



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

URN: 138726

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

Date: 07-08 June 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b> The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	1
<b>Catholic life and mission (p.3)</b> How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.....	1
<b>Religious education (p.5)</b> The quality of curriculum religious education.....	1
<b>Collective worship (p.7)</b> 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

- Partnerships are a real strength of the school, particularly the partnership with the Painsley Catholic Academy. As a result, there are a wealth of opportunities for staff training which in turn means that the Academy's vision of 'Better Together' is realised.
- The school's mission statement is fully understood and lived out by the whole school community. Pupils readily give examples of how they fulfil it in their daily lives.
- Leaders at all levels are passionate about and highly ambitious for the school's Catholic life and mission, and their commitment to making the school the best it can be is excellent.
- Pupils know that adults in the school hear their voices, and they value being asked for their opinions regularly and for specific purposes.

- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. As one parent wrote, 'The Catholic ethos is at the very heart of all aspects of the school'. They willingly engage in activities that enhance learning in religious education and promote the development of their children's understanding of Catholic practices and traditions.

#### What the school needs to improve:

- Ensure that the school's agreed marking policy is followed consistently so that pupils develop age-appropriate skills in self-assessment in religious education and can articulate more clearly how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Ensure extended writing is a regular feature in religious education lessons.
- Integrate a broader range of creative approaches to prayer and liturgy to develop pupil and staff participation further and enhance the experiences for the whole school community.

## 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



Regardless of their own faith, pupils fully embrace the school's Catholic identity and ethos and can clearly articulate what makes this school different from other schools. It is evident from discussions with pupils that they have a deep knowledge and understanding of the school's mission statement and can give examples of how it impacts their lives in school and beyond. For instance, an older pupil explained that it is sometimes difficult to follow God's path, but with 'truth and courage, hard decisions can be made.' Even the youngest children can give examples of how they 'follow the path God sets for us', and this is because the mission statement is visible and constantly referred to during the school day. Pupils are becoming adept at understanding the principles of Catholic Social Teaching; for example, they clearly understand the concept of the dignity of the human person. They can suggest how these principles influence their decisions and actions. Pupils are keen to serve those in need, evidenced by the fund-raising work undertaken by each class towards its chosen charity. Pupils show deep respect for others at all times, and older pupils enjoy the responsibilities they are given for leading the school's chaplaincy activities, such as supporting the younger children with assemblies. Pupils willingly take on leadership roles such as Mini Vinnies, Catholic life monitors and prefects, and their behaviour is always exemplary.

The staff genuinely embrace the school's mission statement and regularly and systematically draw pupils' attention to it. This means that it is known and understood by all. Staff are exemplary role models to the pupils as they consistently bear witness to the school's Catholic life and mission; they are proud to work at St Thomas' and are agreed that relationships are a strength of the school. As one staff member told inspectors, 'It feels like a real community and family'. One example of this is the high priority given to the pastoral care of pupils. The school environment explicitly reflects the school's Catholic identity, and the recent addition to the entrance hall and doors into the main school of its mission statement is a powerful reminder to all of its importance and centrality to the

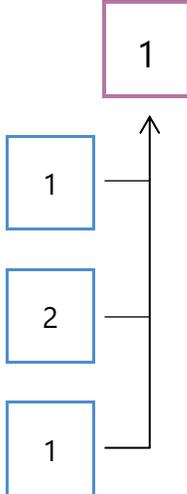
life of the school. The school's provision for relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE) meets all diocesan and statutory requirements and is firmly rooted in Catholic values and tradition.

Leaders demonstrate an exceptional commitment to the Church's educational mission, ensuring that Christ is at the heart of all the school does. The expertise and wisdom of members of the academy's board of directors and the local governing body ensures that their vision for the Catholic life and mission for the school is fully realised. Local governing body members regularly visit the school and therefore know it very well. They carry out their responsibilities with integrity and offer both challenge and support to leaders in the school; consequently, they can be confident that the school's self-evaluation is accurate. The pastoral care of staff is a priority for school leaders, and as a result, staffing is stable. Leaders engage very well with the archdiocese, and there is a flourishing partnership with the parish, which is central to the life of the school. The school acknowledges parents as their children's first educators, which families greatly appreciate. Parents also value all that the school does to involve them in its Catholic life. As one parent wrote, 'I feel St Thomas' excels itself with the Catholic life of the school to the advantage of its children'.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....	1
<b>Pupil outcomes</b> How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....	1
<b>Provision</b> The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....	2
<b>Leadership</b> How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....	1



Pupils are developing very secure knowledge and understanding of subject content; consequently, they enjoy their religious education lessons. They ask perceptive questions in lessons and are keen to find out more. Pupils are curious, interested, fully engaged, and actively involved in all lessons. Pupils have excellent levels of religious literacy, and it is clear from their responses to teachers' questions that they can accurately apply it. Pupils can concentrate for long periods and work well in pairs and groups, listening respectfully to one another. Pupils of all ages can work independently without the direction of an adult, and their behaviour remains excellent at all times. This means learning can move quickly, enabling pupils to progress nicely through the curriculum. Work in books and assessment tasks shows that pupils, including those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), make very good progress from their various starting points. Pupils are clearly aware of how the curriculum is sequenced and understand that revisiting knowledge helps them to know more and remember more. Children get off to a flying start in the reception class, which is sustained throughout the school so that by the end of Key Stage 2 attainment in religious education is high.

