



DIOCESE OF PLYMOUTH

INSPECTION REPORT

The Cathedral School of St Mary
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DfE Number: 8793763
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Headteacher: Mr Mark Dyson
Chair of Governors: Canon Mark O'Keeffe

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.

Date of inspection: 19th November 2021
Date of previous inspection: March 2015

Reporting Inspector: Mrs Sarah Matthews
Additional Inspector: Miss Nicola Slack

Description of school

The Cathedral School of St Mary is a smaller than average sized Catholic Primary School within Plymouth CAST the Catholic Academy Trust which spans Dorset, Devon and Cornwall within the Diocese of Plymouth. It is part of the Plymouth Cathedral parish. The school has 4 mixed year group classes. Currently there are 4 full time members of teaching staff, with a fifth working 0.2. The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 44% with an above average proportion of pupils coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who have English as an additional language are both slightly higher than the national average.

The school has undergone significant changes since the last Canonical inspection. The Federation it was a part of has been dissolved so the school has had a complete change of leadership structure and has recently (Sept 2021) come under the leadership of an Executive headteacher.

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade Good

This is a Good school because:

- The Cathedral School is a vibrant and happy community of faith that promotes the Gospel values and Catholic virtues and strives to live them out.
- The school Mission statement, Love Jesus, Love Others, Love Yourself, A School of Joy, is known and understood by all and plays a central part in life of the school. The mission statement is regularly revisited by all stakeholders.
- The Christian leadership and commitment of both the Executive and Assistant headteacher are key strengths of the school and this has enabled the development of a clear vision which is being embraced by the leadership team and staff.
- Leaders, including governors, have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for future development.
- The pupils are great ambassadors for their school. Their behaviour and attitudes to school are exemplary and they are understandably proud of their community.
"This is a great school because we all look after each other." (Y5/6)
- RE teaching is a focus of the development plan and all was observed to be good and on the day of the validation. Pupils are beginning to develop a better understanding of their faith and are confident about asking questions of adults if they are unsure.
- Prayer and worship are evidently a daily part of school life and the development of the outdoor Labyrinth prayer and reflection area has further enhanced the pupils' experiences of this.
- The Family Support Worker is a great asset to the school, providing a valuable link between school and families experiencing difficulties. Her contribution is widely appreciated.
- There was a high volume of positive responses to the parental questionnaire.
- The school ethos is evident across all areas of the environment and offers an unmistakably Catholic welcome to all parents and visitors.

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

- The school leadership team, Chair of Governors & Parish Priest, Family Support Worker and Diocesan RE and Catholic Life adviser are all working closely together to 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

- Improve the quality of Religious Education by:
 - Offering all staff the opportunity to increase subject knowledge and confidence with a programme of high quality, focussed continual professional development and formation which will positively impact the classroom teaching.
- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education by:
 - Ensuring that marking and feedback is consistent and provides clear guidance to pupils on how to improve their work and progress.
- Improve the quality of Collective Worship by:
 - Offering varied opportunities for pupil involvement in planning, preparing and leading Collective Worship independently across the school.

Catholic Life**Grade Outstanding****A) The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school*****the extent to which pupils take on responsibilities and take part in developing the Catholic character of the school***

- The Mission statement is central to the school's ethos and is known and understood by the pupils. The pupils of The Cathedral School are proud of their school and their faith and are eager to share it with all members of the community and with all visitors.

pupils' sense of belonging to the school community and their relationship with those from different groups and backgrounds;

- The school environment is welcoming and reflects the high value placed on the Catholic faith. Focus is also given to ensure that the pupils learn about other faiths and those who are willing to do so are encouraged to share their beliefs and traditions with others. One parent commented;
'Respect of other religions and thought helps pupils to express themselves and find common areas...'
- The pupils are proud of their school and are eager to share their positive opinions with visitors.

the extent to which pupils contribute to the common good in the school and wider community.

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- The Gospel virtues connect the school and are evident in the classrooms, prayer tables and wall displays. Pupils speak positively about their school and are keen to reach out to help others as evidenced by their fundraising Missio, Cafod and their desire to contribute to the wider community, by organising litter picks, for example.

