



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
Of the Education Act 2005
URN 118767

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School
Catholic Primary School
Romany Road
Rainham, ME8 6JH

Inspection date: 30 April 2013

Chair of Governors: Mr Jeremy Chapman
Headteacher: Mrs Alma Myatt
Inspectors: Mrs Ann Oddy

EDUCATION COMMISSION

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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Chatham Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Medway Local Authority. The principal parish which the school serves is St Thomas of Canterbury, Rainham. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 61%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in Key Stage 1 and 10% in Key Stage 2.

The school takes pupils from 3 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 239. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly around average. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is below average. 16% of pupils have special educational needs. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is below average.

Publication date ... 19 June 2013

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

St Thomas of Canterbury is a good school with many outstanding features. It is a warm and welcoming community where all are valued and supported. Pupils achieve well and make good progress. They enjoy coming to school and are proud to be members of their school community. Parents are appreciative of the school and the Catholic education it provides. In particular they value the staff, whom they describe as exceptionally caring and approachable. Staff form a strong, cohesive team who work well together and support each other. The school has a strong Catholic ethos evident in the good relationships within the school community and in the many attractive and creative displays and modern Christian artefacts around the school. One parent commented "The Catholic ethos of the school is overwhelmingly evident. I am more than happy that this is a prominent point of focus for the school." The school is well led and managed, with senior leaders working closely with the Governing Body. Priorities identified in the last inspection have been addressed.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, headteacher and staff should:

- Further develop the provision for more able pupils to include more open ended questioning and challenging tasks.
- Further develop the current good practice in marking to include "next steps" marking with suggestions as to how pupils can improve their work.

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The Catholic life of the school

Leadership and management

GRADE 1

Leaders at all levels provide clear direction for the Catholic life of the school. They are strongly committed to the school's Catholic mission and to nurturing the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. This is reflected in school policies and documentation and the school's self evaluation. There is a strong focus on promoting high standards and enabling all pupils to achieve their full potential. The headteacher is an excellent role model and inspires her staff to form a cohesive team working singlemindedly to provide the best for the whole school community. Governors show great commitment to the school and are fully aware of their role of support and challenge. They play a significant role in the life of the school. Examples include a governor accompanying Year 6 pupils on an annual day of reflection at Aylesford Priory and governors joining staff for INSET days as well as participating in celebrations and school activities. Good relationships exist with parents and carers, who feel well informed and included in the life of the school. The school has strong links with the local parish and the Diocese. The school is well resourced and provides an attractive learning environment.

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

GRADE 2

Provision for personal and collective worship is good, with pupils offered a variety of opportunities during the school day and throughout the school year. Mass is celebrated in school on a weekly basis and is open to parents and parishioners. Pupils introduce the Masses and lead the prayers and readings, as well as helping to prepare the service. Assemblies reflect the liturgical year and the topics studied in Religious Education. Pupils are aware of the importance of praying together. They are encouraged to write their own prayers as well as praying using the traditional prayers of the Church. The parish priest makes a significant and valued contribution to the liturgical life of the school, offering pupils the opportunity of participating in the sacrament of Reconciliation twice a year, as well as celebrating Mass. The personal and collective worship provision makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils.

Community cohesion

GRADE 2

The school community is welcoming and inclusive. Relationships within the school are positive and supportive and based on a culture of mutual respect and concern for others. Pupils of all abilities and ethnic groups achieve well. Pastoral care is excellent and commented on by parents, who appreciate the approachability of the staff. Pupils know adults are there to help them and will listen to them if they have any problems. They describe the school community as "being like a family" and say it is friendly and caring.

The study of other faiths is included in curriculum Religious Education. It is well resourced and enhanced by talks by visitors and gives pupils an insight into the lives and beliefs of others. Pupils are proud of their school, its place in the community and the friendly atmosphere within it. Fundraising for a wide range of local, national and international charities helps them to recognise and respond to the needs of others. The school participates in many local activities and is part of the local deanery cluster of Catholic schools, as well as participating in Diocesan courses and events.

Religious Education

Achievement and standards in Religious Education

GRADE 2

Standards achieved in Religious Education are high and pupil progress is good. Pupils from all groups achieve well. Performance is good at all Key Stages. Pupils enjoy their work and can speak confidently about what they have learned and the progress they have made in Religious Education. They are thoughtful and attentive in lessons and keen to do their best. Behaviour is exemplary. The school has a comprehensive system of monitoring and assessment, tracking pupil progress throughout the school. Work in books is of a good standard and comparable to standards in literacy. Presentation is good and pupils take a pride in their work. Marking is regular and thorough, but largely affirmative rather than developmental. This should now be extended to include "next steps" marking, with suggestions regarding how pupils can improve their work and progress further.

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

GRADE 1

Teaching and learning in Religious Education is of a very high standard. Lessons observed were all good or outstanding. Teachers' subject knowledge was very good. Lessons were well planned and developed pupils' religious literacy as well as their knowledge of the topics studied. Pupils were encouraged to relate their lessons to their own lives and experiences. Activities were interesting, varied and thought provoking. Pupils with special needs were supported to achieve their best. Resources and ICT were used effectively. Prayer and reflection formed part of the lesson and pupils responded reverently and thoughtfully. Prayer focus areas reflected the topics studied and the liturgical year. Appropriate differentiation was evident in all lessons observed, however this should be extended to provide further challenge for the more able pupils in the form of more open ended questioning and challenging tasks.

The Religious Education curriculum

GRADE 2

The school has recently introduced the "Come and See" programme of Religious Education. Religious Education also features across the curriculum where useful links can be made. The curriculum is well resourced and receives an appropriate budget allocation. ICT is used effectively to enhance teaching. The Religious Education curriculum includes a wide range of activities to interest and engage pupils as well as increase their knowledge. Pupils enjoy Religious Education and appreciate its importance to their lives. Parents are kept informed of the topics studied and their children's progress. All pupils are able to access the curriculum; pupils with special educational needs are supported as necessary. The Religious Education curriculum makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

Leadership and management of Religious Education

GRADE 1

The leadership and management of Religious Education is of a very high standard. The coordinators communicate their strong sense of spiritual purpose to staff and pupils. They have a clear focus on high standards of teaching and learning and the faith development of the pupils. As leaders of this curriculum area they are conscientious and well organised and keep careful records of progress and events throughout the school year. A comprehensive system of monitoring, including lesson observations, pupil interviews, planning and book scrutinies, contributes to self-evaluation and identifies areas for development. Accuracy of assessment is supported by moderation and provision of levelled examples of work. The coordinators attend cluster and diocesan meetings, disseminating up to date information regarding Religious Education to their colleagues at staff meetings and INSET. The RE coordinators are excellent role models and deeply

committed to ensuring high standards of Religious Education throughout the school. They provide valuable support for staff and in turn value the support and encouragement provided by the headteacher.

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