



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Monitoring Visit

ST THOMAS AQUINAS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Part of the Christ the King Catholic Collegiate

North Street, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs, ST4 7DG

Inspection date	8 th July 2014
Reporting Inspector	Dominic Collins

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Academy
Age range of pupils	3 – 11 years
Number on roll	238
Appropriate authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Academy Committee Chair	Mrs Celia Teague
Telephone number	01782 234919
E-mail address	stthomasa@sgfl.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	June 2009
DFE School Number	861/3408
Unique Reference Number	140805

Headteacher	Miss Bernadette Sims
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Previous inspection:	1
This inspection:	1

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE





July 2014

Diocesan Education Service,
Don Bosco House,
Coventry Road,
Coleshill,
B46 3EA

Miss Bernadette Sims
North Street
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffs
ST4 7DG

Dear Miss Sims

Section 48 Monitoring inspection:

Thank you for the welcome you, your staff and pupils gave to me when I inspected your school on 8th July and for the information you provided both before and during the inspection. I am grateful for the time given by all including the parish deacon in speaking with me.

The inspection was a "light touch" monitoring inspection because your school was judged at the last section 48 inspection to be an outstanding school and because it is now five years or more since you last received a diocesan inspection.

The purpose of the inspection was to assess the quality of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning for Catholic life and religious education. In order to make this judgement I read school documents, including a summative self-evaluation, interviewed senior leaders, a governor representative, the subject leader for RE, and pupils, observed one full lesson and one part lesson, and looked at a sample of pupils' written work. In addition, I gathered evidence of some of the outstanding practice in the school as part of a diocesan wide survey of good practice in Catholic life and religious education.

Catholic Life

The school self evaluation of its Catholic life is both accurate and reliable because it is based upon a highly effective range of monitoring processes. Self evaluation is thorough, well organised and consequently provides accurate quality assurance. Crucially, the outcomes are shared, analysed, and form the basis of a comprehensive improvement plan, containing agreed focused aims with appropriate action and success criteria clearly identified.

Self evaluation of Catholic life is firmly embedded within a variety of innovative child centred monitoring opportunities the school has devised and personalised. The successful involvement of pupils, in shaping a range of policies and processes, demonstrate a clear indication of how much each is valued and their views encouraged, considered and actioned where appropriate. As a consequence pupils fully understand their role within the school family and recognise the responsibilities they have towards each other. Pupils demonstrate a mature sensitivity to the needs and feelings of those around them. The analysis of class 'behaviour logs' is one of the effective initiatives used throughout the school to encourage consistency of practice. For example, good manners and politeness are encouraged and rewarded through a scheme, devised by the school pupil council and is successfully implemented with their involvement. In the same way, they have also developed a very effective child friendly, anti-bullying policy that is understood by all pupils and parents. Trained pupil play leaders operate responsibly, conduct their duties with pride and support younger children extremely well by preparing equipment and devising a variety of games and activities at break times.

This notion of pupil empowerment has a very positive impact in promoting a happy, harmonious environment. Pupils feel safe, fully involved in the life of the school and speak warmly of the care and encouragement they receive. Priority is given to living out the school mission which is monitored each day by vigilant and caring staff, who are excellent role models and recognise their responsibility to ensure pupils live up to the high expectations made of them. These foundations are very well developed and have a direct impact on the excellent relationships that exist throughout the school, evidenced by mutual respect within an atmosphere of love, trust and happiness. These values are reflected by the way pupils are able to articulate its Catholic mission through their positive attitudes as maturing Christians. The outstanding Catholic ethos is a powerful presence in this school and fully justifies the judgement of self evaluation.



Religious Education

Self evaluation accurately judges that pupils make excellent progress in RE throughout the school and, by the end of Key Stage 2, a significant number are achieving higher than expected levels of attainment. This judgement is reliably based upon a variety of formal processes used by the leadership to monitor and evaluate RE provision and outcomes. In view of their high quality and effectiveness, these well structured systems give a clear and accurate profile of the quality of RE provision and the impact of teaching and learning over time. The major effect of self evaluation is the conversion of its judgements and outcomes into an improvement plan that is prioritised, shared, actioned and reviewed. This is a considerable strength. For example, pupil tracking data analysis confirms the excellent levels of their attainment in RE and regular scrutiny of pupils' work show the curriculum is covered accurately in accordance with the diocesan strategy. However, subsequent discussion and evaluation revealed a need to further develop writing in RE and ensure that more able pupils are challenged in line with attainment targets. This was agreed and is focussed in the current RE improvement plan.

The quality of teaching and learning is robustly monitored and a regular programme of RE lesson planning and observations is firmly embedded. Careful records are kept and feedback of delivery, content and outcomes for pupils, is shared in a professional and constructive manner. Evidence of monitoring records show a consistent pattern of good and outstanding teaching over time, in line with self evaluation judgements and the excellent quality of teaching and learning observed during the inspection. The RE curriculum offers a broad and rich variety of experiences for all groups of children. Evidence of planning shows how staff prepare resources and activities to make RE lessons vibrant and interesting. These are enhanced by the excellent support given by the parish deacon/ link governor. Consequently, children enjoy their RE lessons and are eager to achieve, evidenced by pupil audit analysis. They are supported very well by teaching assistants and know how to improve, through the way their work is acknowledged and further challenges given.

Governors are effective and successful in promoting the Catholic life of the school and are fully involved in the self evaluation process. They are dedicated to supporting the headteacher and staff and consistently encourage all they do, while at the same time, offering an appropriate level of professional challenge in order to sustain improvement. The parish priest and parish deacon, who is also the RE link governor, have strong connections with the school and visit regularly for Masses and liturgies. They support the teaching of RE and liaise with the RE leader who is also head of school. All governor visits into school are recorded and, together with a termly RE update report produced by the leadership, they are kept fully informed about all aspects of developments regarding Catholic life and RE provision. As a result of this collaboration, an annual governors' action plan is drawn up to focus their monitoring schedule.

The school works hard to foster and develop firm relationships with the families, parish and wider community. Outcomes of the very successful initiatives of 'Roots week', Family Learning sessions and hosting the parish Friendship Circle, are excellent examples of their effectiveness. Prayer and collective worship is at the centre of daily school life in which children participate with reverence and enthusiasm. There are a variety of opportunities for pupils to experience different forms of prayer, through their joyful singing, dancing and meditation. Collective worship is carefully monitored and evaluated, formally and informally and this leads to action for improvement.

Central to the accuracy of self evaluation is the way the school links outcomes of monitoring and evaluation to inform future development. As a result, systems used for the monitoring and evaluation of Catholic life is outstanding, not only in determining a profile of overall quality, but also as a platform for continuous improvement. St Thomas Aquinas School has outstanding overall effectiveness, due to the high quality processes that are embedded for monitoring and evaluating its Catholic life and religious education. The combination of inspirational leadership and the support of knowledgeable, dedicated governors with a shared vision to provide the best possible outcomes for its pupils will ensure the continued success of the school.

Yours sincerely

D G Collins
Diocesan Inspector