



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection

ST THOMAS' CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, TEAN

Part of the Painsley Catholic Academy

Parklands Road, Upper Tean, Stoke-on-Trent, ST10 4DS

Inspection date
Reporting Inspector

23rd -24th November 2016
Mr Paul Nutt

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Academy
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	223
Appropriate authority	Board of Directors
Chair of Governors	Mr John Pennington
Telephone number	01538 722378
E-mail address	headteacher@st-thomas-tean.staffs. sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24-25 November 2011
DFE School Number	8603473
Unique Reference Number	124365

Headteacher **Mr Antony Wretham**

Previous inspection: 1

This inspection: 1

Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector
- The focus of the inspection was on the quality, leadership, and impact of the school's provision of Catholic life, collective worship, and religious education (RE)
- The inspector observed teaching across 3 RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All these lessons were conducted jointly with senior leaders
- The inspector completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic life, worship, and the impact of teaching on their learning over time
- Meetings were held with the chair of governors, the headteacher, the subject leader and lay chaplain, the parish priest and chair of the parish committee, the chief executive, and a link director
- The inspector attended a whole school assembly, a Year 1 Mass, and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in RE, the presentation of the Catholic life of the school and pupils' behaviour
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents including the school's self evaluation, data about pupils' achievement and progress, RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning and questionnaire outcomes

Information about the school

- St Thomas' is a one-form entry school situated in Upper Tean, and serving the parishes of St Thomas', Tean and St Mary's, Cresswell
- The number of children from ethnic minority groups is very low and significantly below similar schools
- The number of Catholic pupils is currently 41%.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through pupil premium is significantly below the local and national average
- Many of the children enter the school with lower than expected levels of knowledge and practice of the faith
- Since the last inspection, St Thomas' has become an academy, a member of the Painsley Catholic Academy

Main Findings

- The Catholic life of the school is outstanding, with its motto, "Truth, Courage", at the centre and many opportunities for all to develop, individually and collectively, their understanding of the Faith and a positive sense of vocation
- Collective worship is a strong feature of the school. It engages all pupils to participate, pray and reflect, which they do with reverence and enthusiasm. It supports and enriches the faith life of all
- Provision for RE is secure and focused, with clear and effective procedures in place for monitoring and evaluating learning and teaching, ensuring impact towards school improvement
- Standards of engagement, progress and attainment for all pupils within years and across key stages are high in RE
- There is strong and dynamic leadership throughout the senior team. Individuals demonstrate their personal commitment to the faith; collectively there is a continual drive towards high standards in all areas and improving on previous best

- Membership of the multi-academy company (MAC), with strong governance and collaborative links, affords many benefits at whole-school, subject-specific and individual levels. For example, the drive towards excellence is supported and sustained through a regularly reviewed programme of continuing professional development, incorporating Diocesan best practice

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

Catholic life, collective worship and spiritual, moral and vocational development: provision and outcomes

- Catholic life at St Thomas' is outstanding and inclusive, with prominence given to the mission statements both of the school and the MAC, and to Catholic values. These are displayed around the school, referred to and discussed frequently with pupils, during lessons for instance
- The school provides an ideal environment for all to develop in faith. Its ethos bears clear testimony to the Catholic faith, whilst ensuring that pupils are familiar with key tenets of other faiths. Behaviour around the school is exemplary, and children initiate and respond with great enthusiasm to their lives here, for example through charitable works and spontaneous acts of thoughtfulness, developing the teaching they receive in their daily lives at St Thomas'
- Spiritual and moral development is a priority in school for each individual in all aspects of life; there is an all-encompassing ethos which values all equally, and to which all pupils respond with generosity and understanding
- The school provides opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in planning and leading collective worship. There is evidence, some observed during the inspection, that increasing numbers of pupils are embracing the opportunities presented, and developing a closer understanding of the liturgical year and its celebrations
- From an early age pupils develop a strong sense of vocation, what God wants me to be, which is a striking feature of the school's Catholic life. There are a number of targeted days in the year which support this development, for example Vocations Day, when guest speakers from many walks of life participate. Strikingly, pupils understand that vocations include far more than the priesthood and religious life
- There are many excellent examples of charitable works, some on a regular basis, some on a more ad hoc basis initiated by pupils. Minnie Vinnies play an important part here, both within school and in the wider community, where they support a local food bank and lunch club for elderly residents. They demonstrate a mature understanding that they are serving others, as God wants them to do
- Minnie Vinnies is currently all girls. Together with the lay chaplain, they are actively seeking to increase membership, to encourage boys to consider involvement, and to increase their capacity for even wider involvement in the planning and delivery of aspects of Catholic life and collective worship
- The prayer life of the school is strong and beneficial to all pupils, individually and collectively. They understand its importance, and are comfortable at times of prayer and reflection. All classes share prayer and silent reflection at important times of the day, and pupils are encouraged to write and share prayers for personal intentions.
- There are prayer corners in each teaching area, and in other key places around the school; artefacts and statues, and a wealth of attractive resources engage pupils' interests and enhance their understanding
- Regular, structured oversight of Catholic Life and collective worship ensure that further improvements to practice and outcomes, already notable, are continually

