

DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

incorporating Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark

URN 100176

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Appleton Road

Eltham

SE9 6NS

Inspection date:	30th April 2018
Chair of Governors:	Mrs Christine Grice
Executive Headteacher:	Mr Markus Ryan
Headteacher:	Mrs Anne Wood
Inspectors:	Mr Stephen Beck Mr David Hennessey

EDUCATION COMMISSION

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**DENOMINATIONAL EDUCATION
AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**



Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Thomas More Catholic Primary school is a voluntary aided school situated in the Greenwich Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is located in the parish of St John Fisher and St Thomas More, Well Hall, Eltham and is maintained by the Royal Greenwich local authority. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 93.1% and as these pupils come from the immediate area, there is a strong community feel about the school. The average weekly curriculum time given for Religious Education is 10% in all Key Stages.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 205. The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium is below the national average at 3.4%, with 1% of pupils having an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP). The proportion of pupils who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is below the national average at 7.4.%. The three main ethnic groups, are White British, Eastern European and Black African. 40.4% of pupils have English as an Additional Language (EAL) which is above the national average.



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Thomas More is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- The Catholic Life of the school, reflected in the mission statement, underpins the school which is passionate about developing pupils through the love and teachings of Christ, into individuals who can develop spiritually, academically, morally and culturally. The impact of the Gospel values is evident in liturgies and Collective Worship and strong relationships, which form the basis of the school community. Priorities since the last inspection have largely been met and there is a continuous drive for improvement for the good of the whole school community.
- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding. It has the highest possible priority and excellent relationships and communication are key strengths of the school. Pupils are very keen to participate in the varied opportunities provided to contribute to the Catholic Life of the school and benefit greatly from them. Effective systems for monitoring and evaluation are in place and as these are adapted and embedded they will result in continuing improvement to outcomes for pupils being achieved.
- The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding because it is central to the life of the school and is given the highest priority. Guided by staff, pupils are demonstrating an ability to confidently plan and lead prayer and worship and the school is developing their skills in this area well. All pupils act with reverence and respect, have the opportunity to pray reflectively and formally and speak with knowledge and pride about their faith.
- Religious Education is good. Learning and progress are at least good in each key stage. Teaching and assessment are good and effective in ensuring pupils learn well. The Religious Education curriculum is thoughtfully adapted to meet pupils' needs and thorough self-evaluation by leaders and managers impacts positively on provision and outcomes.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- Use self-assessment e.g. the SEF, as a more developmental process to identify areas for development and next steps to move Religious Education forward in addition to identifying the school's many strengths.
- Review the opportunities given to the Religious Education lead to complete the cycle of monitoring, feedback and review, in order to ensure teaching has a greater impact on achievement.



Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

1

Catholic Life

1

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.

1

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

1

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

1

Religious Education

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

2

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

2

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

2

Collective Worship

1

How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship

1

The quality of provision for Collective Worship

1

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

1



CATHOLIC LIFE

1

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding

- St Thomas More has a distinctly Catholic ethos, character and identity with a very strong community deeply committed to ensuring that all pupils receive the best personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural education alongside an effective Religious Education curriculum.
- The pupils are central to the Catholic Life of the school and this is reflected by their involvement in Collective Worship, liturgies, and both formal and informal learning situations, in and out of school.
- The school has established a strong, beneficial partnership with Thomas More Secondary School whose Headteacher as Executive Principal has made an outstanding contribution to the school's recent journey through his timely advice and support. This has been welcomed by all and has enabled the school to develop its current position as an equal partner. As a result of a whole school ethos and high expectations, pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they feel safe and cared for. There are very good links between the school and parish and the pupils are enthusiastically involved in parish celebrations and activities.
- Following consultation with Governors, pupils and staff, the school devised a new mission statement, which summarised what they felt was special about the school and how they wanted to promote the core Catholic values. The new Mission statement, "Share the Light of Jesus, by learning together and loving others", is linked with one of the children's favourite hymns, "Share the Light of Jesus," and is lived out in the day to day life of the school.
- Inclusion of all groups is a high priority at St Thomas More. Consequently, all pupils benefit from the rich, shared experiences celebrated by all. In 2016 the pupil leadership of the school was further developed by introducing a pupil chaplaincy team called The Lighthouse Group. These children are selected by their peers to be beacons of the Catholic life of the school by leading liturgies or Collective Worship. They planned the celebratory Ascension Day and Leaver's Mass. Each year, as new Lighthouse pupils are selected, they are presented at the start of the year Mass where the priest blesses them and endorses their special role.
- The Lighthouse group suggested and established a prayer corner in school, where anyone can leave a prayer or reflection which are collected into a book. They have also established a prayer table in the Reception of the school. It is not only the Lighthouse children who are active in sharing the light of Jesus, as over the last few years a group of about 12 children have designed and created an Easter Garden outside in the school grounds, near the Stations of the Cross.



- The school's work on British values is exemplary in the way it is contextualised to reflect cultural inclusivity and links to the school's Religious Education programme.
- A parent reflected, "One of my children is a member of the Lighthouse team which they greatly enjoy. We have noticed how this has developed their spirituality over the past year."

The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding

- The Catholic nature of the school is evident from the moment you step inside. Central to each class, which is named after a Saint, is a treasured prayer corner. Each day the pupils join in prayers and are given time to reflect on their faith. Pupils actively and respectfully participate in prayers. The pupils also enjoy the prayer corner outside in the playground and over the seasons decorate this with flowers. Pupils and staff benefit from religious displays, icons and posters around the building. The provision for the Catholic life of the school has been enhanced over the last two years, through initiatives such as the Lighthouse group and strengthened parish links, which have resulted in the school regularly participating in services in the parish Church, the Parish Priest leading liturgies within the school and classes visiting the Church.
- The school's mission statement expresses the school's role as a Catholic community committed to Gospel values and to sharing these within the school and with the wider community. It has been reviewed recently by staff, pupils and governors and been summarised to make it accessible to all pupils. It is becoming embedded in all that the school does. The school's Catholic Life is evident in the attractive learning environment, the caring relationships within the school and the many events, which celebrate its Catholic identity. Displays related to Religious Education and the Catholic Life of the school are of a very high standard. Many are interactive, encouraging pupils to think deeply about their faith.
- Pastoral care is excellent. Pupils are nurtured and supported to achieve their full potential. The school provides support for vulnerable pupils and their families, using either its own staff or by working with outside agencies as appropriate. Pupils are encouraged to consider their wider responsibilities, locally and globally. They understand their responsibilities as world citizens and show this by their support for a range of charities including, CAFOD, Macmillan Cancer and a local hospice.
- Pupils show a clear understanding of right and wrong and the importance of tolerance and forgiveness. They know that adults in the school will help them with any problems. As a parent wrote, 'The teachers and staff at the school have been amazing at helping me keep my child's routine as normal as possible during a period of family ill health. I cannot thank them enough.'
- The school follows the diocesan recommended programme for Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) introduced to the school in 2017. This has established a programme of Personal, Social and Health Education linked to its Religious Education curriculum provision which the school is embedding within the wider curriculum.



- The school benefits from a strong and stable team of both teaching and non-teaching staff who work collaboratively to support and exemplify the school's Mission statement. All staff are role models for mutual respect and good conduct.
- The school makes good use of its website to celebrate what it does including for Religious Education. Parent questionnaires for this inspection were circulated via the school website and generated a high response and virtually 100% positive responses.
- The commission that 'the school serves others' is reflected in the enthusiastic number of children who serve the school through being House Captains, or members of the School Council, lunch time helpers or by offering to help at charity events. As a result, many children benefit from taking on responsibilities, acting as role models to others and developing community links.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding

- Leaders are energetic promoters of the school's vision and provide excellent role models for everyone within the school community. The provision for the Catholic life of the school is given high priority by leaders in the school's self-evaluation cycle. All leaders take the development and nurturing of an authentic Catholic ethos seriously. Through the school's good website parents are kept well informed about both the school curriculum and its activities. The school's Religious Education policy could be included in the list of policies currently available.
- Planning for improvements to the Catholic Life of the school involves key stakeholders in addressing areas for development. Governors are strategic partners in the development of the school. They are fully aware of the school's priorities for improvement. The school's self-evaluation document provided for this inspection provided a good summative evaluation of the current stage of development in Religious Education. It would benefit from a review to include clearer identification of the school's many strengths and areas for development linked in to the school's overall development plan.
- Governors have invested in the 'Wednesday Word' which is sent home weekly. Parents were appreciative of how this helped them to support their children's Religious Education development. This is well used at classroom level to prompt reflection.
- It is commendable how well the school utilises limited space in a difficult building to highlight the Catholic Life of the school.



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is good.

- Pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons and actively participate in their learning. In the lessons observed, pupils' behaviour for learning was excellent. Most groups of pupils made good progress. Pupils with specific learning needs make good progress in lessons working with teaching assistants, who are integral to the learning of the lesson. In the lessons observed and after a review of the tracking data, little variation was found between groups of learners.
- Pupil writing is good and demonstrates development over the key stages. Pupils are often given clear feedback on how to improve their work. Feedback needs to continue to develop at all levels. Targets for improvement are shared with pupils, updated and discussed regularly and sometimes include next steps. This would benefit from more continuity. The standards of written work in pupils books is in line with school guidance and pupils treat their books with respect.
- There is very good development of religious vocabulary as seen in the lessons observed. Some elements of good questioning by teachers helps pupils to discover connections between topics studied and the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. An example of this was seen, linked to a lesson on 'Doubting Thomas', that saw pupils consider what they believed to be true in a number of given scenarios.
- In some classes the range of activities provided for pupils is very effective in engaging and enthusing pupils from their earliest years. This excellent practice needs sharing to ensure all pupils are enabled to further develop their independence and resilience. Art and Technology are used regularly to motivate and support pupils in their Religious Education lessons and additional curriculum areas could now be used in a similar way.
- Pupils' attainment in Religious Education is good and in the case of some pupils very good. They make good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. A pupil described themselves as 'The fruit of Jesus that will live forever.'
- Cross curricular links, in addition to a range of active learning styles, such as the use of art, music and poetry, has been seen to enhance the quality of learning in the classrooms and this would benefit from further development. Evidence of differentiation has allowed pupils of varying abilities to make progress in lessons. Where behaviour for learning is outstanding; pupils are able to share ideas, support others and work collaboratively creating a strong learning environment. Embedding this across the school will allow for the development of more opportunities for pupil initiated learning and research to be achieved.
- The Religious Education programme of study includes exploration of people of another faith and this year a week was planned to focus on Judaism and included an external guest from the Jewish community.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is good

- Religious Education is good. Learning and progress are at least good in each key stage. Teaching and assessment are good and effective in ensuring pupils learn well. The Religious Education curriculum is thoughtfully adapted to meet pupils' needs and thorough self-evaluation by leaders and managers impacts positively on provision and outcomes.
- Teachers have a clear understanding of the value of Religious Education which they communicate effectively to pupils. Pupils are made aware at the beginning of Religious Education lessons that this subject is different to others. Teachers have confident levels of subject knowledge, which they use well in planning and teaching to secure good learning across a range of lessons.
- Marking and constructive feedback in some classes guides pupils on how to make improvements and they are given time to respond. This develops their ability to self-evaluate which could now be more consistently applied across the whole school.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is good

- Leaders and governors ensure that Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in each Key Stage, so that 10% of the curriculum time is devoted to Religious Education.
- The subject leader for Religious Education and the Headteacher are fully committed to providing high quality Religious Education. The 'Way the Truth and the Life' Religious Education programme is creatively integrated into the whole school curriculum and is enriched by a positive experience of faith in the wider Church and local community. Pupils and their families attend school led Masses in the parish and participate in worship such as the Remembrance service.
- Governors are well informed. They visit the school often and are keen to challenge and hold leaders to account. They are very supportive of the school, but are also confident and questioning in their approach. They are resolute in their desire to build on the school's current strengths.
- The period September 2017 to April 2018 has seen staff starting to use a pilot assessment system which will replace levels and the school plans to share this with the partner primary school and other schools in the Deanery.
- Staff use assessment data to monitor pupil achievement and set new targets. Electronic tracking records are becoming increasingly effective as a progress monitoring tool. Pupils are gaining a growing awareness of the objectives of each unit they are studying.



- It is to the Headteacher, Religious Education lead and school's credit that strong Denary links are being re-established as a result of their drive and outward looking approach. This is already beginning to strengthen assessment through cross school moderation.



COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding

- Pupils' response to and participation in the school's Collective Worship is of a very high order. Throughout the school they act with reverence and are keen to participate in Collective Worship. They sing joyfully, reflect in silence and join in community prayer confidently in an age appropriate manner.
- At interview, pupils spoke about how they enjoyed their times of worship, particularly the times they were actively involved in it and also when they could be silent and calm.
- Pupils are preparing and leading worship with enthusiasm, independence and initiative. They use a variety of approaches to prayer, which includes scripture, religious artefacts, liturgical music and other forms of prayer, both traditional and contemporary.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of the liturgical structure of worship and of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons and feasts and of the approaches these require in the planning of appropriate worship opportunities and this should now further impact on practice.
- The experience of living and working in a faithful, praying community has a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of pupils irrespective of ability. They have a well-developed sense of respect for those of other faiths. This is reflected in the manner in which many pupils participate in prayer and liturgy. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect as evidenced in books and displays around the school. These are of high quality and demonstrate pupils' ability to think deeply.
- A parent commented, "My young child has started learning prayers and applying/using them at home i.e. meal times and bedtime. The school has also reinforced in my child the value of 'sharing and 'caring'. We are very happy with the school."

The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding

- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is good and ensures that the spiritual needs of the pupils are well met. It is unapologetically central to the life of the school and well resourced. It is greatly enhanced by the pupils independent, skilled and heartfelt singing as exemplified by a rendition of 'You have called us by our name' which included part singing without direction. Likewise, when pupils sing in the parish and other events singing is seen as a strength of the school.
- A regular rhythm of prayer is built into the daily life of the school and an established pattern of opportunities are offered for the school community to gather for prayer,

reflection and liturgy. Parents and parishioners are welcomed and take advantage of the opportunities offered by the school to be involved in worship.

- Staff are skilled in planning and leading worship and actively encourage pupils to lead and to write prayers. Pupils plan, prepare and lead acts of worship and this is being embedded throughout the school.
- The school recognises the need to increase pupil knowledge of prayer styles and to further develop their skills in preparing materials for acts of worship and in leading them. Acts of worship are appropriate to the age and needs of the pupils with themes based upon the scheme of work topic and the liturgical calendar.
- The newly established prayer garden is proving to be an excellent resource for both classroom learning, individual and group opportunities for reflection and prayer. The school has also planned a programme of retreats for all classes at an age appropriate level.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.

- Leaders and managers have developed their knowledge of how to plan and deliver quality experiences of Collective Worship. They provide opportunities for pupils to reflect upon the Church's liturgical year, seasons, rites and symbols through the provision of quality worship experiences in a contemporary context. Leaders and managers are reviewing the quality of Collective Worship to inform the development process and possible training requirements.
- Liturgical and spiritual development is seen as a priority in ongoing professional development and staff access training opportunities wholeheartedly.
- Senior leaders, the Religious Education leader and the Parish Priest are visible leaders of Collective Worship within school. They lead good quality Collective Worship experiences for both staff and pupils and are models of good practice. The views of pupils, staff and parents are valued and acted upon to ensure good quality Collective Worship continues to evolve throughout the school and parish community.