Teachers always have high expectations, and pupils rise to meet these. In lessons, teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and are well-supported by teaching assistants. An established routine is that all lessons begin with a short review of prior learning, and this means that any misconceptions are dealt with, and previous knowledge is consolidated very well. Talking with a partner is another established feature of lessons throughout the school, enabling pupils to explore ideas together and make links in their learning. Teachers use open questions to elicit deeper knowledge and to determine where additional support is needed. This means that pupils' needs are always met. Another established feature of lessons is the provision of time and space for purposeful reflection. This helps pupils think deeply and confidently explain how they feel. An example is when one older pupil commented to the inspectors that religious education is different, as 'it can be like

literacy as we read stories, but religious education is real life, not fiction'. This shows that the school's provision of religious education makes a deep contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Although creative learning opportunities are provided in lessons, opportunities to write at length are limited. There is inconsistency in how some staff apply the school's marking policy, resulting in pupils not being confident in identifying what they need to do to improve their work.

Leaders and governors are highly ambitious for religious education and ensure that staff access high-quality training through the academy and the archdiocese. Through conversations with inspectors and staff questionnaires, it is clear that staff are well-trained and supported to deliver high-quality lessons. They particularly appreciate the support from the leader for religious education, who works tirelessly to keep staff up to date. Leaders and governors ensure the religious education curriculum is sequentially planned and faithful to the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Leaders and governors ensure that religious education has full parity with other core subjects; an example is that weekly homework is set in all classes for the subject. Parents overwhelmingly support the school's religious education, with one parent commenting that her child comes home and shares his learning with his family and 'talks about it with love and enthusiasm'.

## 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

Pupils are deeply engaged in and responsive to the school's full and varied prayer life. They are always reverent and respectful and have an exceptional understanding of the Church's liturgical year. Thanks to staff referring to it at appropriate times throughout the school day, they confidently know the cycle, the parts of the year, and their corresponding colours and themes. One example is when a child in the reception class said that although he was learning about Pentecost, which is red, it is currently 'ordinary time, which is green when Jesus is teaching us'. Pupils know a comprehensive range of traditional Catholic prayers by heart and are very skilful at writing their own prayers. They work particularly well together, under the guidance of staff, to plan, prepare and deliver meaningful liturgical prayers. They undertake liturgical ministries with reverence and confidence, such as preparing the focus area and reading scripture. Pupils particularly enjoy preparing and sharing liturgical prayers with other classes and would now like to share these with the whole school. They are keen to try creative ways to celebrate their relationship with God. Pupils of other faiths are always respectful in prayer gatherings because of the inclusive culture of welcome and respect for human dignity throughout St Thomas'. Pupils regularly and routinely evaluate the school's provision for prayer and make comments, which staff act upon. For instance, older pupils were not always keen to take part in the actions of some hymns, and so now pupils are allowed to opt-in or out as they choose. As a result, pupils know that they are listened to and their opinion is valued, and subsequently partake in prayer with even greater enthusiasm.

Staff are wholly committed to the centrality of prayer and liturgy. There is a comprehensive calendar of Masses and planned opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation throughout the year; there is a regular pattern of daily prayer. This means that pupils know the Mass's main prayers, responses, and gestures very well. At every opportunity, staff skilfully make explicit links with Catholic Social Teaching and the school's mission statement during times of prayer and reflection,

and this means that pupils can subsequently make those links for themselves. The school's 'journey map' also ensures that pupils engage in a wealth of opportunities that enhance their prayer and liturgy experiences. For instance, 'Attend, plan and lead a school Mass in Year 5' and 'Lead on your Class Assembly' in Reception. In addition, there are opportunities to participate in virtual events across the academy, such as a liturgical prayer planned and delivered by Year 1 at St Thomas', which was live-streamed across all of the academy's primary schools. Parents appreciate the school's work to enhance their children's prayer life, particularly the prayer bags sent home. One parent wrote, 'The prayer bag is a lovely idea, and all the family enjoyed the activities and prayers when it came home'. Parents also appreciate the spirit of welcome from the school, 'We feel fully involved in the life of the school and in the sacraments.'

Leaders and governors have a clear strategy for monitoring and evaluating prayer and liturgy, including regular opportunities to seek pupils' views. This means that leaders accurately understand the quality of the school's provision. Leaders also ensure that staff benefit from practical training in school and beyond, resulting in staff feeling confident to deliver high-quality liturgical prayer and being good role models for the pupils. The school's policy for prayer and liturgy is well formulated and fit for purpose.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas' Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	138726
Full postal address of the school	Parklands Road, Upper Tean, Staffordshire, ST10 4DS
School phone number	01538 722378
Name of head teacher or principal	Sarah Baxter
Chair of governing board	Kenneth Wilson
School Website	<a href="http://www.st-thomas-tean.staffs.sch.uk">www.st-thomas-tean.staffs.sch.uk</a>
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Painsley Catholic Academy
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	4 to 11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

## The inspection team

Julie Johnson	Lead inspector
Geraldine McCauley	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