clear or not covered by the Code, these can be dealt with in future revisions. The Whistleblowing Policy was also approved by the Board and is attached.

Governors

I look forward to meeting up with our governors again at the Governors' briefings in November (please see Calendar on CAST website for details). At 4.30 pm there will be a brief induction for new governors, followed by the main briefing at 5.15 pm. Along with the Scheme of Delegation, the final version of the Governors' Handbook, which was approved by the Board on 26 October, will be sent out next week. This will bring clarity to the role of our governors and I very much hope will help to inspire and motivate this committed group of volunteers. We will now be able to work together to develop good practice and consider case studies of excellent governance. **If any governors would like to share with me any case studies of good practice in their local governing board, please email me at Raymond.friel@plymouthcast.org.uk.**

On a less positive note, the take up of the offer of a free place on a bespoke Development Programme for Chairs run by the NGA has been low, so that is unlikely to proceed. I will go back to the NGA and see if there is any possibility of a training package online. I appreciate that many of our chairs and aspiring chairs have commitments which prevent them from signing up to training during the working week. We know that the training of our governors is a pressing issue and I will be taking this up with the Diocesan School Commission to discuss the best way forward.

Policies

We have had a number of enquiries about CAST policies. Please note that even if a CAST policy has slipped its review date (e.g. an HR policy on the website), that policy is still current and valid. What I intend to do is send you a complete policy and procedures tracker so you have a complete picture of what has been approved, what is pending and where you can find the policies.

Raymond Friel

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RE and Catholic Life

“How wonderful is the certainty that each human life is not adrift in the midst of hopeless chaos, in a world ruled by pure chance or endlessly recurring cycles! The Creator can say to each one of us: ‘Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you’ (Jer 1:5). We were conceived in the heart of God, and for this reason ‘each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary’.”

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 65

RE and Catholic Life Adviser

I'm sorry to report that our second attempt to appoint an RE and Catholic Life Adviser was unsuccessful. We will try again but not until after Christmas. In the meantime, I am indebted to the RE Steering Group (Sarah Barreto, Emma Wilson, Rebecca Meteau and Emma Kendal) for helping to keep us focused on the big agenda items.

Secondment? I would be interested to hear from any of our colleagues who might be interested in a secondment to the RE Adviser's post from January to July 2018. I'd be happy to look at a range of options, from one colleague per area for 1 or 2 days a week, or one colleague who might be released full-time for six months. The backfill arrangements will depend on the number of colleagues involved. If there is any interest in this option, please let me know as soon as possible and no later than Friday 16 November.

Primary RE Leaders Days

I am pleased to confirm that thanks to support from the RE Steering Group, we will be going ahead with our RE Leaders days later this month, **suitable for both primary and secondary**. A major focus will be feedback from national training on the new Age Related Expectations in RE and discussion on how we can embed our Gospel values in our schools and wider communities (please bring examples of good practice!). Please encourage your colleagues to book on the following days –

Monday 26 November (CENTRAL) 9.30 am – 3.30 pm St. Boniface House

Tuesday 27 November (WEST) 9.30 am – 3.30 pm St. Boniface House

Thursday 29 November (EAST) 9.30 am – 3.30 pm St. Mary's, Swanage

Conference on 20-21 March at Livermead Cliff Hotel, Torquay TQ2 6RQ

Our conference for RE Leaders in March has grown in significance and I would now like to **invite all Headteachers, as well as RE Leaders** to attend. The cost to schools has still to be confirmed but we will ensure it is as reasonable as possible. Please save the dates and we will let you know when booking opens.

We have managed to book Sr. Judith Russi to come and speak to us about her work with pupil chaplaincy, as well as Roz Stockley, who will lead a session on meditation with children in school. Roz has already introduced meditation to a number of our schools in the East. We have also booked colleagues from CAFOD who will be helping us to engage more deeply with *Laudato Si*, the encyclical of Pope Francis on care for the earth, our common home.

