



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Thomas More Catholic School & Sixth Form College

141836

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham on:

Date: 7-8 December 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	1
Catholic life and mission (p.3) How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.....	1
Religious education (p.5) The quality of curriculum religious education.....	1
Collective worship (p.7) The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.....	1
The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	✓
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	✓
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- There is a very strong outward-facing sense of community, resulting in a constant drive to enact the school's mission.
- The teachings of Jesus are put into practice daily, meaning the school actively contributes to the diocesan education service's motto of 'Making Christ known today'.
- Leaders and staff are exemplary role models for the students, which contributes significantly to the very high student outcomes in Catholic life and mission, religious education, and prayer.
- Students enjoy religious education and sense its value in their lives.

This Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection was carried out under canons 804 & 806 of the Code of Canon Law. For maintained schools and academies in England it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.48 of the Education Act 2005. For maintained schools and academies in Wales it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.50 of the Education Act 2005.

- Students display great reverence during acts of prayer and liturgy.

What the school needs to improve:

- Provide more opportunities for purposeful spiritual reflection in religious education.
- Enable all students to create independently a variety of prayers based on a celebration of the Word.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1



All students rapidly gain a deep understanding of the school's Catholic identity. They feel very safe and confident in the school and develop an increasingly determined and joyful sense of mission to those in need, based on Pope Francis' teaching that 'A faith without works...isn't faith'. Students respond wholeheartedly to initiatives to provide for those experiencing financial difficulty or homelessness. They donate in an overwhelmingly generous manner to school and multi-academy company (MAC)-wide appeals; for example, contributing 17,500 items for Christmas hampers, planned for delivery to those in difficulty locally. Students express a profound gratitude for the security of home following participation in the 'sleep in', organised with Fr Hudson's Society. They become aware of inequality in society, and motivated to do something about it, with one student simply commenting 'It's not fair'. Students understand that Catholic social teaching forms the underlying principle for outreach work, and older students are highly competent in taking on leadership roles, with younger students also showing excellent initiative. Students show a great sense of responsibility for maintaining excellent behaviour, showing respect for each other and their teachers. They fulfil the school's aim for them to 'glorify the Lord by their life', and parents are quick to testify to the transforming effect on those joining the school.

The school's mission statement is the product of contributions of the whole community and forms a clear and secure structure for school life based on Catholic values. The foundation of Catholic tradition and practice is presented as vibrant and positive. The strength of welcome and the emphasis on mission and outreach are especially impressive to newcomers and provide an anchor to a growing faith experience. Staff and leaders are impressive role models because they show dynamic commitment and enthusiasm for the school's Catholic life. The provision of pastoral care for all students has a firm base in their uniqueness and value. Teachers go the extra mile for students and are regularly in contact with parents and carers, thereby respecting the Church's

teaching about parenthood, and forming excellent working relationships. The school provides opportunities for reflection on vocations, and activities in tutor group time are very well planned and coordinated, including presentation of Catholic social teaching principles linked to the lives of saints, and relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE). Great care is given to the provision of a prayerful environment, for example the peace garden and the outstandingly beautiful school chapel. The corridor walls have inspiring quotations from saints, the gospels, and Catholic writers.

Leaders and governors are highly determined and effective in articulating and promoting the Catholic life of the school. The call to 'be kind, be calm, be ready' is extremely impactful. Leaders are clear about their core role to promote Catholic values, responding to diocesan initiatives and playing a key role in the life of the Church in the area, particularly in feeding the hungry through the school-based foodbank. They inspire the outreach of the mission to the community, are very ambitious, and are energised by success. Links with local clergy and parishes are flourishing, and students can exercise ministries when attending Mass as a school group. Leaders explicitly promote effective staff training in the Catholic life and mission of the school. They prioritise staff well-being, which is greatly appreciated. The induction programme for new staff has recognition through the platinum award from Investors in People. At all times there is evaluation and monitoring of initiatives to promote the core values of the school by staff, parents, students, and governors. This leads to effective planning and constant improvement. Governors pursue the six explicit priorities of the 'Holy Spirit Experience' in a remarkably unrelenting manner, bringing opportunities for the students to grow in faith and responsibility for the common good.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

1

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

1



Students enjoy religious education lessons greatly. From the outset they are referred to by their teachers as ‘theologians’ and they rapidly develop knowledge and skills in analysing and presenting balanced arguments. They are confident in class because teachers give them opportunities for recall of prior learning at the start of lessons as a solid basis for the new focus. By far, the majority of students are enthused to achieve well because they are well supported and know that their contributions to the lessons are highly valued. Embedded routines create a very sound climate for learning. Students make excellent progress to GCSE level and beyond. Those taking A level do so because of a keen interest in knowing more and developing higher level skills which support further study. Students can use a wide range of subject specific vocabulary with confidence and engage in discussion of moral questions by applying theological knowledge. They are seriously keen to deepen their learning and they ask questions of their teachers. Students’ behaviour and engagement in lessons is excellent and they take huge pride in their written work.

