

# Catholic Diocese of Northampton



## INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

### ST THOMAS MORE VOLUNTARY AIDED CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Northampton Road, Kettering, NN15 7JZ

DfE School No: 928/3502

URN: 122050

Headteacher: Mr F Donald  
Chair of Governors: Mrs D Marlow

Reporting Inspector: Mrs P Brannigan  
Associate Inspector: Mrs L O'Brien

**Date of Inspection: 15 November 2017**

Date report issued: 5 December 2017

Date of previous inspection: **4 December 2012**

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and  
in partnership with Northamptonshire Local Authority

### **Information about the school**

St Thomas More Catholic Primary is a one form entry school on the western side of Kettering serving the parish of St Edward. The school is part of the St Luke Academies Trust and North Northants Catholic Schools Partnership. There are 213 pupils on roll of whom 79% are Catholic. The majority of pupils are from a wide range of ethnic minority backgrounds and half of all pupils have English as an additional language. Since the last inspection in 2012 the school has had many changes in leadership and staff. A new headteacher was appointed in September and a deputy headteacher is due to begin next January. 65% of the teachers are Catholics and two have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies.

### **Key grades for inspection**

1: Outstanding      2: Good      3: Requires Improvement      4: Unsatisfactory

### **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

**Grade 2**

St Thomas More is a good Catholic school. Outcomes for pupils, leadership and management and provision are all good. The headteacher who has been in post since September, and religious education subject leader are effective in promoting the Catholic life of the school. They are supported in this by the school chaplain, staff and governors. Prayer is central to the life of the school and part of every religious education lesson. Religious education and the wider curriculum support the spiritual and moral development of pupils. Behaviour for learning is good and pupils achieve well and make good progress. Teaching is good and new members of staff are very well supported by the subject leader. Pastoral care is very good and pupils value being in a friendly environment where they feel supported and safe.

### **The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**Grade 2**

The school has a good capacity for sustained improvement. The areas for development identified in the last inspection in 2012 have been fully implemented and there are strategies in place to support staff and raise attainment in religious education. Detailed monitoring followed by support where needed has ensured that teaching is at least good and pupils' attainment meets diocesan expectations. Sessions to moderate standards and judgements take place within school and across the Academy Trust. This is leading to greater confidence among teachers.

Self-evaluation is accurate and carefully linked to the current religious education action plan. This is leading to a clear focus on areas for development. When the current subject leader for religious education leaves at the end of term the headteacher will take on this role to ensure current good practice is maintained and developed. There are strong systems which should enable current effectiveness to be maintained or improved. Liaison meetings with the other schools in the trust provide a good level of support. Governors are informed of the areas for development and are committed to improving the school still further. Good chaplaincy provision and close links with the parish strengthen the Catholic life of the school.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Continue to implement the areas identified in the current religious education action plan linked to teaching and learning and the Catholic life of the school.
- Provide appropriate differentiation and challenge for all pupils to enable them to fulfil their potential in religious education.
- Ensure governors are in a position to influence and participate fully in the strategic direction of the school.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

## **Grade 2**

Pupils make a good contribution to the Catholic life of the school. They respond well to opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider community through fundraising for charities including Cafod, Mary's Meals, the trust charity. They take on responsibilities to show leadership as school council members, young leaders and lunchtime monitors. A team of 'Faith Friends' gather each week for a period of prayer and reflection. There are good links with the local parish where pupils regularly contribute to Sunday Mass by leading singing and reading as well as a 'Carols by Candlelight' celebration in Advent. Pupils are familiar with the Church's year through whole school assemblies and discussions. The school is active in the local community by giving support to the local food bank and participating in a range of sporting and cultural events. Pupils show consideration and respect for adults and each other. They value the sense of security, friendship and community created within the school

Prayer and worship are an integral part of school life. Pupils understand the importance of prayer and participate readily in class and assemblies. Pupils know the new school prayer, the traditional prayers of the Church and are given opportunities to write their own prayers many of which were seen during the inspection. Pupils spoken to said they valued the way religious education lessons began with a prayer and a holding cross which gave an opportunity for everyone to contribute. At the end of each topic pupils celebrate what they have learned through a 'Rejoice and Gather' act of worship, one of which was seen during the inspection. Parents and families are invited to these occasions to celebrate with the school. New parents are given a school prayer book to share with children at home. Mass is celebrated regularly in school and in the parish church. All classrooms have a prayer table which reflects the Church's year and a 'Come and See' board which includes pupils' work on the current theme.

Chaplaincy and pastoral care help to foster and maintain the Catholic ethos of the school. The team is composed of the newly appointed school chaplain, the headteacher and the subject leader. There are plans to extend the team to include other members of the school community. Links with parents and the parish are supported by the team through invitations to school Masses and events as well as involvement in a Christmas Eve children's Mass and family Masses.