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You may wish to have a look at some of the excellent resources online from CAFOD, including pupil-led collective worship resources at <https://cafod.org.uk/Education/Primary-teaching-resources/Collective-worship-resources> and RE curriculum resources at <https://comeandsee.cafod.org.uk/>. They refer to the Scheme of Work Come and See, but are just as suitable for God Matters.

There is also a refugee animation, which will support one of the prayer themes for Advent, at <https://cafod.org.uk/Education/Secondary-and-youth-resources/Share-the-Journey-walk>

Advent 2018

This year Advent begins on 2 December. The liturgical colour for Advent is violet (purple). Please try and reflect this in your prayer stations, either with violet cloth or backing. I have attached to this newsletter Notes on the Season of Advent from the Liturgical Office which provide some more background on this beautiful season in the life of the Church. The prayer themes for Advent, which you should try and incorporate into your collective worship, are Openness to the word of God, Migrants and refugees, Expectant mothers.

Sightbox Fundraising

At the Heads and Deputies conference in September, many of you expressed an interest in supporting John Patterson and St. Vincent's School with their inspirational work in supporting visually impaired young people at home and abroad.

Please find attached a flier from John with some more information and links to the website (which includes film clips and info for use in assembly) and Twitter for those who would like to raise funds in school. As John said, £40 will provide a Sightbag to support one visually impaired youngster. If you'd like to take part, I'd suggest that you make this your target.

Some colleagues have suggested a CAST-wide mufti day. This is an excellent idea, but given the short notice, what I propose is that those who wish to take part arrange the fundraising in their own way and send a cheque for £40 to me at St. Boniface House made payable to Sightbox Trust **by the end of November**. I will then forward all the cheques to John with a covering letter. This means that we can consider adopting a different charity for Advent – perhaps the Catholic Children's Society?

Remembrance Day

This year, 11 November falls on a Sunday. It is a very significant Remembrance Day: 100 years since the guns fell silent on 11 November 1918. I have seen a lot of very moving and powerful work in our schools on remembrance, but we will not of course be in school for the national two-minute silence. I suggest that we observe the silence on Monday 12 November, if possible at 11.00 am.



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Finance and Resources Updates

Teachers Pay Award 2018-19

The Board has agreed to implement the Teachers pay award in full, and to move the M2-M6 salary bands back in line with the national position. The pay award will be implemented in your November pay and will be backdated to September 2018. The award is as outlined below:

- i. a 3.5% uplift has been applied across the main pay range and of the unqualified teachers' pay range.
- ii. a 2% uplift has been applied to the upper pay range, the leading practitioner pay range and all allowances across all pay ranges.
- iii. a 1.5% uplift to the leadership pay ranges (including Headteacher groups).

Cashflow

The Trust is now paying all school costs from the central bank account but are not receiving all funds as some are being sent directly to schools. We will therefore be requesting funds transfers from school bank accounts to the Trust to ensure that there are sufficient funds to cover the outgoing payments. Please ensure that you respond to the request promptly.

Finance and Administration review

All of the feedback has been reviewed and considered and this will shape the way forward. We will be communicating with staff involved and their Headteachers over the next week, and hope to conclude this final stage by the end of November, with induction into the new roles during December. What has become clear is that the administration arrangements at schools is not consistent in terms of the scope of the roles of the administrative staff, the salary grades and the training and experience. We therefore need to factor this into the discussions at an individual school level and ensure that there are no gaps in terms of capacity and experience as we move forward.

Year end 2017/18

The financial year end 2017/18 has now closed and the auditors are currently undertaking their work. Please can you ensure that you have sent over the information requested in the previous newsletter to save any last minute delays. We will be issuing out to your draft (pre-audit) reserve position, which will form your opening position for the 2018/19 year.