being sought. Impact on future development is ensured by consistent processes of evaluation, feedback and incorporation into planning cycles

- There are established links between the school, parents and the church. These could form a sound basis for exciting new developments working collaboratively with the recently arrived parish priest

LEADERSHIP

Leadership of Catholic life and Collective Worship

- Leadership of the Catholic life and collective worship of the school is outstanding, emanating from the vibrant and faith-filled personal example of the headteacher
- Strong and dynamic leadership is evident in all areas of the school. Individuals demonstrate their personal commitment to the faith, and there is a collective drive towards continually moving forward standards in all areas and improving on previous best
- All staff respond very favourably to this leadership model, knowing that they are supported at all times. They are confident that guidance will always be available on request
- There is a pervasively positive and welcoming Catholic ethos within the school, to which all contribute; the headteacher, his deputy and the lay chaplain provide especially clear model and guidance through their commitment and personal example. Visitors become immediately aware of, and included in, this environment of faith
- Rigorous processes and procedures are in place for governance, which ensures an effective combination of both support and challenge at school level, integrated into the wider framework of the MAC. Visits are always with purpose, and outcomes fed back and shared appropriately with leaders and individual colleagues
- As a result of the above, a focused, relevant and ongoing programme of continuing professional development is developed through the MAC, the Diocese, and other external agencies. All staff have the opportunity to identify possible future needs

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education

- Leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education is outstanding
- Religious Education is strong in school: the subject is very well led by a coordinator who provides outstanding example and support to ensure that teaching is never less than good; from often modest starting points, progress is strong, within and across both key stages; outcomes for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 are above age-related expectations.
- The last Section 48 Inspection (2011) identified assessment for learning and the quality and quantity of pupils' written work as areas for development. These have been addressed and implemented, though developments and refinements are ongoing
- The school has embedded a consistent use of assessment and tracking data across all classes. Regular, timetabled monitoring ensures high standards are maintained; outcomes are discussed in staff meetings or with individual colleagues as

appropriate. Use of assessment for learning strategies and positive marking provides reliable and ongoing information for staff and pupils for driving forward learning outcomes

- The school has clear and effective procedures in place for monitoring and evaluating RE, and impact towards school improvement is ensured through a structure of observations, work scrutiny, reports, meetings and consequent plans, at school and MAC levels. This affords continual evidence of the effectiveness and consistency of delivery and learning opportunities for all pupils
- The school is continually seeking strategies to improve on previous best, especially for the most able to maximise their potential. There is continuing development of strategies focused to improve performance in RE, especially for higher achievers
- Teaching is very well planned using agreed schemes of work. The lessons seen revealed close agreement with internal evaluations and evidence of internal observations over time. Teachers, including non-Catholics, benefit greatly from a targeted programme of coaching and exemplification by the RE Coordinator and other senior leaders. It encourages colleagues to examine their personal practice, develop a wider repertoire of strategies, and further enrich learning opportunities for their pupils
- Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge, and use a wide range of strategies, including IT, music, prayer, scripture and assessment for learning, to secure engagement and progress. Independent thought is encouraged by the increasing use across year groups of open-ended questioning. The deployment of teaching assistants is planned according to identified need, to very good effect

Recommendations

In order to improve the school should:

- embrace the opportunities afforded by the arrival of the new parish priest to enrich further the pupils' learning experiences in religious education and the Catholic life of the school, including worship
- seek wider inclusion of boys in planning and delivering Catholic life and collective worship (for example, through the work of Minnie Vinnies)