

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



St. Mary's Catholic Primary School
Peverell Road
Penzance
Cornwall
TR18 2AT

URN 140778

Head Teacher: Mrs Demelza Bolton
Chair of Governors: Mr. Pat McGovern

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

Date of Inspection: 19-20th November 2018

Inspectors:
Miss Sarah Adams
Mrs. Helen Brown

Context of School

St. Mary's is a smaller than average primary school serving the parishes of Penzance, Hayle and St. Ives. It is part of the Plymouth Catholic Schools Trust which was formed in April 2014. The current Head Teacher has been in post for 2 years and 2 months. In the months prior to this inspection the school had been governed by an IAB consisting of three members. Since the Ofsted inspection in October, when the school moved from Special Measures to Good, a new governing body has taken over from the IAB.

Context Data

NOR: 158 Girls: 84 Boys: 74

The school also has a nursery which brings the numbers on roll to 177

Number children with a statement of special needs: 1

% of children on SEN register 17%

% of children with English as an additional Language (EAL) 14%

% of children receiving free school meals 23%

% of children in receipt of pupil premium (PP) 35%

| Over-All Effectiveness: | Outstanding | Grade 1 |
|------------------------------------------|-------------|---------|
| The School as a Catholic Community: | Outstanding | Grade 1 |
| Leadership and Management: | Outstanding | Grade 1 |
| Word (Curriculum RE) | Good | Grade 2 |
| Worship and Spiritual Life of the School | Outstanding | Grade 1 |

Summary of Key Findings

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop is **outstanding**.

Key Strengths

- The leadership of the school is rooted in a desire to serve with integrity and clarity. It is committed to living the Gospel providing children with every opportunity to grow spiritually, academically, physically and morally.
- St. Mary's is a bright, warm and welcoming community where Gospel values permeate all aspects of school life.
- The school's mission statement 'Growing together in Knowledge, Faith and Love' clearly reflects the mission of the Church and impacts positively on all members of the school community. This is clearly seen through actions, words and relationships.
- Relationships within the school are highly positive and contribute to the success and ethos in a variety of ways.
- Pastoral care in the school is excellent. All children are provided with a safe and caring environment. Their different gifts and talents are nurtured and celebrated.
- There is a strong sense of community which leads every individual, whatever their position to respond generously to immediate needs which can present themselves. There is a high level of openness and willingness to ensure that members of both the immediate and the wider community consistently feel welcome.
- There is a significant number of children with special needs. These needs can be challenging. However, every child in the school is seen as unique, special and a child of God to be

nurtured and enabled to become the very best that they can be. There is a commitment to inclusion and a balanced approach to dealing with difficulties when they arise.

- Gospel values are well known throughout the school and all members of the community are able to speak of them. In lessons teachers refer to them. They are visibly evident around the school and are linked to the school's virtues which are also dominant in the school. Through liturgy, prayer times and assemblies these are regularly explored and reflected upon.
- A range of rigorous and extensive monitoring, searching analysis and self-challenge enable the school to devise and implement well-focused plans, firmly rooted in the mission of the school.
- Although very new the Governing Body are committed to ensuring that they develop their skills and work to ensure the continuing success of the school, through effective challenge and support.
- The potential of staff is recognised and areas for development identified and supported through a range of highly effective training.

What the school can do to improve further

1. Continue to improve the relationship and engagement of parents and parishioners so that all see St. Mary's as part of their community.
2. Ensure that the Governors develop their capacity so that as a new governing body they feel confident to support and challenge the Leadership of the school to continue moving forward.
3. Continue to support the RE leader in developing her skills as a leader so that she continues to grow in confidence and ability to support and nurture teachers to deliver engaging and creative RE curriculum.
4. Ensure pupils are enabled to demonstrate their learning through a variety of strategies including practising the skills of enquiry, investigation, analysis, evaluation, application, expression and interpretation to a high level.
5. Continue to ensure that staff have on-going formation in theological concepts so that they can be confident in their delivery of the RE Curriculum.
6. Ensure that all support staff are included in the delivery of lessons so that they are clear about the role they have and understand what they are supporting in terms of the RE curriculum
7. Develop Liturgy teams within the school so that expertise and creativity can be shared in the delivery of whole school acts of worship.
8. Continue to develop the skills of the Worship leaders so that they support the school in evaluating and contributing to the quality of liturgy offered to the whole school.
9. Continue to foster opportunities for pupils to develop their spirituality across the school curriculum.