2018/19 Budgets

The Government has confirmed the grant to be allocated by school to cover some of the teachers' pay award. The link is <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-pay-grant-2018-to-2019-financial-year-allocations>

As the allocation is based on pupil numbers and not actual pay arrangements in individual schools we will need to review each school to see whether the grant covers the pay award and the associated on-costs.

I will be undertaking a budget review with all schools over the next two months to ensure that the savings required by the Board across the Trust can be achieved and also to look at the 3 year position of the school and begin discussions on possible ways forward in terms of financial sustainability. This will also be a topic at the next set of Heads Briefings.

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Financial Update and Reporting

The Financial Policy and Regulations have been updated and approved by the Board, and in line with this policy Financial Procedures have been produced to outline at a more detailed level how financial matters should be undertaken at the school and how to build the Live Reports from the accounting system. A finance update is being issued this week with the relevant documents attached, including the reporting dates for the management accounts.

In addition, the Freedom of Information Policy has been updated as has the Risk Management Policy and these have been placed on the policy section of the CAST website. Please can you ensure that you familiarise yourself with them.

Other Regulatory Matters

The Trust does not have access to individual school data return information, hence our need to ask you to forward census data etc. In addition we do not always receive your funding statements. We will be working with the ESFA/DFE and Local Authority teams to resolve this matter, but in the meantime please can you ensure that you forward to me your LA funding statements, your pupil census and your workforce census information. The allocations and the condition of grant for the PE and sport premium for 2018/19 has been published. Please ensure that you spend your grant in line with the conditions outlined in the publications found at the attached link.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pe-and-sport-premium-conditions-of-grant-2018-to-2019/pe-and-sport-premium-conditions-of-grant-2018-to-2019-academies>

Karen Cook

Plymouth CAST

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Premises Matters

Health and Safety policy

The Health and Safety Committee have approved a revised version of the Plymouth CAST Health and Safety Policy. Small proposed changes are being made and once this task has been completed, the policy will be issued to all Schools for implementation. Please remember to refer to and follow this policy for all Health and Safety organisational, system and general arrangements.

Update on H & S reports

Thank you to everyone who submitted an update on the progress that is being made in resolving the non-conformities identified in their School Health and Safety Audits. This information is currently being processed and audit scores are being updated. If you do have any outstanding non-conformity actions, and require help to resolve them, please contact the Devon Health and Safety Help Desk on 01392 382027 in the first instance, or email me at paul.stewart@plymouthcast.org.uk

Training

The first mandatory Health and Safety training course for Headteachers took place on Tuesday 30th October at St. Boniface's College. Run by the Devon Health and Safety Team, this course was well received in providing an insight into the legal responsibilities the Headteacher retains in the day-to-day running and management of Health and Safety within their School. The next training date is the 5th December at St. Boniface House. We have also re-scheduled a day for the East Region at Sir Jon Colfox, Bridport on the 11th February 2019. Booking onto these courses is essential through the CAST Website/Eventbrite portal.

We are also making arrangements for further centrally funded Health and Safety Training for all schools, and will shortly announce dates for Asbestos Awareness, Legionella Awareness and EVOLVE training

Devon County Council Health and Safety Team

Look out for the next "Safety First Bulletin – Schools and Academies version" due on the OSHENS website shortly. This will be found within the Document Library under *News including bulletin, alerts and other information*. It provides updates and straightforward guidance for the continued management of Health and Safety within schools.

If you haven't already booked onto one of the Health and Safety coordinators briefings, please contact the Health and Safety Helpdesk on 01392 382027 or healthandsafety@devon.gov.uk and book your place now. This is a free annual event being held in Bideford, Ivybridge and Tiverton.

New way of working with TDA

We have been working on some key changes to the processes used by schools to request work from TDA. Unfortunately, we have just been recently informed that they (TDA) will be implementing their own Facilities Management Program, which is due to go live in January. This was an unexpected announcement, which has had a significant effect on the systems that we have been building for ourselves. In the meantime, please continue to report all your building and maintenance issues to TDA, but be prepared to fund from your School Maintenance budget those works that fall under the £500 threshold that are not already a SLA provision.

