



## Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

URN: 124376

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

Date: 20-21 September 2023

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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

- The mission of 'Living and Learning together in the love of Christ' is embedded in daily school life.
- Leaders and governors have created a caring, nurturing, and inclusive school with strong pastoral support for pupils and staff.
- Its vibrant Catholic life extends into the local community.
- 'Big Questions' about Catholic social teaching are incorporated into religious education feedback, enabling pupils to respond and reflect on their understanding of human life and human dignity.
- Pupils' experiences of school-led prayer and liturgy enable them to become closer to God.

What the school needs to improve:

- Implement a robust system of monitoring Catholic life and mission that enables governors to actively evaluate outcomes and offer greater challenge to school leaders so that improvements are made rapidly.
- Developing pupils' skills and capability to improve outcomes, demonstrate progress, and know the next steps in their religious education learning.
- Establish a monitoring and review cycle for prayer and liturgy that routinely involves pupils and staff, leading to further improvements.

## 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

The school's mission is the core purpose of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School. Pupils flourish because of the promoted virtues of love, faith, and hope. All are proud to attend this school and live out this mission in their daily work. Pupils value the provision they experience at the school; they talk about how 'everyone belongs' within it. Pupil leadership through the pupil parliament and Mini Vinnies groups is strong because they know they actively enrich the school's Catholic life; they value the opportunity to direct the school's accomplishment of its mission each year. They enjoy leading charity and outreach work, for example, the Lighthouse foodbank, running cake sales, and writing Christmas cards to people in the local community. Pupils are at the heart of the school's mission, and a tremendously strong emphasis on the pastoral well being of pupils ensures Catholic values are central to its work. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary because they have a deep sense of self-worth, demonstrated by the care and kindness they show to each other. Pupils are highly enthusiastic about introducing growing vegetables in the school garden because it enables them to respond to Catholic social teaching principles proactively. This initiative drives the school's work on living simply.

There is a lived sense of community, which is evident in the quality of relationships and the strong culture of welcome. As soon as you enter St Thomas More staff actively embrace the mission statement of the school. The sense of family and nurture radiates from the interactions amongst staff to parents and visitors to the school. There is an overarching sense of pastoral care for the pupils, the school is clearly going the extra mile to create a faith filled joyful community. The displays of Catholic virtues and values, the lives of saints, various fundraising events, and, in particular, the liturgical year demonstrate the school's Catholic identity and support pupils' spiritual and moral development. In addition, classroom prayer areas create a spiritual environment that radiates Catholic life.

Leaders embody the values of Catholic leadership by valuing all staff and working with them to create a culture of inclusivity. Subsequently, everyone is treated with dignity and respect. One staff member commented, 'I am extremely honoured and grateful to work in a fantastic school where we all promote its mission'. Policies clearly provide the highest levels of pastoral care for staff and there is a real commitment to the physical and mental well being of staff. Staff articulate how they enjoy coming to school and feel valued for their contributions. The school has highly effective strategies in place which enable parents/carers to fully engage with the school. Parents thoroughly understand the mission because their children enthusiastically speak of the values they learn. Governors are committed to the school and have a very good understanding of how the school achieves its mission because of the comprehensive reports made by leaders. Leaders have a long-term plan to develop the role of governors further to be more involved in evaluating the school's work. Leaders ensure all staff receive regular high-quality training and induction, meaning St Thomas More is leading in its provision of Catholic life. Leaders are very committed to supporting staff new to school; they are provided with opportunities to engage in an effective induction programme which enables them to become fully committed to the Catholic life and mission of the school. Pupils contribute to evaluating the Catholic life and mission of the school by planning their actions for the year. The community highly regards the parish priest for developing an excellent link with the parish, particularly during Sacramental preparation.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

### Pupil outcomes

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

2

### Provision

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

2

### Leadership

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

2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their lessons and speak enthusiastically about the fun they experience, primarily when actively engaged in their learning. Pupils demonstrate good subject knowledge, including prior learning, enabling them to know more, remember more, and make connections between different curriculum areas. Pupils can work independently and take the initiative in their learning when opportunities arise in lessons. For example, pupils in Year 6 responded to Marian artwork in highly individual and reflective ways, enabling them to achieve personalised learning outcomes. Further, the consistent teaching approach enables pupils' religious literacy to improve and the introduction of a 'big question' initiative, which focuses on Catholic social teaching, is well understood by pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 2. Pupils produce good work and understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further. Pupils attainment for the last three years is comparable with other core subjects.

