

DIOCESE OF PLYMOUTH



VICARIATE FOR FORMATION

**St. John's Catholic Primary School
Trevu Road
Camborne
TR14 7AE**

URN 112008

**Head Teacher: Mrs Pat Yardley
Chair of Governors: Mr Nicholas Talbot**

**Record of Diocesan Inspection
4th February, 2013**

Introduction

The school was inspected by Ofsted in October 2012 and was judged to require improvement. The Diocesan Section 48 inspection identified some of the key strengths of St. John's School and also identified areas of focus required to further strengthen the life and work of the school. The inspection 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 inspection was conducted by Sarah Adams (Diocesan RE Adviser for Schools) and Tricia Blythe (Diocesan Schools Officer) working closely with the Headteacher, and the governors. The outcomes of the inspection were agreed on the basis of:-

- ☐ Documentation made available by the school;
- ☐ Observation of several lessons;
- ☐ Talking to members of the school council
- ☐ Participation in a whole School act of Worship
- ☐ Participation in a key stage liturgy
- ☐ Meeting with the Chair of Governors and the Parish Priest
- ☐ Conversation with RE Leader
- ☐ Discussion with the Head Teacher
- ☐ Work Scrutiny

Strengths of the School

St. John's is a relatively small Catholic School in a rural town of Cornwall. As a school it has a number of key strengths which highlight its distinctive identity as a Catholic school, emphasise its strong pastoral ethos and demonstrate its contribution to the Church's mission in education. The list below intends to be illustrative, not comprehensive.

Leadership

The Head Teacher, Governors and the RE leader with the Parish Priest, are very committed to the Catholic life of St. John's and are keen to maintain and develop its ethos in a positive and fruitful way. Due to the concerns of OFSTED the leadership team has had to focus on the areas of improvement as set out by that inspection. It was noted that the key relationships that strategically support school improvement are under strain. However, the importance of constantly seeking to consistently model and live out the Catholic mission of the school, even in the current circumstances, is acknowledged.

The RE Leader is exceptionally committed to the Catholic dimension of the school's life and is working hard to support the staff in delivering and promoting the mission of the school in all its forms. Through her attendance at Diocesan meetings and the school's commitment to Diocesan training and INSET days the Diocese is confident that the school's Catholic life is not being diminished.

Religious Life

The religious life of the school, under the guidance of the RE leader, is developing well. There were many examples throughout the inspection that highlighted how committed the school is to providing a range of quality opportunities for the children to grow spiritually. As a result children from a very early age are able to demonstrate their capacity to be still, reflective and to respond prayerfully. The school has been working hard to develop the kind of liturgies and prayer times that the children are offered and this is beginning to bear fruit. For example the key-stage liturgy offered to years five and six was well crafted and made excellent use of technology. It was thoughtful in its content and prayerful in its delivery. The children were fully engaged and responded well to the music and images that were used to help them to contemplate. The children sang with energy and joined in the responses prayerfully. The children who read the Scripture did so confidently.

The school is committed to ensuring that all children participate in a daily class act of worship. From experience on the day this is clearly a key moment for the children. Children in Year 1 demonstrated a very mature capacity to reflect quietly and offer their own prayer intentions. The teacher's quiet approach and gentleness facilitated the right kind of atmosphere to allow the children to respond well.

Throughout the school year St. John's is well supported by the Parish priest. Each week different groups of children attend the Parish Mass. At this Mass the children are fully involved, having prepared the readings, music, and intercessions. The Parish priest encourages their participation and works well with the teachers to ensure that the children have a rich and rewarding experience. The Parish priest is a regular visitor to the school and the staff appreciate his support, particularly when it comes to preparing their teaching of RE.

Around the school there are many examples of the Catholic life of the school. Religious artwork and artefacts sympathetically reflect the mission and purpose of the school. Each classroom has its own prayer table which reflects the liturgical season but they tend to be adult-led. A positive way forward would be to see these becoming more interactive and something which the children take a lead in developing.

Over and above the liturgical life of the school there is a strong sense of mission which leads the children and staff to take on numerous extra-curricular activities of a charitable nature. These activities help to develop a great awareness in the children and consideration for other people. The children believe that this is important because they are 'a Catholic school'.

Teaching in RE

The quality of teaching and learning at the school is, for the most part, of a high standard. Clear learning objectives are evident in most lessons and the activities planned and offered ensure that children are able to achieve and make progress

within the lesson. Where technology is used it is effective and engaging. In most lessons teachers use a wide variety of teaching methods and offer thoughtful activities that challenge the brightest and enable those who needed extra support. For example there were children in EYFS who were clearly able to recognise the story of the feeding of the five thousand and a significant number who could retell the story. The children were offered a number of activities to help them to develop their knowledge of the story and to relate it to their own experience. Children were encouraged to sequence the events of the story and then to consider what the story tells us about Jesus, what the little boy was like and how the people might have changed as a result. The children were keen to answer questions and to offer their suggestions as to how they can be more like Jesus. For example one little boy said that he could be more like Jesus if he did not 'back-chat' so much. Many of the children observed in this lesson were performing at an above average level of attainment in both AT1 and AT2.

In another lesson there was clear evidence of the children having to engage at a deep level though group discussion. These were lively discussions with children working hard to justify their arguments. This was a well-paced lesson with adults allowing children to do the work

In most lessons children are very focused on their learning and are given many opportunities to learn. The quality of their written work reflects this especially where teachers take time with their marking and ensure that next steps for learning are evident. Teachers plan carefully and take time to research the topic they have to teach. They are supported to do this by the RE leader and opportunities to study the topic at an adult level in staff meetings. As yet these are not as consistent as they might be but the school is moving in the right direction to ensure that these happen.

Pastoral Life of the School

The children who attend St. John's feel very safe and well cared for. Throughout this inspection children were observed caring for one another and behaving well. The school council spoke warmly about the school and believe that the adults are there for them. Children know that what to do and to whom they can go if they have a concern or a problem. The children described people in the school as kind. In addition they believe that they are offered many opportunities by the activities available to them. They feel safe in lessons because as one children described, 'we know what to expect because the teachers write up what we will be doing on the board, this makes us feel safe'. Through the 'Eco Warriors' the children learn about their environment and looking after it. The children are proud of the way their school is cared for.

Areas 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.

- In line with Diocesan expectations and with the support of INSET, ensure that within the course of a topic, activities are provided which allow children to make progress in both AT1 and AT2.
- Ensure that in all lessons activities are broken down appropriately so that all children can achieve and make progress.
- To continue to develop the liturgical life of the school by developing joint class or key-stage liturgies across the school and wherever possible enable children to develop their skills in developing and leading prayer. It is important that the school puts in place regular opportunities for reviewing the quality of the provision on offer to the children.

Conclusion

The school is going through a difficult time and knows that it has to raise standards in a number of areas. However this inspection proves that the staff and children have a great appreciation of who they are and what it means to be a Catholic school. Whilst OFSTED has identified the areas where the school needs to and must develop, this inspection saw evidence of improvements that are taking place. Teachers, in particular, are encouraged to be confident about who they are and what they can achieve. Within this Catholic school the mission of the Gospel is frequently expressed through its prayer life and care and concern for one another, consequently with continued focus on achievement in teaching and learning, there is no reason why St. John's should not continue to grow to become the best that it can be.

Sarah Adams
Tricia Blythe

February 2013