As part of a larger review process, we will be looking to develop maintenance support systems for all our Schools, either from shared caretaking provision, local building companies or through contracted services. Each School will be contacted shortly to see what provision they currently have, and will identify where support is needed. *Paul Stewart*

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Human Resources

Headteacher Personnel files

To support the recent changes brought about by the revised line management structure and Scheme of Delegation it is necessary for personnel files for all Headteachers to be held at St Boniface's House. Could Headteachers please bring their own personnel file to the appropriate Head's briefing which are scheduled for 13, 14 and 15 November. Karen Cook will collect the files from you and deliver them to the HR team at St Boniface House.

Policy development

Some people have been unclear about the status of various HR policies and the process for their review. The following are Trust wide policies that have been through consultation with the Unions where necessary and been adopted by the Trust Board.

Trust-wide policies

Plymouth CAST Appraisal Policy (HR policy)

Plymouth CAST Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy (HR policy)

Plymouth CAST Capability Policy (HR policy)

Plymouth CAST Disciplinary Policy (HR policy)

Plymouth CAST Equal Opportunities Policy (HR policy)

Plymouth CAST Flexible Working Policy (HR policy)

Plymouth CAST Grievance Policy (HR policy)

Plymouth CAST Making a Disclosure in the Public Interest (Whistleblowing) (HR policy)

Plymouth CAST Social Media Policy (HR policy)

Plymouth CAST Reorganisation and Redundancy (Procedure only) (HR policy)

Plymouth CAST Health and Safety Policy (Education and Standards policy)

Plymouth CAST Complaints Policy (Education and Standards policy)

Policy use and review

The policies listed above should be used in all cases. They supersede school policy on the given subject. If the policy you require is not listed above then your school policy should be used. Trust-wide policies are adopted by the Trust Board and do not require adoption by Local Governing Boards. Policies are reviewed centrally by Finance, Education and Standards or HR. Policies remain in force and should be used even if their review date appears to be overdue.

Richard Thorns

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Safeguarding

Can I begin by thanking you all for resubmitting your SG1 forms in September. It was also very useful that all schools submitted evidence that their staff had read, understood and agreed to abide by the changes in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018. When Kim and I have analysed the SG1 returns, we were pleased to see that the evidence included on the forms to support leaders' analysis of safeguarding in their schools is of much greater quality.

Thank you also to those schools who have already submitted their SG2 form. There are still a small minority of schools who we are still waiting for a return. Could I take this opportunity to ask you to check that your school has submitted the SG2 form, as required. Thank you. I should also thank those who provided feedback on the Safeguarding Handbook. The final version of this will be with you by now. We hope it continues to be useful.

During the school inspections that have taken place this year so far, it has been pleasing that the new CAST Safeguarding policy has stood up to scrutiny. Safeguarding has been judged to be effective in each of the school's inspected this term. Well done and thank you to everyone who worked hard in these schools to ensure that pupils are safe.

We still require leaders to submit their SG3, SG4 and SG5 forms. The deadline for all three forms is **Wednesday 19 December 2018**. The SG4 and SG5 forms need returning termly.

I am delighted that Kim, our DSL, has been able to deliver safeguarding training on a number of occasions. I am also really pleased to report that we are on track to have all schools using CPOMS for safeguarding records by the end of November. Thank you to the support of the schools that have had to make the change. It is much appreciated. If you have any safeguarding questions or concerns, please remember you can contact Kim, either by phone, or using the safeguarding email: safeguarding@plymouthcast.org.uk

GDPR

You should now have received copies of the 'Subject Access Request' and 'Data Breach' policies for the Trust. These have been approved at senior executive team level and so represent the expectations of the process to follow in both cases. The Data Breach policy makes explicit the expectation that data breaches and potential data breaches should be logged onto the GDPRiS website. Many schools are already using the website to do this, for which I am very grateful. Can I take this opportunity to give a gentle nudge to anyone who hasn't yet.