Pupil achievement and progress in religious education are good. Pupils spoken to said they enjoy religious education and the range of activities involved. Behaviour for learning is very good and pupils work well in pairs and groups. They are given a good start in the Reception class where a lesson on 'Baptism' included a wide range of cross curricular activities. This is built upon as pupils progress through the school. Achievement is good for all groups and pupils know what to do to improve their work through 'next steps' marking and teachers' comments. Workbooks are very well presented and show progress and coverage of the curriculum. By the end of Key Stage 2 attainment meets diocesan expectations.

## **Leaders and managers**

## **Grade 2**

The headteacher together with his subject leader for religious education show good leadership in the way they promote, monitor and evaluate the provision and outcomes for the Catholic life of the school. The headteacher has shared his vision for the school with all staff. New teachers are given support from the subject leader who provides prayer resources for use within school. Senior leaders plan whole school collective worship linked to the Church's liturgical year. They ensure that the school's development plan gives priority to the promotion of its Catholic life. As a result of this leadership and example, all members of staff clearly promote the Catholic life of the school and are good role models for the pupils. Teachers are encouraged to continue their professional development and enrol on the CCRS course. Religious education is regarded as a core subject and given a high status. Parents are invited to school Masses and celebrations and attendance is good. The headteacher and subject leader work hard to raise standards of attainment and teaching. They have put in place a

monitoring and support programme which includes lesson observations, book scrutinies and learning walks. They also attend moderating sessions with other partnership schools. The subject leader assists members of staff as they plan class worship. The school's marking policy is applied to religious education and enables pupils to know how to improve their work. Assessment is accurate and in-service training for staff is leading to confidence in levelling pupils' attainment.

Members of the governing body are aware of their responsibilities. They visit frequently and are informed about the life of the school through meetings with the headteacher and subject leader. However, they need to be more fully involved in the self-evaluation of religious education and the Catholic life of the school to enable them to support and challenge effectively. The new link member for religious education intends to develop her role through class visits and meetings with staff and pupils. Many governors have good links with the parish and local community which enable them to promote good relationships with the school.

The great majority of responses to the Parent Questionnaire were supportive. There were many positive comments praising the Catholic ethos of the school and the welcoming atmosphere. Communication with parents is good and includes curriculum information, monthly newsletters and termly meetings where pupils' progress and well-being are discussed. Parents are invited to many assemblies and celebrations including Masses, a Pentecost celebration, as well as Christmas and Holy Week liturgies. A Parent and Toddler Group uses school premises one morning each week which provides a good link for families before their children begin school.

### **Provision**

### **Grade 2**

Collective worship is central to the life of St Thomas More School and a key part of every celebration. Assemblies are well planned and there is a variety of formal and informal opportunities for daily prayer. Holy day Masses are celebrated in school or parish throughout the year and on special occasions. These include the annual Diocesan Schools Mass, First Holy Communion and Confirmation celebrations. Assemblies give pupils opportunities to link the life and teaching of Jesus to situations today. There are many opportunities throughout the school day for staff and pupils to pray together. The Chaplaincy team supports the Catholic life of the school through discussing initiatives and future plans, including the provision of a sacred space for pupils and staff.

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good. Lessons observed during the inspection were good, some with outstanding features. A Year 6 lesson on vocation and commitment enabled pupils to explore their understanding of how God calls us to serve and how our faith influences the way we live out our mission. Lessons are well planned with clear learning intentions and a range of differentiated activities. However, differentiation needs to be more closely matched to pupils' abilities to ensure an appropriate level of challenge is offered. Teachers respond well to pupils' comments and questions and take the opportunity to extend learning. Staff training on assessment is leading to confidence in tracking pupils' progress. Good support by teaching assistants is enabling all pupils to make progress. Workbooks are well presented and have the mission statement inside the front cover. The book scrutiny undertaken as part of the inspection showed coverage of the curriculum, positive marking and prompts to help pupils improve their work.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is good. On average, 10% of teaching time is devoted to religious education and the programme 'Come and See' is now embedded. Other faiths are taught well with an aim to develop visits by members of faith communities. There are plans to purchase more good quality resources to improve teaching and learning. Attractive religious education displays around the school emphasise the importance of faith to the life of the school. The curriculum enables pupils to develop a sense of service to each other and the wider community. It contributes very well to their spiritual and moral

development. The curriculum is enhanced by visits from the school chaplain and a pilgrimage to Walsingham for Year 6 pupils. There is good reason to expect that outcomes for pupils are likely to be maintained or improved as the school consolidates and builds on good practice in all areas.

The inspectors would like to thank all members of the school community for the warm welcome and hospitality extended during their visit.