

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



St. Margaret Clitherow School  
Polhearne Way  
Brixham  
TQ5 0EE

**URN 140768**

Head Teacher: Mrs Finola Gill  
Chair of Governors: Judith Johnson

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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

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**Date of Inspection: 22-23<sup>rd</sup> May 2019**

Inspectors:  
Miss Sarah Adams  
Mrs Helen Armstrong

## Context of School

St. Margaret Clitherow is a smaller than average primary school serving the parish of Brixham in East Devon. It is part of the Plymouth Catholic Schools Trust which was formed in April 2014. The current Head Teacher took over as interim Head in April 2017 and became the substantive Head in December 2017. This full inspection follows a s48 inspection in January 2017 which resulted in a judgement of serious weaknesses in key areas, notably leadership and teaching. There followed an Ofsted inspection in February 2017 which also resulted in the school receiving an Inadequate judgement. The school's governing body was taken over by an Interim Academy Board (IAB) to ensure that the school can and does make effective progress to move out of special measures.

## Context Data

NOR: 107 Girls: 65 Boys: 42

Number children with a statement of special needs: 2

% of children on SEN register 26% (28 pupils)

% of children with English as an additional Language (EAL) 1 pupil

% of children receiving free school meals 21% (23 pupils)

% of children in receipt of pupil premium (PP) 31% (34 pupils)

% of children from British Service Families (2%)

## Over-All Effectiveness:

The School as a Catholic Community:	<b>GOOD</b>
Leadership and Management:	<b>GOOD</b>
Word (RE Leadership, quality of teaching and achievement)	<b>GOOD</b>
Worship and Spiritual Life of the School	<b>GOOD</b>

## Summary of Key Findings

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

## Key Strengths

- Gospel values are becoming increasingly embedded in the life of the school, underpinning decisions and driving practice.
- The leadership of the school is committed to serving with integrity and dignity. It consistently provides opportunities for children to grow spiritually, morally, academically and physically.
- The current mission statement encapsulated in 'Dream Believe Achieve' is highly influential. It encourages children to aim high and have a greater sense of where they can go in life.

- Relationships in the school are highly positive. This is a community growing in confidence and self-belief, where adults and children support one another generously and compassionately.
- Pastoral care is rooted in gospel values, leading to systems and practice which ensure that all members of the community feel safe, cared for and dignified. Gifts and talents are recognised and celebrated.
- The relationship which the school has with the local community and the parish is strengthening by the day. Parents are very positive about the school and recognise the enormous efforts the school makes to ensure that they are welcome and are kept informed about all aspects of their children's progress and engagement with school life.
- A significant number of children within the school have special needs. However, every child is seen as unique, special and a child of God to be nurtured and supported to grow into the very best that they can be. The school's ARC room ensures that no child is left to flounder when they are struggling and offers opportunities for children to develop their social skills.
- Since the last inspection the teaching of RE has developed significantly. Teachers are growing in their confidence to deliver sound lessons, where most children are challenged to 'dig deep' and achieve.
- The monitoring of progress in RE is extensive. The school's consistent approach to it is leading to the development of well-focused plans and clear targets so that all children are given the opportunity to achieve their best.
- The school's governing body (IAB) has worked hard to support the school to maintain its focus on what it means to be a Catholic School. The remit to move the school out of special measures has not deterred the drive to ensure that this is done within a Catholic context.
- Gospel values are well known throughout the school and all members of the community, particularly the children, are able to speak about them. They are visibly evident around the school. Through liturgy, prayer times and assemblies these are regularly explored and reflected upon.
- 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**

- Continue to embed the vision and mission of the school so that it is the driving force behind all decision making and actions as the school moves forward.
- Ensure that a new Governing Body is fully equipped to appreciate the need to systematically evaluate the school including the areas relating to the Catholic life and can show determination in challenging and supporting the school to become an outstanding Catholic School.
- Develop all staff to take on leadership roles and develop their skills to enable them to be confident in sharing the school's Catholic vision and purpose.
- Develop further assessment procedures to ensure that children are being taught from their starting point and can make progress lesson by lesson.
- Continue to work on ensuring that assessment for learning (AFL) leads to reshaping tasks and explanations to improve learning.