Matthew Barnes

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Education and Standards

Headteachers' Briefings:

We are looking forward to seeing you at the Headteachers' briefings the week after next. Included in the agenda is:

- Vision and values – RF (Primary and Secondary)
- Cluster working – RF (Primary and Secondary)
- Follow up from previous Headteachers' briefing – LA (Primary and Secondary)
- Follow up from SEF writing – LA (Primary and Secondary)
- Ofsted readiness and surviving the inspection – LA (Primary and Secondary)
- Managing complaints and the complaints policy – LA (Primary and Secondary)
- Financial management – KC (Primary and Secondary)

DATES/VENUES

- 13 November Central Area: St Nicholas School, Exeter (Arrival from 09:00 for 09:30 – 15:00)
- 14 November West Area: St. Austell Conference Centre (Arrival from 09:30 for 10:00 – 15:30)
- 15 November East Area: Christ the King, Bournemouth (Arrival from 09.00 for 09.30 – 15.00)

Ofsted Update

Since the beginning of term we have had three section 5 inspections and one monitoring visit. All judgements were as expected. Two schools were judged to be good, one was judged to require improvement and the monitoring visit identified that the school was taking effective action. Well done to all of the Headteachers and staff.

Approved complaints policy: please upload this to your website and apply when dealing with all complaints going forward. We will be discussing this at the Headteachers' briefings. Please find attached.

Ofsted preparation checklist: we have drafted this checklist to be used in advance of an Ofsted inspection. Although this is particularly relevant if you an inspection is imminent, it is also helpful for schools to consider if expecting an inspection in the coming 12 months. Please find attached.

Subject descriptors (Primary): Thank you to Demelza Bolton from St Mary's Penzance, for forwarding these documents which she uses in her school. During a recent inspection, a Senior HMI identified how useful they are and indicated that these reflect the current direction of travel with regards to the curriculum. This will be sent to you next week.

Admissions Policy: Thank you for reading the policy and providing very useful feedback. Following advice from Devon local authority, we have amended the policy so that it meets the needs of each local authority. Each school will then need to add their school details. Kim will send this to you next week. This policy is going to local authorities for consultation this week. The final approved policy will be approved in February.

Louise Adams

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The Journey from Special Measures to Good

Congratulations to all the staff and IAB at St. Mary's, Penzance, for taking the school from Special Measures to Good. In this article, Demelza, the Headteacher, reflects on what she learned along the way.

The journey out of Special Measures was very personal for me. As a former pupil of St Mary's, I remember it as the 'school of choice' in Penzance and I had very fond memories of being there as a child. When I applied for the post, I understood that the school was no longer the 'Outstanding' school that it had been judged to be ten years previous. I was coming from a school that had gone into special measures and, as Deputy Headteacher, had supported the Head in coming out of category to Outstanding. I was aware of the journey I had ahead of me but felt compelled to apply.

The most important lesson I have learnt is to believe and have hope. The two years in special measures have been the hardest two years of my career but also the most rewarding and I never stopped believing that, once again, St Mary's could be a school of choice! The toll it took, at times, on my personal life can never be underestimated but the most important thing for me was the network of people around me, supporting me.

I researched many different ways to ensure rapid improvement and drew on the experience I had recently had and the competencies from my NPQH. One thing soon became clear to me, due to the context of individual schools, changes could not be exactly replicated, but the structure of how and when to implement changes could. I worked through the following stages: to stabilise, repair, improve and excel.