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

the centrality and efficacy of the school's mission statement;

- The community of The Cathedral School is based on faith, firmly embedded in Catholic virtues, where every member is nurtured, valued and encouraged to; 'Love Jesus, Love Others, Love Yourself. A school of JOY'
The Mission statement is known and referred to by all and is evident in many displays around the school. The school desire to live out their mission is tangible.

the extent to which the school makes its Catholic identity and ethos explicit through the learning environment, chaplaincy and community cohesion;

- The development of the physical environment contributes to creating an attractive and purposeful school, with high quality displays that make explicit the Catholic nature of the school.
- The strength and warmth of the relationships between all members of the community and the welcome offered to visitors is notable.

the quality of the pastoral care shown to all members of the community, both pupils and staff;

- Links with the parish community are strong, through shared worship and with parishioners volunteering within school and the school pupils assisting at a wide variety of parish events.
- The Cathedral School is caring, inclusive and supportive. There is a clear focus on social justice and the need to be stewards of God's creation.
- The school has good links with the parish and is exceptionally well supported by the parish priest
- The family support workers are an invaluable resource for the school. Their significance and importance are well recognised, and they do vital work supporting the school families, some of whom are, or have been, in crisis.

the extent to which the school promotes standards of behaviour that reflect Gospel values and how effectively it develops positive relationships between all members of the school community;

- Spiritual and moral development are outstanding. Pupils are provided with a wide range of spiritual opportunities and provide a Christian witness within the school environment, the parish and the local community.
- The pupils in the school show outstanding behaviour and Christian attitudes, giving of their time and talents to support those in need.

the quality of Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE), Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Spiritual and Moral education.

- The new Ten Ten PSHE and RSE program, Life to the Full, has been introduced to all Diocesan schools very recently. The Cathedral School leadership team and the RE leader in particular, are aware of the need to monitor the implementation and

delivery of the scheme over the coming year. Initial feedback from staff and pupils is positive.

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

the effectiveness of leaders and governors in promoting the Catholic Life of the school;

- School leaders provide a strong and effective model of Christian leadership which is recognised by staff, pupils and parents. The chair of governors is a very frequent visitor to the school and is heavily involved with the Catholic life of all those who belong to the school community. The school benefits greatly from his support and input.

how well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the Catholic Life provision and outcomes to plan future improvements;

- The school leadership team, including the RE leader, demonstrate a keen awareness of the need to continually monitor the provision the school offers to its entire community

the extent to which leaders offer models of good practice as leaders of Catholic Life;

- Relationships within the school community are strong and pupils respond to the adults in school openly and with confidence. Throughout the school there is clear evidence of its Catholic nature.

how well leaders and governors implement improvement in respect of the Catholic Life of the school;

- Since the last Canonical inspection, the school has undergone many radical changes, including a total change of both leadership and governance. The entire team now play a united, central role in the Catholic life of the school and take a joint responsibility for monitoring its implementation

how well leaders and governors ensure that the whole curriculum contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, and vocational development.

- The school leadership team is aware of the need for both the content and delivery of the RE curriculum to be monitored and this is the focus of their RE development plan.

how well Leaders and governors implement the Diocesan Pastoral Vision for the Diocese and its strategy for schools.

- The Inspectors were satisfied that this is being implemented effectively.

Religious Education

Grade Good

A) How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

the quality of pupils' achievement, learning and progress in Religious Education and any variations between groups of pupils;

- Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their RE lessons and achieve well in RE. Less able pupils were observed to be being well supported by both teachers and support staff.

the extent to which pupils are becoming religiously literate;

- Pupils in all classes were able to use appropriate religious vocabulary confidently and were able to explain many of the relevant symbols of Baptism.
'The candle is the light of God' (EYFS)
'The white garment is important as it welcomes the baby into God's family.' (Y3/4)
'The white garment is for purity' (Y3/4)
- The pupils were also very keen to speak to the inspectors about their responsibilities to and understanding of Catholic social justice and also to the environment, specifically referencing *Laudate Si'*. (Y5/6)

the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress;

- All observations on the day demonstrated that the needs of all pupils, including the scaffolding and differentiation of work, were accounted for, met by teachers and supported ably by the teaching support staff.

pupils' attainment in Religious Education at the end of each key stage.

- Whilst the inspectors saw evidence to show that attainment is good, there is a recognised need to develop the higher expectations of teachers and to further challenge all pupils to raise their performance to meet these new, higher expectations.

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

how well teaching promotes learning, enjoyment, progress and the attainment of pupils;

- Throughout the day, including in transit and at playtimes, the pupils were well behaved. Classroom observations demonstrated that they were engaged in and enthusiastic about their learning. The leadership team agreed with the inspectors that there was not enough evidence of challenge in the learning tasks set in the some lessons.

how well assessment informs appropriate teaching and learning strategies.

