

DIOCESE OF PLYMOUTH

Vicariate for Formation



**St Augustine's Catholic Primary School
Hardy Avenue, Weymouth DT4 0RH**

URN 113837

**Head Teacher: Michael Lobo
Chair of Governors: Rose Bruce**

Record of Diocesan Review 11th July, 2011

Introduction

St Augustine's was inspected by Ofsted on 9th and 10th June and was judged to be good school with a number of outstanding features. In particular the excellent provision in the Reception Year was highlighted. 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 Augustine'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 for Plymouth Diocese) working closely with the Head Teacher, the chair of governors (Rose Bruce), and the RE Co-ordinator (Ali Fraser). The outcomes of the review were agreed on the basis of:-

- Three lesson observations
- Meeting with RE co-ordinator
- discussions with pupils representing all ages within the school;
- participation in an Act of Collective Worship
- Scrutiny of pupil's work
- Meeting with Chair of Governors and Deacon from local parish
- Meeting with Head Teacher

Strengths of the school

A significant number of key strengths were identified in the context of St Augustine's distinctive identity as a Catholic school, as factors in its educational success and its contribution to the Church's mission in education. The list below is intended to be illustrative, not comprehensive.

Leadership

Following the retirement of the former Head Teacher, St. Augustine's has been successful in recruiting a dynamic and visionary leader to take the school forward. His personal faith commitment and natural spiritual disposition lie at the heart of his desire to make this Catholic school the best it can possibly be. Supported by a very committed governing body and an RE co-ordinator who has worked consistently well over the years, the ethos of the school is firmly rooted in gospel values and reflected in the desire of the school to live its faith fully. Although the RE co-ordinator is about to retire, the school is fortunate to have recruited an experienced RE leader to take this role on.

The quality of welcome experienced on arrival at the school, the demeanour of the children and the positive attitudes of the staff reflect the desire of everyone to live a

community life where everyone feels included and valued. The Head Teacher is committed to ensuring that this not only remains the case but is fostered and nurtured to become even more embedded within the life of the school.

Religious and Spiritual Life

Prayer, manifested in a variety of ways, lies at the heart of the St. Augustine's. Each day there is an opportunity for staff to gather to pray when and if they wish. This is led by a teaching assistant who also looks after the small school chapel. This time of prayer is appreciated by a number of people as an opportunity for starting the day with some quiet reflection and prayer for the needs of the community.

Both in the classroom and within whole school acts of worship, children demonstrate their capacity to be reflective and to participate with enthusiasm. In the act of worship experienced during this visit, the Head Teacher led the children in a reflection on the Gospel story linked to the Sunday Mass. Through the use of ICT, music and images, the children responded to questions about the story. The Head Teacher linked the story with the images on a screen and with the music so that all were used effectively. The message of the story was then linked to the current drought in Africa and to the work of CAFOD. Children coming into the hall did so respectfully and quietly. Throughout the assembly they listened to one another and for the most part were keen to participate. Within lessons children also experience opportunities for prayer, at the beginning of lessons and as part of their time to reflect on the work that they have been doing.

Mass takes place in the school on a regular basis with the Parish Priest supporting the school whenever he can. In addition the parish Deacon visits the school on a regular basis and participates in some of the RE lessons, leading children in a Liturgy of the Word within their class. In addition the school is blessed to have the support of one of the sisters from the local convent who helps with displays and occasionally running a prayer group for the children.

In Advent the opportunity for silent prayer is now being offered to the children on a regular basis, using prayer stations to facilitate this. There is a desire for parents to be invited to this as a way of offering them the opportunity to reflect with their children (as opposed to watching them perform).

Links with the parish are growing and each month the school joins the parishioners for their Sunday Mass. Sacramental programmes within the parish are also supported by the school and only recently Mass has been celebrated within school to highlight those children who had made their first Holy Communion. Within their classroom also the teacher had marked this occasion with a beautiful display of the big occasion. What is particularly positive is the number of non-Catholic parents who support many of these events.

