



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection

ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Hut Hill Lane, Great Wyrley, Staffordshire, WS6 6PG

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| Inspection date | 28 th & 29 th March 2017 |
| Reporting Inspector | Maureen O'Leary |
| Assistant Inspectors | Christine Finnegan |
| Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 | |
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| Type of School | Voluntary Aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3-11 years |
| Number on roll | 199 |
| Appropriate authority | The Governing Body |
| Chair of Governors | Georgina Keeling |
| Telephone number | 01922 857075 |
| E-mail address | office@st-thomasmore.staffs.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 10 th & 11 th February 2014 |
| DFE School Number | 860/3485 |
| Unique Reference Number | 124376 |
| Headteacher | Stephanie Hewitt |
| Previous inspection: | Requires Improvement |
| This inspection: | Good |

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



MAKING CHRIST KNOWN TODAY

Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors.
- 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 Inspectors observed teaching across 8 RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Most of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The Inspectors 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: a group of governors (including the chair of governors, Catholic life link governor and the parish priest); the headteacher and deputy headteacher (who is also the RE subject leader); and the lay chaplain.
- The Inspectors attended a whole school Mass, collective worship in 4 classes 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 Inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals.

Information about the school

- St Thomas More School is a one form entry school which serves the parish of St Mary & St Thomas More in Cannock. The school is situated in the small village of Great Wyrley that forms part of the larger conurbation of Cannock.
- The number of pupils from ethnic minority groups at the school is lower than the national average.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 33%.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils at the school is lower than the national average.
- The number of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities at the school is lower than the national average.
- Attainment on exit from reception is just above national expectations.
- A new RE subject lead has been appointed since the last inspection.

Main Findings

- Under the strong leadership of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the governing body, St Thomas More Catholic Primary School has made very effective improvements to the provision and outcomes of Catholic life, collective worship and RE at the school since the last inspection.
- School leadership and the governing body are profoundly and actively committed to promoting and enhancing the Catholic mission of the school.
- The distinct and vibrant Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The morals, values and consequently the behaviour of pupils are securely shaped and informed by the Catholic ethos of the school.
- Pupils encounter a variety of opportunities to develop spiritually through class and whole school collective worship, and through the liturgy of the Church. They are ably assisted in this endeavour by the school priest chaplain and the school lay chaplain.

- The RE subject leader, who is also the deputy headteacher, has provided dedicated strategic leadership which has ensured that RE provision and outcomes are securely good with elements that are outstanding.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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

- The Catholic life of the school is outstanding.
- The use of the Catholic Schools' Pupils Profile, the allocation of class saints as faith models for pupils, and the strong pastoral care pupils receive from all members of staff, enable them to develop strong Catholic virtues and values.
- Pupil involvement in shaping and contributing to the Catholic life of the school is outstanding.
- The school has established a vibrant and exceptional Mini Vinnies group. This group truly achieves its aim to 'put concern onto action' by their successful charity fundraising and support for the local community, which involves the whole school. Although this group was initiated by adults, it is now predominately led by pupils. They give great consideration to the charities that the school supports such as the Cannock Food Distribution Centre (which it decided to visit) and local residents.
- Led by the school secretary, Mrs. Tonks, the pupils in the ECO warriors actively lead the school to protect and care for the world God has created for them.
- Pupils have a very sound understanding of a life of service, both within school and to the wider community. For example, they provided afternoon tea for local elderly residents.
- Year 6 pupils take their role as buddies to Reception class pupils very seriously. Consequently, they provide excellent faith models to these pupils as they sit with them in Mass and support them at break times.
- Within the Catholic life of the school there is specific emphasis on the God given uniqueness of each individual. Consequently, there is a high degree of mutual respect between adults and adults, adults and pupils, and pupils and pupils.
- The opportunity for an annual whole school retreat and a residential retreat for Year 5 contributes to the spiritual development of the whole school community.
- Collective worship is good with some elements that are outstanding.
- A key strength of the school is its use of the *Wednesday Word* to enhance Catholic life and collective worship; this has been enthusiastically led by the parish priest. The themes from the *Wednesday Word* inform not only whole school collective worship at the start of the week, class collective worship and weekly Mass but are pervasive throughout the school. As a result, pupils have developed strong Catholic virtues and values.
- The Eucharist is at the heart of the school. All pupils have the opportunity to attend Mass weekly in school, and some pupils are able to travel by bus (provided by the local Catholic Secondary school) to St Mary's and St Thomas More Parish Church for weekly Mass. The impact of this regular Mass attendance is reflected in the reverent way pupils behave and respond.
- The preparation of Mass is supported by the lay chaplain. Mass is enhanced by the pupils' singing and signing, which contributes to pupils' engagement and

participation in the celebration. Older pupils are active in preparing the school hall for Mass and acting as altar servers. They undertake these duties with great pride.