The School as a Catholic Community

Outstanding

St. Mary's is an inspiring school which is growing in a quiet confidence about its identity and the contribution it can make to the lives of the children who come to the school. This is a school where people care for one another, children look out for each other and the whole community pulls together and is moving forward in the same direction. Despite a challenging two years, the adults in this community are determined to serve the children in every way possible. Christ and the Christian message of the Gospel lies at the heart of this community. Attitudes, behaviour and a commitment to nurturing children to achieve the highest possible outcomes reflect the mission of the Church. High expectations of behaviour, application to work and engagement in the life of the school are

reflected in the capacity of the children to respond with generosity and confidence. This is evident in the desire of so many children to take on roles of responsibility, to drive projects and be successful in their outcomes. Following an introduction to Pope Francis' encyclical 'Laudato Si' the children have opted to be a plastic free school. They have embraced this with enthusiasm and produced a remarkable display showing the impact of plastic in the oceans.

Surveys show that children enjoy coming to school. Attendance is improving, and parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Children feel safe and know that when there are problems they will be dealt with, so that the community can be happy and positive. The children speak of a caring and friendly environment. They are noticeably respectful of one another and the adults.

Pastoral care is a key element in the success of the school. Knowing the academic progress and pastoral needs of every child has been and continues to be central to how this school is moving forward. The approach to pastoral care is rooted in key Gospel values of kindness, compassion, forgiveness and integrity. Faith, hope and love underpin expectations and a commitment to ensuring that children achieve their very best. Focused targets and planning give every child the chance to succeed. Regular progress meetings address educational needs and the emotional well-being of each child. This ensures that all staff are fully cognisant of what they need to do to provide for and meet these needs. Pertinent and relevant staff training sessions help the adults understand the various behaviours which children present. Consequently, staff feel confident to embrace vulnerable children and meet their academic and emotional needs.

St. Mary's is an outward looking school and as such has a commitment to serving the wider community wherever they can, not only by charitable work but also by reaching out to other schools both within the Catholic community and the local area. The school is actively involved in a local Sports Cluster and St. Mary's provides a termly able Maths workshop for schools in the local area. Attending joint staff meetings and belonging to the Rainbow trust around moderations is an additional strength of the school. In terms of charitable ventures, the school embraces CAFOD with enthusiasm, Fairtrade, 'Foodbox' and other charities. These opportunities to see and respond to the needs of others locally and globally is ensuring that children leave the school aware of the needs of others and ready to take their place as global citizens.

The School as a Catholic Community (Leadership and Management)

To be an outstanding leader in a Catholic school requires the person responsible for that leadership to fully appreciate the message of Christ to 'do this in memory of me'. In John's Gospel this reflects the command to wash the feet of one another. This great act of humility puts other people first. Servant leadership, in this sense, is about ensuring that those for whom you are responsible, are enabled to embrace a way of being which does not diminish but allows individuals to flourish. This is the case at St. Mary's. The Head Teacher's desire to be there for others allows others to embrace this way of being and is manifested in the way adults within the school consistently go beyond the call of duty to support the most vulnerable of children while ensuring that the most able also achieve their potential.

The Head of St. Mary's is an outstanding leader. She has a clarity of vision that has enabled her to successfully take the school forward so that the life of the school is one which lives the Gospel and is true to its mission and purpose. She has worked tirelessly to develop a staff team who are committed and effective in providing for every child in the school. Staff feel valued and respond generously. Her personal commitment and calm presence as well as her capacity to challenge

effectively is inspirational. It has enabled her deputy to grow in her own confidence and is a highly respected member of the leadership team.

The school has a recently appointed new Governing body. Although it is early days they are committed to supporting the ethos of the school and are confident that they can make a positive contribution to ensuring that the vision and mission of St. Mary's continues to develop. They see themselves as critical, supportive friends to the school and feel positive about the direction of the school as it is. The Chair of Governors has a wealth of experience both as a Head Teacher and as a person involved in school improvement. As chair of the school's interim advisory board (IAB) he has a sound understanding of the journey the school has been on and is keen to support the Head to drive the school forward.

RE Leadership is a priority for the school. In order to equip the RE Leader to lead effectively, the school has put in training and CPD so that she understands the nature of the role. The RE leader's own commitment has enabled her to grow in confidence and effectiveness and RE is now recognised as the core of the core curriculum. In addition, the added support of an HTLA has given extra weight to the role and been a fruitful source of confidence and encouragement.

The School as a Teaching and Learning Community (Word)

Over-all grade 2 (Good)

Curriculum RE is has a high status in the school and is valued and seen as important by teachers, leaders, parents and governors. Senior leaders take a keen and active interest in the subject and are well-aware of its strengths and areas for development. A range of rigorous monitoring activities have had impact and as a result the quality and quantity of work reflects a commitment to continue making improvements to teaching and learning.