Stabilise

Structures were quickly put into place to ensure the effective day-to-day running of the school. This included ensuring all stakeholders believed in me, and my ability to turn the school around. I became a visible presence on the gate every day and had an open door policy. I was transparent with parents and worked with all stakeholders to ensure everyone was aware of the school's vision and values. The most important thing for me was to win the trust of the parents and the staff. There were no quick wins but I felt it important at this point to model honesty and an optimistic 'can do' attitude. My leadership at this point was very authoritative, I needed to mobilise everyone towards our vision whilst also having a degree of empathy for the staff who had had eight different Headteachers since the previous inspection. A staff structure was established and clear lines of accountability were developed. The behaviour of the school although rated as 'good' was a major concern for me. We had pockets of individual children who had a complete disregard for learning or allowing others to learn. There was a culture of 'team teach' and no structure was in place to put an end to the poor behaviour. A behaviour policy was implemented with clear stages of sanctions at different levels of behaviour; this was shared amongst staff and parents to ensure consistency. We also developed a parent behaviour policy. The children had values by which to behave and rewards were put in place to encourage good behaviour. Eventually, at one of my hardest parts in the journey, this resulted in a permanent exclusion. This is not something that I would ever do lightly but it had a huge impact on the resulting change of behaviour in the school.

| School report | |
|---|------------------|
| School report | |
| Ofsted raising standards improving lives | |
| St Mary's Catholic School, Penzance | |
| Peverell Road, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 2AT | |
| Inspection dates | 2-3 October 2018 |
| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Inadequate |
| Summary of key findings for parents and pupils | |
| This is a good school | |

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Repair

It was at this point in our school improvement journey that I felt I was in a position to make changes and would have the support of the team. The first thing I worked on was the physical building. It is amazing the difference a few inspirational quotes and lick of paint can do! The children were suddenly excited about the changes to the school as their environment improved. This was however, met with criticism by some who felt this should not have been my priority. I have always believed that the school environment can have a huge impact on learning outcomes for pupils, particularly if they feel their space is safe and organised when many of their home lives are not. As I had grown to know the staff's strengths and areas for development, I felt it was time to focus on personalised CPD for all staff. I had a leadership team with no experience so they were my first concern. I provided a timetable of fortnightly training through leadership meetings and immersed them in all areas of school improvement beginning with the most basic of understanding data. All teachers visited 'good' schools to have good practice modelled for them. Our staff meetings focused on teaching, learning and assessment with a layer of pedagogy around teaching provided by our IAB. I had to have many difficult but honest conversations with people at this stage of our journey as the level of accountability increased. What was crucial to our school improvement journey was that I had an IAB who constantly challenged me and pushed me to do things that were out of my comfort zone. This really helped to develop my skills as a leader. As a whole staff team we looked at our curriculum in

more depth and changed our schemes of all subjects. In a sense, we 'started again'. Teachers and TAs received training around all new developments to ensure consistency across the school. I truly believe we were able to improve so rapidly because the staff took on board any advice given. They were beginning to believe in their own abilities and in turn, the progress of the children improved. It was around this time that we had our first HMI visit in July, nine months after the first inspection.

Improve

Once we had repaired all that was holding the school back, we were able to look at how changes could be improved and become embedded. I initially needed to disperse the leadership so others could support me. Two TAs trained to become HLTAs. By doing this, I was able to give release time weekly to the middle leaders so that they could monitor their subject areas throughout the school. By distributing the leadership, the leadership team were holding others to account and I was able to concentrate on other areas such as the bigger picture of the whole school. It was at this point that I re-opened the school swimming pool. This was a very positive move in winning the parents' approval. It also made for some good advertising and community links and we became more 'outward looking' as a school. I began a parent forum to give the parents a voice and started our school Facebook page. Although we had received a very positive HMI visit in the Summer, this was without doubt the hardest term for us, a year since the initial inspection. Morale hit an all time low and staff were finding the speed of all the changes difficult to adapt to. The hardest part for me was that although I knew staff morale was low, I could not allow this to stop the pace that we needed to maintain and the high expectations that had to continue. I was disappointed as everything had been going so well and at such a positive pace. With the support of the IAB we held a staff forum for the staff to openly share their concerns. This was a very difficult meeting to sit in on and I had to remain focused on the end goal and remember that it was not personal, however, it felt it at the time. The important thing for me was to listen, empathise and remain outwardly positive. Although difficult, this time did pass. I will never forget how much I leant on my family, friends and faith for support at this difficult time.