- All the observed lessons demonstrated a pattern of lesson delivery that took into account pupils' prior learning. There was evidence of verbal, formative assessment in all lessons. Diocesan summative assessment procedures are in the early stages of implementation but indicate that they should form a good basis for AT1 & 2. Staff are keen to develop further and more innovative ways to assess AT3

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

that the Religious Education curriculum meets Bishops' Conference requirements;

- The inspectors were satisfied that the Religious Education curriculum at The Cathedral School meets these requirements.

that the curriculum meets any additional requirements of the diocesan Bishop;

- The inspectors were satisfied that the curriculum meets these additional requirements.

how well leaders and governors use monitoring data to evaluate the school's performance in Religious Education in order to plan future improvements;

- In light of the pandemic, monitoring data has understandably been sporadic. Leaders and governors demonstrate a desire to fill this gap and continue to try to drive both learning and pupil achievement forward. The RE development plan is ambitious in this regard.

how well leaders and governor's plan improvement in provision, and in pupils' outcomes, and how effectively these plans are implemented at all levels;

- Leaders and governors are eager to improve outcomes and provide the pupils with an ambitious and exciting RE curriculum. There are clear plans to develop and embed this.

the effectiveness of the subject leader(s);

- The subject leader has an exceptionally good knowledge and understanding of the subject and is clearly passionate about improving the offer to pupils and the standards of RE provision across the whole school.

how effectively assessment is used in monitoring and securing improvements;

- Diocesan assessment arrangements are relatively new and the implementation has been impacted by the pandemic but examples provided to the inspectors show that year 6 assessment is in line with requirements.

how well scheme and specification choices support the learning and achievement of different groups of pupils.

- Observations on the day demonstrate that the less able pupils are well supported in class to enable them to achieve objectives and complete work. Challenge for all pupils could be more ambitious and explicit in some classes

Collective Worship

Grade Good

A) How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship

the extent to which pupils show interest and actively participate in the school's prayer life;

- The school gathered for worship reverently and with real purpose. The Navigators class (Y5/6) delivered an adult planned worship respectfully for the rest of the school who were attentive and engaged. The pupils of The Cathedral School are evidently used to thoughtful and reverential prayer in school.

the extent to which pupils are acquiring skills in planning and leading prayer and worship;

- The pupils of The Cathedral School are obviously experienced in delivering and leading the school community in prayer. There is a clear desire, demonstrated by the leadership team, to start to involve the pupils more in the planning of these liturgies

and prayer services to allow them more ownership of their prayer time. Plans are being developed to introduce this element to the school worship programme.

the extent to which the school's prayer life contributes to the spiritual and moral development of pupils.

- All the pupils, from the youngest to the oldest, are clearly used to reverential prayer in school. They are well behaved, focussed, reflective and thoughtful. The pupils' social and moral development is very obviously well catered for by the school.

B) The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

the centrality, quality and variety of prayer and collective worship opportunities provided by the school;

- The inspectors saw a range of different prayer spaces and displays. A whole school worship of good quality was observed. The pupils were able to talk enthusiastically about different prayer opportunities they are offered.

how well the school provides opportunities for the pupils to develop spiritually through the prayer life of the school, taking into account their age, aptitudes, family backgrounds and the Catholic character of the school.

- Prayer and worship are evidently central to school life and the pupils demonstrated a good understanding of their purpose. The pupils, of all ages, were able to tell the inspectors why prayer and worship were important to them and recognised the relevance of prayer to their daily lives.

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

how well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate provision for prayer and Collective Worship in order to plan future improvements;

- The school leaders and chair of governors are committed to providing all pupils with high quality opportunities for prayer, worship, meditation and reflection. There is an awareness of the need for plans to allow the pupils to plan and take ownership of both class and whole school worship.

The extent to which leaders offer models of good practice as leaders of prayer and Collective Worship;

- The leadership team and all members of the school staff were observed to behave with reverence and were keen to participate in all opportunities for prayer and worship and to set good examples of behaviour to the pupils. Prayer is a priority for all members of this school community.

how skilled leaders are in planning for worship and how knowledgeable they are about the liturgical rhythms of a Catholic community.

- Observed worship was age appropriate, well planned and beautifully delivered by confident and assured year five and six pupils. Content and hymns were appropriate and the entire community participated enthusiastically.

Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 30 parental questionnaires received. The vast majority were extremely positive and complimentary about the school;

'They believe that every child is special and unique. They aim to discover and maximise every child's talents and strengths.'

'The school is very welcoming, inclusive and supports pupils' development.'

'They listen to and care about the pupils.'

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors: Sarah Matthews and Nicola Slack. The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality and leadership of the school's provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.

The inspectors observed teaching across four Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. These lesson observations were conducted jointly with The Cathedral School senior leaders.

The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship.

Meetings were held with the chair of governors, who is also the Parish Priest, the executive headteacher, the Assistant headteacher and Religious Education subject leader, the family support worker, the Diocesan Catholic adviser, and the Year 5 & 6 pupil GIFT chaplains.

The inspectors attended a whole school Collective Worship (delivered by Year 5 & 6 pupils) and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in Religious Education, the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school and pupils' behaviour.

The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, the school development plan, the Religious Education action plan, teachers' planning and other school related documentation.

The inspectors would like to thank the headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff, chair of governors, parents and pupils of The Cathedral School for their preparatory work for the inspection and to express their appreciation for the warmth of welcome they received, the open and honest discussions about their school and the support given during the inspection process.