Lessons observed across the school were consistently good with some outstanding features in a number of lessons. The provision of quality differentiation in lessons ensures that the needs of all children are consistently met. Children enjoy their RE. They can talk confidently about their learning and appreciate the variety of activities that they are offered. They are keen to learn but also see their RE as a part of the whole ethos of the school. The quality of relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils is excellent. Respect and high expectation enable children to achieve and make secure progress in their learning. Support staff play a crucial role in enabling a variety of activities to be offered to the children. The support staff at St. Mary's are professional, unobtrusive and gentle in their interactions with children. Teachers are supported by good CPD and the guidance of the Parish Priest, who is a key figure in the school. His help with the theology of different RE units is greatly appreciated. It provides teachers with invaluable knowledge and understanding which helps them deliver well planned lessons.

In addition to observing lessons, children's books demonstrate a consistent approach to teaching and learning. Marking is taken seriously and time is given for children to respond to further challenges or making corrections. This ensures that children know when they are succeeding and how they can improve. Working walls and focal points add to the engaging environment and the learning. Children can speak about their contribution to these and like it when they are given responsibility for maintaining these.

Within the context of lessons children demonstrated that they have a good understanding of Scripture and can readily retell different Bible stories. They are able to draw from these messages which help them know how to live their life. Teachers have developed good practice in this area. In most lessons the pace of lessons was good. Occasionally it was too fast and didn't allow for concepts to be absorbed or the desire to get children writing something in their books meant that key

references were omitted. Sometimes an anxiety to restrict evidence to what is in books can impact negatively but for the most part teachers are getting the balance right and finding creative ways to record discussions which show the depth of understanding and learning taking place.

The school has embraced the Diocesan curriculum programme and teachers value the work of the CAST writers' group, which has provided valuable materials to support the teaching of RE. A new initiative in the school is to have children as subject ambassadors who will help to monitor and evaluate what children are being offered in subjects, this is already having an impact. Although early days it allows children to have a voice about their learning and ensure that RE remains a focus for teachers.

The School as a Celebrating Community (Worship and Spiritual Development)

The spiritual and worship life of St. Mary's is to be commended. It is rich and engaging and flows throughout the school. The wide variety of experiences contribute to the spiritual development of the children. The behaviour and interactions of children reflect the school's focus on virtues and Gospel values. In addition, the prayer life in classrooms and within whole school liturgies enriches the spiritual growth of the whole community. Three classroom prayer times were experienced during the inspection. These were beautifully prayerful and demonstrated how children are enabled to reflect and be still. From the youngest, right through the school, children showed their capacity to be still and to respond appropriately. There was plenty of evidence to show that children are open to God's presence and have an open heart within these experiences. Teachers are non-intrusive, reflective in their delivery and sensitive about what they are offering the children.

Whole school Liturgies enable the children to participate in different ways, reading, praying and singing as well as being silent and reflective. The quality of singing in the school is joyful! The introduction of children as dedicated worship leaders has had a big impact, not only in their keenness to be involved but in the use of the small school chapel. This is now a well-used place of prayer. Children opt to visit the chapel at lunch-times where a variety of prayer activities, many devised by the children are on offer. The capacity to engage in spontaneous prayer has grown and allows everyone to grow spiritually as they are able.

Weekly visitor assemblies add to the variety of people who contribute to the children's appreciation and understanding of the Christian community outside of the school. The opportunity to celebrate the different sacraments of Mass and Reconciliation ensure that the faith life of the school is rooted in the traditions and practices of the Catholic Church. Increasingly parents and parishioners are responding to the invitation to participate in these celebrations and value the opportunity to be a part of this living witness to the Gospel. The Parish Priest is a very welcome visitor to the school. He visits regularly and supports the Head Teacher in her desire to celebrate major feasts and the sacramental life within the school. The celebration of Mass on a monthly basis takes place in school and in the Parish Church. Going to the Church is seen as an important part of the school being truly integrated into the life of the parish.

The introduction of spiritual journals is having a significant impact on the spiritual growth of the children. They are given regular short periods of time to be silent and prayerful and to draw or write their thoughts and prayers. One class with a significant number of children with special needs, spent fifteen minutes engaged in this activity. The fact that they could be still and silent for such a long time showed that not only were they used to it but that they appreciated the time they were given. It felt like an oasis of time in an otherwise frenetic day. Although what they do is not marked and are

only looked at by staff on occasions they often reveal a deepening sense of God in the life of the child. They are a very special opportunity for children to reflect at a deep and meaningful level.

Conclusion

It is clear from what has been said that almost everything in the school contributes to the spiritual and moral development of the children at St. Mary's. This is a school going from strength to strength and reflects the deep desire of the Head to bring about a school where every parent wants to send their child. It is a credit to the local community, to CAST and most importantly to the Diocese. This is a school of which Bishop Mark and the Catholic Community of Plymouth Diocese can be justly proud.

Sarah Adams

Helen Brown