Following this and thinking about succession planning, three middle leaders started the NPQML and the SENDCo started the SEN award, I now had a leadership team that thought and acted as I would. They provided training for the other teachers and everyone started to work as a team with our prime aim of ensuring the school's success, for example, most teachers attended Easter booster classes for the year 6 children regardless of the year group they taught. We came together to produce a Teaching and Learning Handbook, outlining what we believed to be good teaching based on our

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own research and practice. We had our second monitoring visit in March and this gave the staff the confidence they needed to 'keep going' and further improve. Following this, the staff worked above-and-beyond with a renewed sense of positivity, and the improvements became tangible. The children were proud of their work and the school, and we were happy to share our books and ideas with other schools. We began curriculum workshops for other schools in the locality and shared our practice around assessment, teaching and learning. Once we had reached this point, teachers and TAs approached me with ideas; such as a TA wanting to teach Cornish language lessons, and our sports lead working to achieve the 'gold' sports mark and 'healthy schools award'.

Our next stage is to 'excel'. There is still so much work to do particularly around our curriculum design and ensuring all children leave our school secondary ready. Although we are all delighted with the result, this has just given us the stepping-stones needed for the next stage of our school improvement journey.

This process has really taught me; not to dwell on defeats but to learn from them, to offer those around me plenty of praise, to not be afraid to take risks, to not be affected by negativity and to ensure that 'what is best for the children' is at the heart of any future decisions I make.

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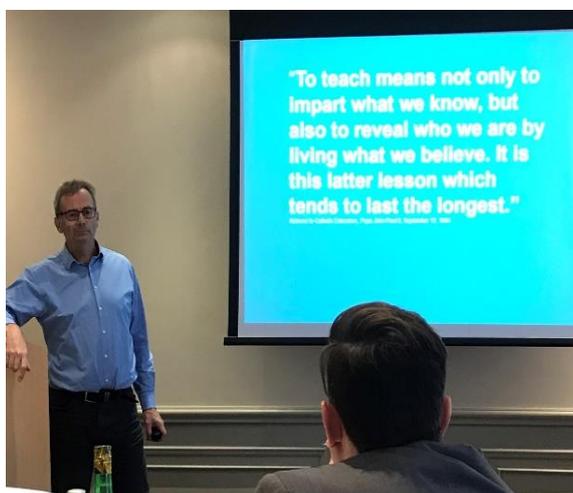
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Aspiring Heads

On 9-10 October, the first residential of our new Aspiring Heads programme took place at the Mercure Southgate in Exeter. We have ten delegates on the course, supported by five mentors who are serving Heads. We explored the Church's teaching on Catholic education and the qualities of effective leadership with careful analysis of the National Standards for Headship. There was a lot of open and honest reflection on our own journeys so far and honest sharing about the challenges of leadership.

We were delighted on Day 2 to be joined by David Wells and Mike Antram. David, a dear friend of CAST, was in great form as he helped us to reflect on leadership with the example of Pope Francis. He also made it known that he was competing in the Manchester half marathon! Mike is Headteacher of St. Edward's in Poole, one of the two joint Catholic and Church of England schools in Plymouth Diocese. Mike provided a very thoughtful and humorous insight into the reality of being a faith leader.

Our next event will be a retreat at Buckfast in March. In the meantime, the mentors will visit their mentees in their schools to begin the process of shared reflection arising out of a self-audit. At this point, we are not sure if the programme will run again next year or the year after. I'd be very happy to hear from any Headteachers who think they have a colleague who would benefit from the programme.



