



DIOCESE OF PLYMOUTH

## INSPECTION REPORT

St John the Baptist RC Primary School

Milton Lane,

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DfE Number: 878/3603

URN: 140761

Headteacher: Mrs E Hamilton

Chair of Governors: Ms L Upton

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**This report to the Bishop of the Diocese under Canon 806 of the Code of Canon Law is also the report to the governors of the school on religious education. For Catholic maintained schools, the report also fulfils the requirements of Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.**

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Date of inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> May 2022

Date of previous inspection: June 2015

Reporting Inspector: Mr J Skelton

Additional Inspector: Mr P Cotte

*In this report the word 'school' shall mean V.A. schools/colleges/academies/special schools*

## **Description of school**

St John the Baptist's RC Primary School Dartmouth is a smaller than average setting of 81 pupils. It is a mixed sex school with 55.6% boys and 44.4% girls. It has a higher than national average number of pupils with SEND at 28.4%. The school consists of three mixed age classes with EYFS/Year1, Years 2 & 3, and Years 4, 5 & 6 taught together.

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)**

### **Grade Good**

#### **This is a Good school because:**

- The caring Catholic nature of the school is visible and tangible. All members of the community are respectful and caring towards one another. It is a happy, joyous, safe place for the children.
- Pupils act with reverence and are keen to participate in collective worship. They sing joyfully, reflect in silence and join in community prayer appropriately and with confidence. Children are regularly involved in the preparation and delivery of liturgies.
- Pupils understand that the school community is committed to following the teaching and example of Jesus as expressed in the Gospels and in the social teaching of the Church. As a result pupils develop in virtue, accepting their personal responsibility to care for our common home, pursue the common good and serve those in need.
- Leaders, staff and governors are committed to the Church's mission in education and ensure that Christ and Catholic teaching are at the heart of the school.
- Leaders plan the curriculum to provide sufficient opportunities for learners to progress sequentially through the RE subject content. Catholic virtues, values and social teaching are interwoven throughout the wider curriculum.
- Pupils appear to enjoy their learning and approach their lessons with interest and enthusiasm. As a consequence, behaviour in lessons is good because most pupils enjoy Religious Education and are engaged.

## **The capacity of the school community to improve and develop is Good**

- The school leadership team, Governors and Diocesan RE and Catholic Life adviser are all working closely together to continually improve the RE provision for all pupils, staff and parents. Their unified and committed approach means that the school is always striving to ensure that it is the best it can be.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Governors need to hone their understanding of assessment data and in particular how the data from St John the Baptist school performs, in comparison to similar schools both in the diocese and further afield. A good understanding of comparing RE assessment data with other core subjects in the school would also be beneficial.
- Class teachers would benefit from developing their subject knowledge further, to allow for more robust questioning to assist the depth of learning, particular for 'Greater Depth' pupils.
- The school has shown that it understands the areas for development and has identified some areas for development. It would benefit from documenting these more formally with time scales, improvement, accountabilities and documented follow-up.

**a) The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school**

- Children at St John the Baptist school are aware of and engaged with, the Catholic character of the school, using their own initiatives and thinking to develop and interpret the charitable nature of Catholic social teaching.
- Pupils speak openly and with commitment about the caring nature of their school community. They recognise that they are part of a bigger world and understand their role within it as part of God's creation.
- Pupils work well with school-based adults to develop community links and share the manifestations of their faith, through both parish links and the wider local community.

**B) The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school**

- The school's mission statement is clear and unambiguous, but it is also clear in the way it demonstrates that all they do is because of the Catholicity of the setting. Pupils act in a way that embodies the mission statement 'Live, Love, Learn in a Caring Catholic Community'. The school exudes care and kindness with adults and staff clearly working for the same goal.
- The learning environment, student chaplaincy and community itself has a clear Catholic identity with ample visible and tangible examples of each on display.
- Pupils and staff are cared for pastorally at St John the Baptist's school and this is evidenced through conversations, displays, interactions and parental feedback
- Children are very clear on what behaviours are expected in school. More importantly they understand why these behaviours are important and how they link to the overall ethos of a Catholic school. Children are calm, polite, enthusiastic and interact superbly with each other, showing genuine care and compassion to all members of their community.
- Pastoral programmes, PSHE and RSE are faithful to Catholic teaching and present a holistic vision of the human person. They are well designed and planned in line with the diocesan protocols and the Bishop's vision.

**b) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school**

- Leaders and governors are enthusiastic and effective in promoting the Catholic life of the school. They speak with pride and energy about how well their pupils engage with this central

tenet of the school's mission. They display a clear vision, and promote this vision with passion.

- Catholic Life and Mission is a standing item on the agenda of every LGB meeting. Plans for improvement are thorough and realistic and evidence shows that overtime, constant improvement is being made.
- Parents see school staff as models of good practice in Catholic life and modelling and support of this area is discreet yet consistent. Leaders and governors are involved at all levels in inspiring, encouraging and developing the children in this area and this involvement gives good witness for the children to view.
- Leaders and governors are not happy to rest on what is being achieved and are keen to look at next steps. This is obvious through discussion, but as importantly through a trawl of minutes from previous discussions and meetings where continuous improvement is given a priority over self-congratulation.
- The curriculum across the school has been developed and planned with clear links to the pupils' spiritual, moral, and vocational development. Links are made to Gospel values and Catholic Social Teaching throughout the curriculum.
- The school leadership has been quick to implement the Diocesan 'Virtues Initiative' and is embedding it in the school effectively. It is a visible initiative, and the children are able to discuss and explain it well when questioned.