- Continue the excellent practice of providing regular CPD prior to new RE topics and incorporate opportunities for reflecting on the challenges and successes of the previous topic.
- Develop confidence of all staff and children to create and deliver acts of worship.
- Continue to develop and strengthen links with the parish priest and the parish community.

## **The School as a Catholic Community**

**Good**

St. Margaret Clitherow is a small, but vibrant and increasingly confident Catholic school with a number of outstanding features. Having struggled in recent years, the school is well on the road to restoring its identity and the contribution it can make to the lives of the children who come to the school and to the local community of Brixham.

Throughout the school care and concern for one another is evident in children and adults. Children feel safe, are happy and enjoy coming to school. This is because they believe that the adults want the best for them and have high expectations. Attitudes, behaviour and a commitment to ensuring that children are offered the best opportunities to grow and develop reflect the mission of the Church.

There is a calmness and sense of order about the school which enables learning. Expectations around behaviour and the support for those children who struggle, give clear messages and a clarity around what is and what is not acceptable. Children are responding well to these clear boundaries and consequently they are keen to engage with the school, responding well to challenges. Children are articulate in their appreciation of what the school is trying to do and they value the guidance they are receiving. Equally they are keen to take on roles of responsibility and serve the community. There are many opportunities for children to do this from the Eco group, to School Council; class chaplains and most inspiringly the school Guardian Group which consists of children, a member of staff, two parishioners and four parents. Children who choose to belong to this group are active in a variety of ways but particularly in relation to the spiritual life of the school. From small beginnings, the group is growing in engagement and confidence, such that the children who participate are now real ambassadors for the school. One of the outcomes of this group is the decision to design a permanent outdoor prayer space to be situated at the front of the school. Parents are giving freely of their time to build the space, reflecting their own commitment to the values of the school and to the nurture of their own children's spirituality. The whole school has been involved in creating 'Gospel Value pebbles' which will be incorporated into the space.

The school is working hard to offer a wide and varied curriculum whilst ensuring that the core subjects are given their due focus. Gospel values permeate the curriculum and children are helped to explore what they mean for them through assemblies and other acts of worship. Children can talk about them and see how they relate to their every day lives. Linked to these are the vision and values of the Academy Trust which have been embraced fully by the school. A combination of both is leading the school to offer a fully rounded experience for both staff and pupils.

Surveys show that parents are very happy with what they see the school offering. They are regularly informed by newsletter of the work which their children are learning in RE and are encouraged to support them by engaging in activities at home which will help to deepen the children's learning. Parents feel welcome in the school and comment on how teachers are readily available to them and have a genuine sense that there is a shared commitment and ownership of the school. Many have commented that the information which they receive about their children's progress is much more helpful. As a result, parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Children also speak positively about how the school is improving and are grateful for the hard work of the teachers.

Pastoral care is a strength of the school and is a key element in enabling the school to move forward. Knowing the academic progress and pastoral needs of each child helps the school to identify appropriate support and respond effectively to them. Kindness, compassion, integrity and forgiveness are the Gospel values which underpin the pastoral care shown at St. Margaret Clitherow. This is a school which continues to go the extra mile, particularly when a child is really struggling. The development of the ARC room is a great asset to the school's management of children who might be vulnerable. It is a space which is providing children with the means to develop socially and emotionally. Pupils who visit the ARC at social times participate in a wide range of activities that help them with their personal development. It is an opportunity for helping children to grow in self-esteem and self-confidence. This was observed during the inspection and, specifically, the support that children gave to one another.

