



**"NOTRE DAME IS A GOOD SCHOOL" OFSTED 2005**

**MISSION STATEMENT**

Notre Dame RC School  
is  
an optimistic school promoting Christian attitudes  
a school where every person belongs  
a school which values learning  
a school which rises to challenges and celebrates achievement

**Notre Dame educates the whole person: head, heart and hands**

Welcome to Notre Dame!

We are a school with a strong sense of tradition, a vibrant present and an exciting future. There has been a Notre Dame School in Plymouth for nearly 150 years. This school is proud of its history but is forward looking.

In 1804, two French women, Julie Billiart, the daughter of a country draper, and Francoise Blin de Bourdon, an aristocrat, founded a Religious Congregation dedicated to the education of girls. From that time onwards, in Europe, America, Africa, Japan and other parts of the world, Sisters of Notre Dame have worked to keep alive the educational ideals of St. Julie. It is a truly world wide family. You may have heard of Sister Dorothy Stang who was murdered in the Amazon in February 2005 for the stand she took in support of the rights of poor farmers. She is a modern example of the bravery and independence shown by the founders of the congregation. The final sentence of their mission statement may help you to understand our inspiration: **'Each of us commits our one and only life to work with others to create justice and peace for all.'**

St. Julie believed that education should be for all, whatever their ability. The first Sisters were encouraged to educate **"the whole child: heart, hands and head"** and they were urged to teach their pupils **"whatever is necessary for life."** We have adopted this **'head, heart and hands'** approach to underpin our status as a Specialist School and we too try to adapt our curriculum to suit every need.

Notre Dame has a strong record of academic success, and a broad and enriching curriculum that stretches the gifted and supports those who need extra time. We expect the best effort and the best standards from all our community members because we are totally committed to achievement. We are a learning community; a successful comprehensive school that values all achievements. We are a Specialist Humanities School promoting excellence through English, Drama and Religious Studies. We pursue excellence for every student in our care, in all areas of life.

Our school improvement plan uses the nine gateways for personalising learning as the framework for setting priorities. We set these within four Deep Working Groups. We place a high value on developing spiritual and emotional intelligence in all our learning community and set aside time for this each year.

**Buildings**

The school is set in beautiful, spacious grounds on the outskirts of Plymouth. Improvements over the past five years include a remodelled Design Technology suite, transformed Music provision, refurbished Mathematics rooms, and, as a result of Specialist Humanities status, exciting and innovative provision in English, Drama and Religious Studies. In 2008 we opened a brand new Sports Hall and fitness suite, new library and Sixth Form facilities and a five classroom block. The classroom block houses History and Geography and is named after Sister Dorothy Stang. We also revolutionised our Food Technology area so that training for catering has become a real option. In 2009 we plan to transform three more of our Science Labs.

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### **Students**

*"The students describe the school as an 'optimistic' place to be. A particularly outstanding feature of the school is its work to empower students so that they can contribute fully to its life and work". Ofsted 2005*

There are approximately 850 students at Notre Dame; of these over 140, including boys, are in the Sixth Form. We are part of a consortium of five schools: St Boniface's College, Eggbuckland Community College, Devonport High School for Boys and Devonport High School for Girls. This offers wider choice to our 'A' Level students. The school draws its intake from between 30-40 primary schools across Plymouth, Devon and Cornwall.

All students are members of a tutor group. The tutor knows the students well and provides a first point of contact for help and advice. Student leadership is expressed through the Senior Student team (SST), School Senate, MaD (Make a Difference) groups, prefects and house captains. We are in the throes of moving towards a vertical house system in 2010 and are confident that this will suit our students well and help to raise standards and encourage community spirit and friendly rivalry!

### **The Curriculum**

The school follows the National Curriculum. At Key Stage 3 students are given the opportunity to work within every department. Some subjects have mixed ability groups; others such as English, Maths and Science, have setting or banding. At Key Stage 4 we offer a full range of options for GCSE's with as much freedom of choice as possible. We also offer alternative packages to GCSE provision where we link with the local college to provide vocational courses. At Sixth Form level the school offers an excellent choice of 'A' level, National Diplomas and NVQ courses through working as part of a consortium of five secondary schools. We introduce a Diploma in Manufacturing in September 2009.

We offer a good range of extra curricular activities. The school's harmony group has performed at events across the city. Many sporting activities take place both during the lunchtime and after school. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme is well established here. We have a very active Young Enterprise group. Our students have represented the city as youth MP's for the past 5 years. We are well known for our work on Student Voice and the Respect agenda. Every year we offer an activities week during which students have the opportunity to choose from exciting options such as an adventure week in Bude, rock climbing, sailing, and cultural visits to countries such as Germany, Holland, Italy, Poland, France and even China.

As an inclusive school we aim to provide opportunities for the full range of abilities. We seek to create an environment in which each person is valued as a unique individual. The basis of school life is mutual respect for all members of our community.

### **The Staff**

Teachers at Notre Dame are expert, dedicated and committed to student progress. We have 58 teaching staff who are supported by an excellent, highly efficient team of 72 support staff. Many of our support staff have been trained and been promoted in house to new positions such as learning support, cover supervision and library. This is something we encourage. We are also delighted to have a lay chaplain who also supports students' leadership.

Notre Dame looks to every member of staff to support the Christian ethos of the school and to play their part in caring for the young people who come to the school. In this, as in other aspects of life at Notre Dame, staff are helped to fulfil new commitments through planned professional development and the mutual support of colleagues. Coaching is our approach to raising standards and sharing good practice.

You will enjoy working at Notre Dame. Our staff consider the commitment of staff, the sense of community and the motivation of students as its greatest strengths. Our visitors tell us that they are struck by the friendliness of our students, the quality of our learning environment and the ethos of the school. Investors in People agree with them.