## **Religious Education**

### **Grade - Requires Improvement**

#### **a) How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education**

- Pupils appear to enjoy their learning and approach their lessons with interest and enthusiasm. As a consequence, behaviour in lessons is good because most pupils enjoy Religious Education and are engaged. For some pupils however, the knowledge, understanding and skills they are acquiring are, at times, insufficiently developed. The lack of depth of understanding is affecting the potential progress of Greater Depth pupils in particular.
- Pupils show an understanding of religious literacy and are able to build some links between their own lives and Bible stories and Jesus' teaching, although more nuance in this understanding would be beneficial.
- Good support is shown through adult intervention and differentiation to promote the learning of the significant numbers of pupils with SEND at St John the Baptist school.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of each key stage is in line with national averages according to school data, however within the key stage there are some year groups falling below national

averages. The school is aware of these vagaries and has documented actions to redress the balance.

**b) The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education**

- Teachers are committed to the value of Religious Education and they communicate this effectively to their pupils. They are enthusiastic and lessons have pace and an array of activities. However, questioning is limited, particularly in enabling pupils to develop their own understanding and this is affecting the progress of some pupils. Literacy and recall are a focus rather than allowing children to discern and respond to the material (with depth and nuance) from a personal viewpoint.
- Planning is not always linked to pupil's current (real time) assessment such that learning and progress is limited. Explanations and adaptation of tasks in a methodical way to suit the individual learner's place on the continuum of understanding is also sometimes limited and this can make it more difficult (than necessary) for children to manage their next steps in learning. This is particularly noticeable in Greater Depth students who are not always pushed to demonstrate strong understanding of the personal alternative meanings of scripture and Church teaching.

**c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education**

- Leaders and governors ensure that the curriculum for Religious Education is a faithful expression of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. Correct resources are given to staff and Religious Education is taught for 10% of curriculum time.
- The Headteacher monitors and understands the data for Religious Education and has a strong understanding of the areas which need development. Future improvements have been planned in a methodical way and support is being resourced and delivered.
- Issues around questioning and its associated effect on Greater Depth pupils have been identified and steps are being taken, through ongoing Continuous Professional Development to help staff develop their own knowledge, skills and understanding in these areas of Religious Education pedagogy.
- The subject leader is knowledgeable and committed. She has a firm understanding of both the strengths and areas for development within Religious Education and has plans in place to ensure Religious Education remains a prominent element in the life of the school.
- Assessment data is analysed and understood. It has been used to effectively monitor groups of pupils and has informed plans to secure further improvements.

- The diocesan directed 'Come and See' programme is used to deliver Religious Education in the school. A scheme which is wholly appropriate for the groups of pupils at St John the Baptist school.

## **Collective Worship**

**Grade Good**

### **a) How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship**

- Pupils are keen to be involved in the school's prayer life and do this respectfully and regularly. Children show a willingness to participate at all levels and the pupil chaplaincy team is something many are keen to be involved with. The school community sings enthusiastically and has a good understanding of the traditions of various liturgies.
- St John the Baptist school benefits from a strong pupil chaplaincy team and these children are showing genuine skill in planning and leading new forms of worship, such as the recent stations of the cross. It is clear that the children are developing well with guidance and steer, but also that they are driven by their own faith and beliefs.
- The experience of living and working in a faithful, praying community clearly has a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of most pupils, irrespective of their ability or faith background. They have a deep sense of respect for those of other faiths and this is reflected in the way pupils prepare and participate in prayer and liturgy and the manner in which they talk about the prayer life of the school.

### **b) The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school**

- Collective worship is central to the life of the school and forms the heart of every school celebration. Praying together is part of the daily experience for all pupils and staff, regardless of their faith backgrounds. Themes and scriptures chosen are entirely appropriate and show a good knowledge of the Church's liturgical calendar.
- Staff are committed to and skilled at, helping develop children's skills in planning and leading worship. The prayer life of the school demonstrates a range of access points allowing children of all ages and cultural viewpoints and backgrounds to develop spiritually

### **c) How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the prayer life of the school.**

- Leaders and governors are fully aware of the importance of high-quality prayer and liturgy activities and opportunities within the school and monitor and evaluate this provision to plan

improvements and ensure it meets the needs of the whole community.

- Leaders actively promote the inclusion of pupils in planning and leading collective worship but are also fully participatory on the prayer life of the school and are active in modelling good practice and supporting the practice of other staff members.
- Leaders have a deep understanding of the Church's liturgical cycle, and this is evident through the school's prayer life, displays and classroom focal points. However, leaders also display genuine sensitivity to needs and backgrounds of the large number of non-Catholics in the school community which ensures all members are engaged and included.

### **Summary of Parental Questionnaires**

There were 15 parental questionnaires received. When the size of the school is considered, this is a strong response and the strength of feeling from parents to support the school was very much mirrored in their responses.

14 were extremely positive about the school and they all mentioned the caring nature and Catholic ethos of the school. Staff were frequently praised for their interactions with the children and all parents mentioned that their children were happy at St John the Baptist's School.