St. Margaret Clitherow is an outward looking school. Situated so closely to the sea, the staff see a real opportunity for developing the children's awareness and appreciation of their environment. They have opted to explore this through their study of 'Laudato Si', Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment. Children at the school expressed their enthusiasm for the subject and are becoming ever more conscious of the importance of looking after the world in which they live. This sense of belonging to a wider world is strengthened by the warm inclusion of children from different nationalities, cultures and social and economic backgrounds. Alongside the promotion of Gospel Values, British values and an understanding of core learning values the school ensures that no child is excluded, and all children have a sense of belonging not just to the school but to the wider community.

This sense of belonging to the wider community encourages outreach and the desire to serve others. The school is keen to work with other CAST schools and to this end staff are linked with staff from other schools to provide support and guidance. This is important for the school on its journey of improvement but is also a reciprocal arrangement so that all can benefit from working together. Participating as part of a CAST pilot cluster, to develop a 'Stewardship' curriculum, has enhanced relationships within the cluster and provided teachers with support for teaching and their own pastoral care of one another.

The school is recognised for the range of charitable activities for which they fundraise. The School Council take an active role in deciding which charities they support as nominated by the whole school. The engagement in such work and participation in a variety of activities in the local area, such as the Torbay music festival, Brixham swimming gala and visiting the local care home are all signs of the school's desire to effectively prepare children for their future roles and responsibilities towards all members of society. Their presence in the community is having a positive impact on the relationship which the school now has in Brixham and further afield. 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) Good**

To be an outstanding leader in a Catholic school requires a commitment which goes far beyond daily routines to ensure pupils make progress in their learning. Ultimately it is about fully appreciating the message of Christ to 'do this in memory of me'. Within the context of John's Gospel this is reflected in the command of Jesus to wash feet. It is an act of great humility which 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 approach is central to the philosophy of the leadership team at St. Margaret Clitherow, where those with responsibility for leadership actively seek to be there not just for the children but for the adults also, supporting and guiding them to grow as professional people with gifts and talents that can be fostered for the greater good of the community.

The Head of St. Margaret Clitherow is a dedicated leader. She has a clarity of vision that is enabling her to take the school forward so that the life of the school is rooted in the mission and vision of the Gospel. It is a challenging journey but one which she is able to embrace because she is supported by equally dedicated senior leaders. This is a team which works well together and understands the needs of the school. Together they are working tirelessly to develop a staff team which is committed and effective in providing for every child in the school. Staff feel valued and respond generously. They are accepting of appropriate challenge because they are confident that it is ultimately about the children, for whom they want to do their best.

For the past two years the school has been governed by a CAST appointed IAB. This group of people have also worked tirelessly to support the school on their journey. They are not afraid to challenge the leadership team and have done so effectively. At the same time their regular visits incorporating 'deep dives' have provided support and guidance as to the way forward. Regular monitoring visits from Ofsted verify the progress which is being made. Throughout this process, the Catholic life of the school has remained a core area for review with a determination to ensure that this central aspect of the school's identity is never lost.

RE leadership has been a priority for the school and is currently a role which the Head holds. She is committed to ensuring that RE is seen as the core of the core curriculum and as part of this she has introduced and ensured that time is allocated regularly for staff to develop their own knowledge and understanding so that they can deliver the curriculum effectively and confidently. In addition, despite the demands of Headship, she makes time to attend appropriate meetings to keep herself informed about developments in RE teaching and assessment.

### **The School as a Teaching and Learning Community (Word) 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. Children engaged with interest and enthusiasm. They like RE as it is 'fun and makes us think'. Teachers have high expectations, challenge children and enable them to express their views. Children are articulate and well-informed. They can make links between their learning, acts of worship and other areas of the curriculum. An example of this would be the links they could make between their work on Laudato Si and Gospel values. Children can talk about their learning and how they are helped to make progress. Lessons are well paced, draw on previous learning and employ a variety of activities including group and pair work to facilitate learning.

