

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

URN: 148495

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster

01 - 02 February 2024

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

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

2

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

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

2

What the school does well

- Leaders and governors are very committed and highly effective in creating a nurturing environment for the whole school community.
- Staff and pupils ensure the most vulnerable families are well supported.
- Leaders and governors are inspirational witnesses to the Gospel.
- Staff value greatly the support and direction provided by leaders.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary.

What the school needs to improve

- Embed Catholic Social Teaching throughout all curriculum areas so pupils have a clear understanding of its impact on everyday life.
- Plan deeper learning opportunities for pupils that clearly impact on outcomes.
- Use evaluation consistently to improve prayer and liturgy experiences for all.

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

Pupil outcomes

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

Provision

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

Leadership

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



Pupils are very proud of their school. They embrace their mission statement and can talk confidently about how they strive to abide by it in their daily lives. Pupils are happy to come to school, they recognise that they have a responsibility to live in accordance with Jesus' teachings. They understand that Catholic Social Teaching permeates their daily lives and can give examples. They can link their learning in geography about climate change to the need to care for creation. Pupils recognise how their fund-raising efforts are linked to Catholic Social Teaching and can identify their impact on the lives of others. They explained they have supported the local food bank, the Catholic Children's Society and Cafod. Pupils show a deep respect for their own personal dignity and that of others, recognising that all are made in the image and likeness of God. They demonstrate a deep sense of respect for pupils of other faiths. The behaviour of pupils is exemplary in lessons and throughout the school. Pupils enjoy being pupil chaplains. They value their personal contribution to this work and can see how it impacts on the wider school. They show a developed sense of maturity and recognise that everyone should be afforded the opportunity to lead, seeing their role as facilitators and enablers.

The mission statement has a significant impact on school life. Staff are wholly supportive of the Catholic life and mission of the school. They explained how this helped the school community to develop resilience in times of challenge. This strong sense of community rooted in Christ has created a culture of welcome, support and respect where every individual is valued and can flourish. One parent commented that 'The school provides an excellent understanding and awareness of other cultural beliefs in a respectful way'. Staff welcome the most vulnerable families with care and compassion. They offer support and welcome to those in need. As a result, pupils with additional needs flourish. Communal displays are colourful and creative. The school has made sure that pupil chaplains enable all pupils to lead. They work in a meaningful way with Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) pupils to begin to prepare them to take on responsibility for leading prayer and liturgy. This approach is highly successful and continues throughout the

school. R(S)HE is carefully planned and delivered, and lessons are rooted in the teaching of the Church.

Leaders and governors embrace their mission in education ensuring that Christ is at the heart of this school. The head teacher is sponsoring one staff member through the Right of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) programme and has supported another. Leaders and governors have actively sought to work closely with the diocese to make sure that all pupils have a dynamic experience of Catholic life. Parents are highly supportive of the school and feel very well informed. One parent commented 'My son often talks at home about what he has learnt and shares it with others'. Leaders have been relentless in their pursuit of ways to support the most vulnerable pupils within their economic constraints. Staff value the leadership team. They celebrate the work of leaders when considering staff wellbeing; staff retention statistics are evidence of how well supported and valued staff feel in this school. Leaders have introduced the 'Rooted in Love' programme for Catholic Social Teaching, and this is beginning to have an impact. Leaders have developed a robust action plan to further embed their work in this area. Governors are highly ambitious for the Catholic life and mission which is rigorously monitored. As a result, leaders have well planned and targeted improvements to further develop the school's life and mission.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

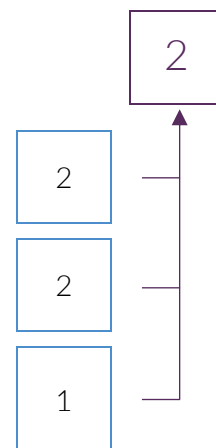
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

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

Leadership

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



Pupils are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect the learning required by the *Religious Education Directory*. Pupils in Early Years were learning about the miracle at Cana and were able to think about their previous learning. They recalled the miracles of the blind man and the paralysed man. In a Year 1/2 lesson pupils were thoroughly engaged in a practical activity to recall previous learning. Pupils make good progress in knowing more, remembering more, and doing more when measured against the planned curriculum for each year. As a result, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, achieve well in all age phases and most years. However, outcomes in Key Stage Two books do not evidence any adaptations made to challenge more able pupils. Pupils have good religious vocabulary; they can speak with confidence about what they have learnt in religious education. Pupils in a Year 3/4 lesson were using scripture and finding Bible references, as well as linking Catholic Social Teaching with their learning about Jesus. In this lesson pupils were encouraged to respond with their own artwork, demonstrating different forms of expression and showing an awareness of key concepts. Pupils in a Year 5/6 lesson were considering how they could identify the themes of Catholic Social Teaching in the Mass. They demonstrated a keen interest as they worked collaboratively and used previous work on the Mass to consolidate their viewpoints. Behaviour in lessons is good because most pupils enjoy religious education and are usually engaged. Pupils achieve at least average attainment when compared with other core curriculum subjects.

Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge. They are committed to the value of religious education and communicate this effectively to pupils. Teachers' use of questioning during lessons identifies where pupils are in their understanding. As a result, most explanations are adapted, thus improving learning for most pupils. However, this is not consistent throughout the school. Consequently, teaching is not always adapted for the most able pupils in Key Stage Two, to be provided with opportunities to develop their thinking and responses. Pupil effort is often celebrated and pupils are proud of their work in books. EYFS and Year 1/2 books are well presented with evidence of well annotated work and good feedback for pupils. A good variety of

tasks such as role play and outdoor activities were recorded as well as artwork, leading to good levels of motivation from pupils. In Year 3/4, and in Year 5/6 pupils' books demonstrate that they are provided with a variety of creative tasks in their religious education lessons.

Leaders and governors have adopted a religious education scheme and ensured it is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Directory*. They have focused on creativity within the curriculum so that pupils have an experience of a variety of forms of expression. Leaders have ensured that religious education has at least full parity with other core curriculum subjects. All staff have access to a wide range of high-quality professional development. Leaders have used their links within the academy trust to benchmark their work and pupil progress against other schools. The subject leader has a thorough understanding of pedagogical development and an inspiring vision of outstanding teaching and learning. Leaders and governors are resolute in their determination that their school community not only plays a part in the academy trust but also impacts significantly. The head teacher shares her expertise with other schools within the trust thereby providing leaders in St. Thomas' with additional professional opportunities. Leaders and governors have ensured that excellent working relationships have been established within the St Francis Academy Trust that impact positively on pupils in St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

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

1

Pupils from Early Years through to Year 6 participate regularly and reverently in prayer and liturgy. Their engagement in communal singing is active, full and joyous. Pupils have a clear understanding of the different ways of praying and use scripture effectively. They enjoy writing their own prayers, they use reflection time very well and incorporate a wide range of traditional prayer into their liturgies. Pupils understand how to create a prayerful environment with activities to enhance the experience for all. In a Year 3/4 liturgy, pupils focused on the theme of 'acceptance'. A pupil introduced a special prayer she says at home in her home language. Pupils had a clearly identified mission. All pupils were thoroughly engaged and provided wonderful suggestions to further improve their liturgy. Pupils speak with confidence about their prayer life. Pupils can provide examples of how their prayer life inspires action. A pupil from another faith expressed how he values the sentiments expressed during Catholic prayer. Pupils enjoy reflecting on the monthly prayer themes. They explained that this reflection provides time to consider how they will actively engage with the theme.

Pupils experience a range of opportunities to pray. They enjoy leading prayer and liturgy. Pupils know their prayers well and scripture is used confidently to form the heart of their liturgy. Staff are highly skilled in helping pupils to confidently plan and lead well-constructed prayer and liturgy. Pupils are creative and resourceful when planning liturgy. There is a clear understanding that liturgy offers a space for reflection and growth. Pupils enhance this experience for all by providing focal prayer spaces, quiet music and artifacts that reflect the liturgical year. They are encouraged to use their gifts confidently to enrich prayer and liturgy. The school makes imaginative and creative use of the spaces available to provide prayer spaces within classrooms and around the building that are owned by the pupils. Relevant staff work with families to include them in the prayer life of the school and to support the developing prayer life of pupils. An example of this is in Early Years where the Prayer Bear visits every family. One parent commented 'My son has started to ask more questions about God and has been able to say some prayers, I love the idea of the prayer bear'. Staff carefully plan for experiences of awe and

wonder; for example, in EYFS, pupils received a special letter from Pope Francis asking them to be brothers and sisters together. Pupils were delighted to receive this special letter. They responded thoughtfully displaying excellent behaviour and offering spontaneous prayers. Pupils in Year 1/2 used the five-finger prayer of Pope Francis with which they were clearly familiar and staff effectively modelled quiet reflection time.

The school's policy on prayer and liturgy is carefully formulated, regularly reviewed, and fit for purpose. Leaders have thoughtfully crafted a pathway for progression as pupils move through the school. Leaders, including governors, prioritise the professional development of all staff. As a result, staff are highly skilled and able to both support pupils and each other in leading inspirational prayer and liturgy. Leaders have a clear understanding of the links between participation and action, and they bring this understanding together with the needs of their community when planning prayer and liturgy. As a result, meaningful high-quality prayer and liturgy experiences are the backbone of this small school community united in Christ. Leaders have begun to evaluate the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy and have identified this as an area for further development.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148495
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9193367
Full postal address of the school	St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School, High Street, Puckeridge, Ware, SG11 1RZ
School phone number	01920821450
Headteacher	Michelle Keating
Chair of Local Governing Body	David Lang
School Website	www.stcanterbury.herts.sch.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Francis Of Assisi Catholic Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	outstanding

The inspection team

Evelyn Ward
Linda McDonald

Lead
Team

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