Teachers generally have good subject knowledge, with some demonstrating excellent knowledge appropriate to the age they are teaching. However, teachers do not get the opportunity to observe stronger practitioners to enhance the quality of their provision. Staff adapt their teaching for different groups of pupils through their questioning; this contributes to most pupils achieving the learning objectives of each lesson. Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) are well cared for at the school because teachers adapt resources and work alongside capable teaching assistants to provide stimuli to engage and motivate this group of learners. Beyond this, most teachers deploy other adult support well; in the best examples, good subject knowledge is used to question pupils, enabling effective support to improve learning for all pupils. Resources, including Bibles, are used effectively by staff to maximise learning. Teachers adhere consistently to the school's feedback policy, recognising and valuing pupils' efforts. However, the development of pupils' autonomy in taking ownership of their learning, which enables them to identify how to improve their understanding, check their progress, and focus on the next learning steps, is

underdeveloped. Pupils' personal development is effectively facilitated through extension questions, verbal and written, which support them in developing their spiritual and moral reflections at a deeper level. Overall attainment is good and most pupils meet their expected age-related standards.

Leaders ensure training opportunities are available for staff to support their subject knowledge and teaching practice. The foci identified for staff training helps reinforce leaders' vision for all pupils to do their best and achieve and promotes school development. Staff greatly value the support from the subject leader; together with pupils, they benefit well from her invaluable knowledge and support. The school follows the diocesan scheme of work, ensuring pupils develop knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect the learning required by the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Religious Education is well planned to meet the needs of the different groups of pupils, in particular those with SEND. Pupils receiving one to one support are well catered for and adaptive teaching strategies are used well for them. This adaptation is not yet used consistently to support pupils with higher prior attainment, meaning they are not given opportunities to fully extend their learning. Leaders and governors give the subject the same status as other core subject areas regarding resourcing and finance. Governors have a good grasp of religious education provision in the school; this is underpinned by monitoring activities, which broadly link to targeted subject improvement priorities.

## Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

### Pupil outcomes

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

2

### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school .....

2

### Leadership

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

2

Prayer is fully inclusive and accessible to pupils from all faith backgrounds. All pupils show reverence and participate with confidence in liturgy, joining in with responses with a sense of purpose and confidence and embrace the opportunities to pray through song and do so with great enthusiasm. Pupils are familiar with Scripture and use the correct responses during liturgy. Year 6 pupils especially feel a sense of pride and that prayer is extra special when pupils lead their own liturgies. One child commented, 'Leading class liturgy helps us become more independent'. The best pupil-led prayer follows the 'gather, listen, respond and go forth' model because this enhances their experience of listening to the Word of God and thinking about its message. Pupils respond well to each other during prayer, and time is given for personal reflection which usually elicits meaningful, age-appropriate responses. The youngest children are enabled to relate the gospels to their lives, leading them to eloquently respond and make prayer time a beautiful experience for all. This sets a good foundation on which older pupils build as they learn to be reverent, attentive, and respectful during more complex prayer and liturgy, such as the Mass. Pupils need to continue accessing prayer at different times in the liturgical calendar, to reflect upon key events. A central display on the liturgical year is a great resource for pupils to improve their knowledge and understanding of the liturgical norms of the Church. Each classroom has a floor book, which is used to share pupils' reflections on liturgy, which documents pupils' skills in planning and leading liturgy.

Leaders place importance on the centrality of prayer; consequently, it impacts all significant moments of joy and sorrow and is evident throughout the school. This means pupils are developing a good knowledge and understanding of Catholic traditions and talk about the prayers they say at various times throughout each day. Leaders have high expectations of what is expected in the prayer areas around the school: all classrooms have prayer areas displaying appropriate prayers, scripture, and virtues, and they also display Cafod's Catholic social teaching animal resource, which is currently being used to help achieve a school improvement objective. These are well cared for

and provide a focal point for the pupils during prayerful silence. Traditional prayer booklets and ideas for classroom booklets are readily available for all, giving pupils and staff confidence in planning prayer. Leaders work well with families to include them in the prayer life of the school and parents and the community value the opportunities to worship together and join in liturgy celebrations in school. Parents particularly appreciate the work of the parish priest and lay chaplain concerning sacramental preparation.

The prayer policy and associated prayer progression document are accessible and useful in helping staff prepare prayer and liturgy. Sharing of good practice enables the upskilling of pupils and staff are good role models and demonstrate a commitment to prayer, setting a positive example as both leaders and participants. Staff are encouraged to gather and share the Catholic faith, contributing to their spiritual formation. Leaders have not yet implemented a robust system of monitoring and evaluation for prayer and liturgy which enables them to review the effectiveness of their strategic development targets. Neither do review processes always take into consideration the views of parents and staff, meaning leaders' planned improvements to worship are not always as precisely-targeted as they are for Catholic life and mission and religious education.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas More Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	124376
Full postal address of the school	Hut Hill Lane, Great Wyrley, WS6 6PG
School phone number	01922 666 335
Name of head teacher or principal	Stephanie Hewitt
Chair of governing board	Diane Jones
School Website	<a href="http://www.stthomasmoreprimarygreatwyrley.co.uk">www.stthomasmoreprimarygreatwyrley.co.uk</a>
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	March 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Krystyna Bickley

Lead inspector

Wendell Gopaul

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