Religious education teachers have high levels of subject knowledge. They are confident in delivering carefully planned lessons and their students learn very well. Planning is based on a keen awareness of students’ needs following regular assessments. Teachers communicate very effectively their high expectations both verbally and in written form. Their own deep commitment and enthusiasm are quickly communicated to the students for whom the role of their teacher is pivotal in their enjoyment and sense of success. Questioning is skilful and elicits thoughtful responses, which serve to advance learning as well as to indicate any misapprehensions. Teachers develop imaginative ways to engage their students and provide a range of resources suitably adapted to students’ needs. Tasks may require independent or group work, and this is very effective in instilling confidence and the ability to discuss. There are particularly frequent opportunities for moral development in religious education, for example in the topics of the vocation of marriage and the loss of the life of a child experienced by parents, introduced through the study of the Pietà statue. Spiritual

development is increasingly a focus, and all lessons begin with prayer. The religious education curriculum benefits from a determined focus on cross-curricular themes such as sustainability in science.

Leaders and governors are extremely diligent in ensuring that the curriculum follows the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and offers a very challenging and stimulating programme for students. Leaders ensure that teachers are updated in their skills and the lead teacher regularly attends diocesan training. He is recognised as a role model both within the school and the diocese, and he ensures that there is a close link between the academic work and the schools Catholic life and mission. His vision for religious education is for a foundation for life, with the provision of a curriculum that will '...enhance lives, so that students learn from it now and keep coming back to it later in life'. Planning is based on rigorous evaluation of approaches to topics by the subject team. There is an overriding desire to create the most successful learning experience for students. This has led, for example, to a consideration of the most arresting themes for core religious education for sixth form students, and the decision to study current areas of conflict in the world. There is forensic analysis of examination results, and students of A level, for instance, benefit greatly from the conclusions of how best to tackle questions in order to achieve the highest possible marks.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

1

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

1

Students behave impeccably during assemblies and other times of prayer. They are reverent and silent, totally engaged in the liturgies and Masses. A priest commented that you can 'hear a pin drop'. They join in singing and in the responses to prayer, with heads bowed at moments of personal petitions. They are familiar with the Rosary, the Angelus, and other traditional prayers. They value time for reflection. With support from their teachers, students are growing in confidence to plan liturgies themselves and to evaluate and plan for improvement. Hymn practice enables students to be aware of how hymns fit to the theme of the liturgy. They volunteer for roles in assemblies and for ministries, such as eucharistic minister. Due to the large number of altar servers at the school, there is a branch of the Guild of St Stephen, the only school-based branch in the archdiocese. Prayer at the school is very closely linked to Catholic mission, so that petitions are often for the recipients of charitable actions, for those who are going through times without a home, or for asylum seekers, the hungry, sick, and suffering. Students are very aware of the need for prayer.

Prayer has a central role every day at school. Prayer times are unnegotiable routines with prayer in form groups and the chapel, a rota of assemblies, and Masses in the local parish church. Students are regularly asked to lead prayers, and concerns from families and world events become topics within the confidentiality of the groups. The Angelus is prayed daily, and students know the value of this devotion. Music is used appropriately to create a reflective atmosphere. Passages of sacred scripture are linked to charitable action, as well as to prayer and the Church's liturgical year, for example the final judgement reading for Advent from St Matthew's Gospel. Provision for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is in parish churches. Tutors and those responsible for year groups are excellent role models, inspiring reflection and participation in prayer and singing. There is a very strong and mutually supportive relationship with local priests. Close attention is given to the provision of prayer stations which are placed prominently in classrooms and are a clear indication

of the liturgical season. The chapel is beautifully inspiring, with the presence of the Blessed Sacrament and a relic of St Thomas More. It is a highly appreciated sacred space.

Leaders and governors have ensured that the policy for prayer and liturgy is a thoroughly practical document and is regularly reviewed. Careful planning of the school's calendar ensures a priority for the celebration of Mass on significant days in the Church's year, as well as the feast of St Thomas More in June. Leaders plan for visits to parishes, for example to St Benedict's, Atherstone for Mass on Youth Sunday, and students are able to fulfil several ministries. There are very effective strategies for chaplaincy, bringing together all aspects of Catholic education. The high levels of knowledge and expertise of the team are an inspiration to all. Leaders recognise the need for the open sharing of experience and skills in inspirational ways. Tutors consequently feel very well supported in understanding and gaining confidence to use a range of Catholic forms of prayer. Students already willingly participate in leading prayer, for example in leading the Rosary, but leaders have chosen to make careful further development a high priority so that students are able to devise liturgies themselves. Leaders plan ambitiously for retreats and pilgrimages despite growing costs. Governors ensure that there is a priority for resourcing prayer and liturgy, which are constantly evaluated by all stakeholders.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas More School & Sixth Form
School unique reference number (URN)	141836
Full postal address of the school	Greenmoor Road, Nuneaton, Warwickshire CV10 7EX
School phone number	02476 642400
Name of head teacher or principal	Leearna Thomas
Chair of governing board	Philip Richardson
School Website	www.st-thomas-more.net
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Holy Spirit Catholic Multi Academy Company
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	11 to 18
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Janet Mellor	Lead inspector
Maggie Hazeldine	Team inspector
Ben McArdle	Team inspector

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement