



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

URN: 104236

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

Date: 23-24 March 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

- Christ is at the heart of the school, evident in the quality of relationships and its strong culture of welcome. The school goes above and beyond, offering generous hospitality to all, especially those in need.
- The head teacher, staff and governors are inspirational witnesses to the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching in the direction of the school. This has an overwhelmingly positive impact on the entire school community.
- Pupils are religiously literate and use their learnt knowledge and skills effectively to reflect spiritually. They see it as their role to live out their faith; consequently, their behaviour is exemplary.

- Staff have a strong understanding of religious education's impact on pupils' moral and spiritual development. This is reflected in providing high-quality space and time for purposeful reflection during lessons.
- The head teacher and her staff are inspirational models of exemplary practice to pupils as participants in and leaders of prayer, leading to the provision of very high-quality worship.

What the school needs to improve:

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to evaluate the school's Catholic life and subsequently take appropriate leads in planning improvements.
- Share leaders' in-depth analysis of monitoring and evaluation relating to religious education with staff to bring about consistency in the way they achieve the school's very high standards even more swiftly.

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



Pupils understand and appreciate the distinctive school mission, fully participating in all aspects and contributing significantly to enhancing Catholic life. They articulate that they are valued as individuals, made in God's image, confidently proclaiming to live out the school's mission, *'In God's love we flourish'*. Pupils are highly committed to following the teachings of Jesus, as expressed in the Gospels, embracing the values and virtues which help them live out their lives in Christ to the full. Because of their deep understanding of how to apply the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, they know how to personally care for our common home and serve those most in need. They implement these actions readily by contributing to food banks and raising money for UNICEF for medical supplies to Ukraine, for example. Members of the chaplaincy team fully embrace their responsibilities; they are independent in their approach and effectively support pupils across the school in growing in confidence regarding matters of faith. They clearly articulate the importance of being stewards of God's creation in every sense. One pupil told inspectors, *'We are trying our best to connect with the parish and help it in any way we can'*, giving examples such as producing seed packets for a jumble sale, tidying the church, and the Rotary kids project. The behaviour and manners of pupils are outstanding in lessons and throughout the school day.

'In Amore Dei Floremus' - *'In God's love we flourish'* - is a strong, explicit, and profound declaration which aligns with the Church's mission. The head teacher, leaders and staff are consistently inspirational and outstanding role models for their pupils. Christ is unequivocally at the heart of St Thomas of Canterbury, witnessed through the strong sense of community, the exceptionally high quality of relationships, and the warm welcome that oozes throughout the school. Through these relationships, moulded by the love and care they show for their pupils, staff embrace the school's Catholic life and mission. Pupils' pastoral care is given the highest priority, and there is a consistent commitment to the most vulnerable. Staff support pupils to understand the importance of Catholic

Social Teaching and provide many opportunities for them to bear witness to them, such as by working towards CAFOD's *LiveSimply* initiative, planning a retreat day on the theme of caring for God's Creation and awarding pupils with *Gift of God* certificates in recognition of their discipleship. Provision for relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE) is carefully planned and faithful to all statutory and diocesan requirements. The internal and external environment, including displays, enhances religious, spiritual, and moral development, and the school works hard to monitor these spaces, ensuring they are well-cared for and used.

Leaders are very ambitious regarding developing the school's Catholic life and mission, which are given the highest priority. The head teacher readily responds to diocesan policies and initiatives and is willing to put herself at the service of the archdiocese. Leaders promote the concept that St Thomas of Canterbury is at the service of the local Church and think creatively to develop even stronger links with their parish. Recent initiatives have increased the number of pupils and families from the school attending weekly Mass. Leaders empower parents and carers to meet the demands of being their children's first educators and go the extra mile; for example, providing warmly received workshops to help parents in their formation. Staff new to the school feel fully supported by leaders and appreciate the welcome and induction they receive. This ensures they comprehensively understand how they can actively contribute to promoting and living out the school's mission. Pupils contribute to evaluating Catholic life and mission, though these opportunities are not yet fully utilised.

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

Pupils develop excellent knowledge, understanding and key skills across all years and firmly grasp key religious vocabulary. They are skilled at recalling biblical knowledge and are confident in using Scripture and sharing their opinions. Pupils show great interest in their learning, demonstrate excellent concentration, and fully engage in their lessons. They are curious learners, readily asking their teachers searching questions to consolidate and deepen their learning and understanding of key topics and concepts. Their behaviour in lessons is notably exceptional. Pupils' knowledge of the liturgical year is deeply embedded through reinforcement by relevant curriculum areas. Using the liturgical seasons, they apply their learning in religious education to their lives and think ethically. They appreciate the time and space they are given to reflect spiritually at the beginning and during lessons. They subsequently speak confidently about what they have learned and how they can relate this to their lives. The quality of pupil work across the school is of a consistently high standard, and pupils are challenged to demonstrate a deeper understanding of religious education through extended and reflective questioning. Excellent standards in religious education have been sustained for the last three years, with a high percentage of pupils achieving above age-related expectations.

Teachers demonstrate a strong commitment and high expectations for religious education. Planning is always linked to pupils' current assessment; because of this, lessons consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding, enabling them to know, remember, and do more in relation to the planned curriculum. Lessons are imaginatively and creatively planned, including using art, music, and role-play. There is a consistency in the use of knowledge retrieval questions at the start of lessons so that pupils are always primed to build upon prior learning; teachers ensure that religious vocabulary is explained in an age-appropriate way so that they can use it with independence and accuracy. Reflective questioning and discussions are features of lessons, though sometimes, lengthy questioning and discussion sessions leave less time for pupils to record their

achievements in independent work. Teachers have a profound understanding of religious education's impact on pupils' moral and spiritual development. They regularly provide meaningful opportunities for purposeful reflection so pupils can make sense of their world experience. Feedback and challenging questions in books allow pupils to think more deeply and improve their outcomes.

Leaders and governors ensure that the school curriculum for religious education fulfils the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* and that it has full parity with other core curriculum subjects regarding timetabling and resourcing. Leaders and governors are committed to securing regular, high-quality training in religious education for all staff, focusing on subject knowledge and teaching strategies. The subject leader shares all diocesan updates with staff and supports them individually, especially those new to the school, ensuring consistency in high-quality provision. She has a good level of expertise in securing her vision and is committed to continually improving teaching and learning in religious education. Subject monitoring using various forms results in strategic action that further enhances the provision of religious education at St Thomas of Canterbury. For example, audits for social, moral, vocational, spiritual, and cultural development within the subject have all been carried out to identify areas for improvement which are being effectively actioned and used to inform leaders' evaluation. Leaders use observations of learning, scrutiny of planning and reviewing pupils' work to accurately identify aspects of religious education to develop further. However, leaders' analysis of monitoring activities is not always shared with staff, limiting the rate with which consistency of provision is achieved.

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

The experiences of prayer and liturgy provided by the school engage pupils deeply and lead them to full and active participation. Pupils are exceptionally reverent during all forms of worship. Indeed, their engagement and responses during the different parts of the Mass, including prayerful silence and communion singing, were excellent during the inspection. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their parish priest and how he inspires them to 'always be a better person in life'. Furthermore, they readily and clearly articulate how prayer and liturgy experiences have shaped how they think about themselves and the world and how they inspire them into action. Pupils have a detailed understanding of the wide variety of ways of praying that are part of the Catholic tradition, including the use of Scripture and liturgical music. Pupils work collaboratively to prepare creative and well-constructed experiences of prayer and liturgy and undertake liturgical ministries with confidence and skill.

The centrality of prayer and liturgy to the life of the school is apparent across all its work. A wide variety of significant moments are identified, planned for, and celebrated as part of the rhythm of school life. There is a focus on celebrating the Eucharist, and the Mass is well-organised and carefully planned, contributing significantly to instilling senses of calmness and deep reflection within pupils. The head teacher and staff are inspiring models of exemplary practice to pupils as participants in and leaders of prayer and liturgy. Staff have a clear understanding of planning liturgy, consistently using the school's model for prayer and are highly skilled in helping pupils to plan and lead prayer confidently. The school makes imaginative and creative use of the spaces available, with prayer areas outside, such as the prayer garden and bee garden, which pupils tend to, further demonstrating that they are stewards of God's creation. These creative spaces are imaginatively used to enhance the quality of prayer and

the school's spiritual life. Leaders and relevant staff have thoughtfully planned how to include parents in the school's prayer life. Workshops have been very well received by parents and illustrate how the school welcomes parents and involves them in their children's spiritual formation. Other initiatives, such as prayer bags and stay-and-pray sessions, further embed effective relationships with parents.

Leaders have an understanding and strategy for building participation skills for planning and leading liturgy as pupils progress through school. The independence pupils showcase when using liturgy planners and the increasing ease with which they participate in liturgy and prayer as they mature demonstrate the effectiveness of this strategy. Leaders and governors have planned the school calendar to ensure that opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist are regularly offered to the whole school community at crucial times in the liturgical year. Furthermore, they work hard to ensure that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is provided, particularly during Lent and Advent. The head teacher and other senior leaders place a high priority on staff training and liturgical formation. Consequently, they lead by example and demonstrate an excellent understanding of the importance of prayer and liturgy to school life; they actively participate in it. The monitoring and evaluation of prayer are rigorous; leaders and governors are fully involved in it and place the highest priority on ensuring evaluation always positively impacts their provision of prayer and liturgy. Pupils' involvement in evaluation is an integral part of the cycle, and because of this holistic approach to school improvement, the highest outcomes are secured.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	104236
Full postal address of the school	Dartmouth Avenue, Coalpool, Walsall, WS3 1SP
School phone number	01922 720712
Name of head teacher or principal	Jean Richmond
Chair of governing board	Michael Quinn
School Website	https://www.st-thomas.walsall.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	December 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Melanie Elliott

Lead inspector

Helen Rigby

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