- The lay chaplain now needs to empower staff to plan Masses led by their class and to support pupils to write the bidding prayers.
- Sacramental preparation is well planned and benefits all pupils. It is a testament to the school that, although the number of Catholics receiving the sacraments is in the minority, the celebration of the sacraments is attended by the vast majority of pupils.
- The school is a place of evangelisation and catechism where all are prompted to develop spiritually. This is made prominent by the fact that a number of non-Catholic children are eager to find out more about the Catholic faith beyond their RE lessons. The school is now offering a *Finding Faith Programme* delivered by the school priest chaplain for these pupils.
- Pupil led collective worship has been newly initiated in the school and has become routine in all classes. Staff training and the acquisition of varied and thoughtful resources has supported the delivery of this. It is especially successful in Key Stage 2, where pupils are eager and able to plan and lead class worship that is reverent and heart felt.
- The school now needs to embed this practice and also to enable younger pupils to plan and lead collective worship in an age appropriate way in their own classrooms.
- Pupils value the wide range of experiences they have to pray which include writing their own prayers, praying spontaneously in class and learning traditional prayers.
- Collective worship is well planned throughout the year by senior staff so that it happens regularly and it is shaped by the liturgical year and by the themes of the *Wednesday Word*. The impact of this planning would be enhanced by the strategic matching of the chosen themes to the classes leading the act of collective worship.
- The school has good links with the local parish of St Mary's and St. Thomas More through its collaboration with the parish priest, the sacramental programme and attendance at the monthly parish Sunday Mass.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership of Catholic life and Collective Worship

- The leadership of the Catholic life and collective worship of the school is good with some outstanding features.
- The senior leaders, staff and governors are unstinting in their commitment to promoting and developing the Catholic mission of the school.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have inspired and led this development of Catholic life and collective worship.
- The parish priest is both an inspiration and support to the school community. He is immensely valued by pupils, staff and parents. His leadership in using *Wednesday Word* to stimulate both the collective worship and Catholic life of the school is exceptional.
- Leaders engage in a range of monitoring and evaluation which enables them to clearly identify the strengths and areas for development in both Catholic life and collective worship. These findings are regularly shared with governors in an informal and increasingly formal way.

- The senior leaders evaluate the school development plan termly with both staff and governors. Consequently, governors are able to explain with confidence how they support and challenge the school to improve further in terms of its Catholic life, collective worship and RE.
- Governors now need to take a more strategic role in the monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic life, collective worship and RE of the school. The school has recognised that weekly meetings with senior leaders and governors need to be formally recorded, acted upon and these actions reported back to the full governing body each term.
- The leaders of the school regularly seek the views of all stakeholders and act upon their findings. For example, a recent pupil survey revealed that pupils wanted a quiet place to pray in the school grounds. This area is currently being erected.
- Through a variety of means such as: staff induction; ongoing staff training; the experience of a bi-annual retreat day for staff and governors at Cardinal Griffin School; the annual review of the school mission statement and the nomination of secret staff saints (during Lent), the leaders of the school ensure that both staff and governors fully support the Catholic ethos of the school.
- Governors meet their canonical duties and fulfil all the requirements of the *Bishops' Conference*.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education

- The leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education are good with some elements that are outstanding.
- The RE subject lead, who is also the deputy headteacher, rigorously monitors RE. Analysis of this monitoring has ensured that teaching clearly meets all the expectations of the diocese and has led to well-planned and appropriate improvements to the teaching of RE. Her clear understanding of the strengths and her ability to address the areas for development in RE is a key asset to the school.
- Teachers plan well thought out lessons that provide pupils with a variety of creative tasks that engage them. As a result, there is good teaching of RE throughout the school with some aspects of outstanding teaching in Reception class, Year 1, and upper Key Stage 2.
- Pupils meet age related expectations in RE and progress is good or better in all phases.
- Pupils make most progress in those classes where tasks and pupils' response to teacher feedback enables pupils to express and develop their reflection and meaning about religion.
- Teacher subject knowledge of RE is good. Consequently, pupils' subject knowledge of biblical stories and their use of appropriate subject vocabulary is also good.
- The use of teacher questioning and pupil discussion is an outstanding feature of the school. As a result of excellent teacher modelling of questioning, pupils are able to ask and answer questions at a sophisticated level.
- In the best practice observed during the inspection, class teachers facilitated high order discussions between pupils that became solely pupil led. This expertise now needs to be modelled across the whole school.

- RE diocesan unit markers have been recently introduced, but they are used inconsistently. This resource, to aid the assessment of pupils, needs to be embedded further.
- The quality of the presentation and marking of RE books is generally good. Where inconsistencies do occur they are usually identified and addressed promptly by the RE subject leader.
- Additional adults in classrooms have a good RE subject knowledge and support pupils well in their learning. They make a very strong contribution to the high standards of pupil behaviour. However, there are occasions when they could be used more effectively to assess pupils' understanding during lessons.
- Relationships and Sex Education is age appropriate and is taught in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Pupils have opportunities to learn about other faiths during focus weeks and assemblies. Consequently, they are able to speak about other faiths with respect and understanding. The school recognises that pupils' understanding of other faiths would benefit from visits to other places of worship.

Recommendations

In order to improve the school should:

- Use teacher feedback and the planning of appropriate tasks to ensure all pupils are given opportunities to express and develop their ability to reflect upon the meaning and purpose of religion.
- Review the planning of collective worship so that the classes leading the act of collective worship are more purposefully aligned to the chosen themes.
- Empower staff and pupils to plan and prepare Masses.
- Equip governors to take a more strategic role in the monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic life, collective worship and RE of the school.