David Wells makes a welcome return



Mike Antram on the reality of faith education

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Plymouth Diocese

Congratulations

Many congratulations to Fr Mark O’Keeffe and Fr Peter Morgan who have been elected Canons. Their installation will take place in the Cathedral on 25th March 2019. Fr Philip Dyson has been elected as an Honorary Canon.

Caritas Consultation event: 1 December 2018

Pope Francis, since the beginning of his Papacy, has urged us to rediscover our essential mission to the world. That is, to look around us, and see the need and then put our faith into action.

He has made the “Ministry of Charity” a priority through the establishment of Caritas organisations at international, national and diocesan levels. Thanks to the support of Bishop Mark O’Toole Caritas Plymouth will be launched on 18 May 2019 at St Nicholas School, Exeter.

In the meantime, we are making sure that Caritas Plymouth is focusing on the main areas of need in this diocese. Local Catholic organisations have suggested that the focus of Caritas Plymouth should be to co-ordinate and support efforts to assist children and families in difficulty, to support the homeless, to support migrants and refugees, and to support the elderly and isolated.

The Caritas Consultation Day on Saturday 1 December will discuss this further. It will be held from 10.30 a.m. – 3.30 p.m. at St Boniface College, Plymouth. Please register on-line at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/caritas-plymouth-consultation-event-tickets-50394612643> or through your Parish Secretary.

Gather 2019: 18-20 January

The GATHER Conference brings together people from across the Diocese of Plymouth and further afield for a weekend of faith, formation and friendship. In 2019 we will gather at the Best Western Livermead Cliff Hotel, Torquay on 18–20 January. We’d love to see you. The weekend will include speakers: Sr Judith Russi, Director of Catholic educational charity Educare, a passionate and inspirational speaker and curriculum developer, she pioneers many innovative and challenging educational initiatives; Pia Matthews, theologian and lecturer in bioethics at St John’s seminary, Womersley; Raymond Friel, newly appointed CEO of Plymouth CAST and David Wells, national and international speaker, author and facilitator; shared liturgies; prayer space; inspiring workshops and evening entertainment. Residential rate £155 includes 2 nights bed and breakfast, lunch and evening meal on Saturday, tea, coffee and pastries. Single room supplement £20. The price does not include supper on Friday. A bar menu is available. Non-residential rate £45 includes full conference attendance, lunch and evening meal on Saturday, tea, coffee and pastries. Sunday lunch may be booked and paid for in advance or upon arrival at the hotel. When you’ve booked please email delegates’ names to plymouthgather@yahoo.com. If you have any questions please email us at the same address or submit them via the Facebook page Gather Conference. A booking flier is **attached**.

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Mission Together is the children's branch of Missio, the Holy Father's official charity for overseas mission. Through **Mission Together**, children around the world pray for and share with others in a unique exchange of faith and friendship, fulfilling our motto: "**children helping children**".



Each year **Mission Together** follows the story of a child supported by one of our many worldwide projects. In 2018 - 19 our **Together in Jordan** campaign focuses on Sandra, a seven year old pupil at The Marka School for Iraqi Refugees. By supporting **Mission Together** you will enable millions of children, like Sandra, living in poverty overseas to have access to safety, shelter, faith formation, education, healthcare and nutrition.

Please visit our website missiontogether.org.uk to download our resources, including our latest materials for Advent - liturgies, assembly, calendar, and activities to help your pupils get the most out of the season.

For further details please contact:

Tony Armstrong
Director of Mission Together (MT)
Plymouth Diocese
Missio

Tel: 07792 510578

Email: tony@dtoneprojects.co.uk

“The Catholic school loses its purpose without constant reference to the Gospel and a frequent encounter with Christ. It derives all the energy necessary for its educational work from Him and thus ‘creates in the school community an atmosphere permeated with the Gospel spirit of freedom and love.’ In this setting the pupil experiences his or her dignity as a person before he or she knows its definition.”

The Catholic School (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977)

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