The Head Teacher is aware that with new staff having been appointed for September, the time is right to review the mission and vision of St. Augustine's as a Catholic school in line with the Bishop's vision for the Diocese. In addition this will also be an opportunity to develop the quality of liturgical experiences offered to the

children so that they can grow in their capacity to appreciate and participate in different forms of liturgy.

Teaching and Learning

In line with the rest of the Diocese, St. Augustine's has introduced 'God Matters' as its curriculum for RE. This has been a challenging transition but one which the school has embraced and positive progress is being made. Children talked about enjoying their RE and one child expressed his enthusiasm for the varied activities that they do in these lessons.

All lessons were thoughtfully prepared and had clear aims and objectives. For the most part children were aware of what was expected of them and what they were learning to do. Effective use of the interactive white board, Scripture and recall on previous teaching helped the children to engage fully with the lesson and to participate well. In one lesson the teacher very effectively linked the Olympic 2012 torch relay to the message given to the disciples to pass on the message of Christ as the 'Torch of Truth'. Children then had to create their own torches and select aspects of the message of Christ that they would want to pass on to others. The children not only enjoyed this activity but were able to select appropriate messages thus demonstrating their knowledge and understanding.

In another lesson year 2 children were able to demonstrate their understanding of parables and to retell some of the stories they had learned and to highlight what these mean for us if we are to be followers of Christ. In another lesson with year 3 children were studying the writings of St. Paul and reflecting on the nature of missionary work both in St. Paul's day and in our own. Here children were clearly able to draw upon their previous learning and to apply it to this lesson. Children demonstrated their capacity to talk in pairs and to share their ideas with others. The teacher used a variety of prompts to help the children and provided them with helpful guidelines to support their learning.

Teachers spoke enthusiastically about 'God Matters' and commented on the depth of learning that they have to have to be able to teach RE. It will be important for the teachers to be able to explore the different topics thoroughly as adults so that their own theological understanding is supported and develops.

Pastoral Life of the School

Throughout the visit the dedicated pastoral care of the children was keenly apparent. Adults have a high level of awareness of the needs of their children and are able to support them with compassion and understanding, in line with the ethos of the school. The children were keen to say how well they feel looked after and believe St. Augustine's to be a very safe and friendly school.

The school has a strong sense of care for the wider community and are part of 'Comenius' a European link which involves teachers and children taking part in exchange visits to learn about different ways of living. A group of children had recently been to a school in Barcelona as part of this. In addition the school is

beginning to develop links with an inner-city school in London to broaden the children's experience of other cultures within the UK.

Children at St. Augustine's have a generous capacity for supporting a variety of different causes. CAFOD features strongly in this and the school council chose to do a sponsored water-carrying event during Lent. In addition they involve themselves in other charities such as Children in Need, Shoe-box appeal and carol singing for the local elderly residents.

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. With new people joining the staff of St. Augustine's it will be important for everyone to be clear about the mission and vision of the school. To this end the desire for INSET and reflection on the nature of the Catholic School for staff, parents and governors is seen to be an important step forward.
2. It is important that all teachers of RE are offered the opportunity to explore RE topics at their own level prior to each topic. The Deacon is happy to support this and the Diocese will also be happy to offer support as required.
3. The school will support the Diocese in beginning to develop and implement assessment and monitoring for 'God Matters'. In addition it will be important for the school to firmly establish its RE teaching commitment as 10% across the year groups and in line with the Bishops' Conference guidelines.
4. The opportunity for the school to develop its liturgical life will be enhanced by INSET in the area of prayer and liturgy so that everyone can be confident in helping children to develop their liturgical skills.

Conclusion

St. Augustine's is a warm and friendly school where children feel safe and enjoy coming to school. It is a successful school and the way forward holds much promise. Its capacity to further the mission of the Church is plain to see and it is something of which the Diocese and the parish can be justifiably proud. As it continues to grow in its sense of purpose there is no doubt that it will become an even better school.

On a personal note I would like to thank all those who made my visit so enjoyable.

Sarah Adams
Diocesan RE Adviser
July 2011