The quality of relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils is excellent. Support staff work closely with the teachers and understand what they need to do to help children progress. They are highly professional, unobtrusive and supportive in their interactions with children. Teachers are supported by regular CPD and value these opportunities to understand units before they teach them. This is an important element of their preparation and crucial in ensuring that they have as much theological understanding as they can. As a result, teachers plan their lessons with greater confidence. The Head has a robust monitoring programme and feedback is given individually to staff with a time-scale to respond to identified action points. Pupil voice is an important part of the monitoring plan and the views of children are actively sought and valued.

In addition to observing lessons, children's books demonstrate a consistent approach to teaching and learning and marking is effective. Working walls and focal points add to the engaging environment which supports learning. Children can speak about their contribution to these and like it when they are given responsibility for maintaining them. The Guardian group have a responsibility for monitoring these to ensure that they are engaging and effective.

The school has embraced the Diocesan curriculum programme and teachers value the work produced by the CAST writers' group, which provides valuable materials to support the teaching of RE. The national assessment guidelines for RE are being implemented in the school. These are helping teachers to gauge the different stages of learning and next steps for children. Although this is in its early stages it will prove an invaluable tool as its implementation becomes embedded.

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

**Good**

Since the last inspection the worship and spiritual life of the school has been transformed. It now lies at the heart of the school life and underpins all aspects of the school's ethos. A wide variety of experiences contribute to the spiritual development of the children. These include formal and informal opportunities for prayer and celebration. 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. Classroom prayer times offer children the opportunity for reflection, silence and stillness. They respond well to these times and often commented on the fact that anything they put in their prayer journal is private, unless they wish to share it.

The school had created an outside prayer tent for the month of May. Each day children, staff and some parishioners gather to pray the Rosary. In the midst of all the lunch time activity, this is seen as something of an oasis for prayer and reflection. The building of a permanent outdoor prayer space by parents will offer further opportunities for the children to have quiet moments. Throughout the inspection children across the whole school demonstrated their capacity to be still and 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.

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 Guardian group play a key participatory role in these liturgies and assemblies. Their next step is to take responsibility for preparing and leading these. They are role models for other children and what started as a small group has grown in size and stature because other children want to get involved.

The opportunity to celebrate the sacramental life of the Church reflects the desire that the school has to root itself in the traditions and practices of the Catholic Church. A sign of hope for the school is the growing relationship the school now has with the parish. The school is keen to be involved in parish activities and is increasing its efforts to do that. The Head is working hard to strengthen the relationship between the school and the parish. The Parish Priest is visiting the school more often and the sacramental life of the school is slowly developing. A parishioner leads a prayer group in the school on a weekly basis at lunch time. The variety of activities on offer ensure that children have a good understanding of how they can develop their own personal faith and relationship with God, personally and communally.

Interactions between children and between children and adults demonstrate the care and compassion which the community has for one another. Occasional bullying is seen as that, occasional. Children know what to do if it occurs and are confident that teachers will deal with it. They are very forgiving and accepting of one another, thoughtful in their concerns for each other and loving in their relationships. The school's Catholic ethos underpins its commitment to inclusivity. It is welcoming to all, regardless of ability, faith or background. There is no doubt that this is a school which values all of God's children, dignifies everyone and celebrates individuality. All aspects of the school life contribute to the spiritual and moral development of the children and consequently this is a school which is happy and inspiring.

## **Conclusion**

After a turbulent two years, St. Margaret Clitherow is a school which is going from strength to strength. It reflects the deep desire of the Head and the whole community to create and grow a school where every parent wants to send their child. The children are its greatest ambassadors and it was a privilege to spend time with them. Bishop Mark and the Catholic Community of Plymouth Diocese can be confident that this school is one which is a true witness to the Gospel and striving to serve the mission of the Church in all its fulness.

**Sarah Adams**  
**Helen Armstrong**