



# Diocese of Westminster

## **St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary**

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DFE Number: 919 3367

URN Number: 117 454

Headteacher: Mrs M Keating

Chair of Governors: Mrs Breda Jackson

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005
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Date of inspection: 29<sup>th</sup> April 2013

Date of previous inspection: 26<sup>th</sup> November 2007

Reporting Inspector: Mr Sean Flood

## Introduction

The inspector would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspector spent 1 day in the school, visited 4 lessons and 2 assemblies or liturgies, and carried out 6 interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St Thomas of Canterbury, Puckeridge, Herts, was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

## Description of School

The school is a small half form entry in the LA of Hertfordshire and the locality of Puckeridge. The school serves the three parishes of Puckeridge, Buntingford and Old Hall Green for which this is the nearest Catholic Primary school. There are also pupils from the Parishes of Ware and Bishop's Stortford. The area in which St. Thomas of Canterbury lies is within the 6% least deprived areas in England.

The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 70%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 21% and 9% of pupils are of no specified religion. There are currently no pupils from other Faiths.

There are 113 pupils on roll, with no pupils with statements of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is below average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is 6%, well below average. There is a well below average rate of 5% of families claiming free school meals and eligible for pupil premium.

There are 5 full-time and 2 part-time teachers in the school. Three members of staff are Catholic. All members of the Leadership Team have the CCRS or equivalent.

St Thomas of Canterbury is a small, welcoming and caring village Primary school with a rising Catholic population in its early years and infants. The Mission Statement of the school states: "We learn, love, respect and accept our responsibilities through our faith in Jesus Christ"

### Key for inspection grades:

**Grade 1\*: Outstanding;**  
**Grade 1: Very Good;**  
**Grade 2: Good;**  
**Grade 3: Requires improvement;**  
**Grade 4: Causing Concern.**

## **A. Classroom Religious Education**

*How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?*

### **What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?**

**Overall Grade: [1]**

The overall effectiveness of religious education in St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic school is very good.

The current core scheme of the school is the "Way, Truth and the Life" programme, supplemented with Diocesan Year of Faith units of work.

The use and mapping of the Curriculum Directory is progressing well and provides a very good programme of religious education across the key stages. Planning is very good indeed both in individual lesson plans and in longer term planning. Staff are taking care to ensure that it is well mapped to the Curriculum Directory.

Pupil attainment in religious education is very good overall at both key stages and progress is consistent from Early years onwards. By the time pupils leave in Year 6 attainment is of a very high standard as is religious literacy.

All teaching seen during this inspection was at least good, with outstanding features seen in some lessons. Teaching is both creative and imaginative in enhancing RE.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and internal structures are very good to support NQTs. Staff development is carefully planned in this school.

Teachers have a shared vision for the delivery of religious education and strive for high standards.

The leadership of the subject is also very good with an enthusiastic subject leader and very focused head teacher leading the school forward.

Teaching and learning support assistants play a key role in the effective delivery of RE lessons and are well deployed to support a wide range of pupils.

Overall, the school self-evaluation provides evidence of good awareness and understanding of the needs of the school and also some very good and useful pointers for future development. This self-evaluation now needs revisiting in the light of this inspection

The place and very high importance of religious education in the life of the school is evidenced by the common purpose and shared vision among the leadership team

There is a constant focus on the leadership of RE by the head, the senior leadership team and governors who support this school.

### **What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection and what should the school do to further improve in classroom religious education?**

The school has made very good progress in addressing the two key issues from its previous inspection. Marking is now consistently applied across the school, is very informative and aids pupil development, especially in the Early Years and at the end of Key Stage 2 where it is very good.

The other key issue for the school has been extensively addressed in the last year. Collective Worship is now a major strength of the school and is carefully monitored. Pupils now play a key and active role in all acts of worship, liturgies and prayer services.

To further improve classroom religious education the school needs to:

- set out a timetable to monitor the effectiveness and quality of teaching in RE in order to move more teaching from good to outstanding.
- Ensure that coverage of written work is regularly scrutinised and audited as to its content.
- Review the current timetable of classroom lessons as soon as possible.

## **How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?**

**Grade [1]**

The school currently uses the scheme 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' as its core curriculum content. It has started mapping this scheme to the Curriculum Directory during half-termly staff meetings & Inset days training. Plans clearly identify objectives for the Curriculum Directory and the attainment focus for assessment. Examples of very good and imaginative planning were seen in all classes. The teaching staff are becoming more confident in delivering the requirements of the Curriculum Directory.

The core scheme has been supplemented in some instances with Diocesan Units of Work from the Year of Faith Modules. The school is planning in the near future to look at additional RE resources and schemes in order to further enhance the teaching of RE.

In November 2012 all classes explored the Hindu festival of Diwali and the school is planning on expanding further links with the Jewish community.

## **Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education**

**Grade [1]**

Pupils enter the school above national averages and leave at key stage two achieving high standards of work in religious education and a high degree of religious literacy. Achievement is at least good in all classes and in Early Years and Year 6 is often outstanding. There is clear evidence of very good progress across the school and especially among the older children. The school has made efforts to evaluate its current levels of pupil attainment and is keen to review this work by more accurately and realistically tracking and refining its analysis of pupil progress.

The behaviour of the pupils is outstanding at all times in lessons seen and also around the school, including during playtimes and lunch. Pupils are polite, articulate and very friendly in sharing their work and ideas. One child described how the school felt like "a second home". Children get a very good start in the Early Years of the school and quickly learn about Bible stories and the prayers of the church. Evidence of this is plentiful, as the school makes very good use of photos and iPads to display and share the achievements of pupils. The books of the Nursery and Reception age children are very well maintained and care is taken to ensure to parents and pupils alike that the RE books are seen as special. Religious literacy is evident from the work seen in Key Stage 1 around the time of Lent. Pupil knowledge about this was very good. Some outstanding written work was seen at the end of Key Stage 2 where pupils wrote reflective research pieces on people who help vulnerable groups and also on a wide variety of inspirational people who led great lives. Pupils also have composed and written their own prayers and meditations on life. Marking has been a key issue for the school and is developing well. Early Years work is very well annotated and highlighted as being special and in upper Key Stage 2 pupils are given "next steps" marking in how to improve their work even further. The school has addressed the previous key issue of consistency of marking, well.

Coverage of written work needs to be reviewed by the school as at times there are lengthy gaps between work being recorded in books, in some of the classes.

The standard of artwork in this particular school is also of a very high order and is prominently displayed throughout the school. Collage, drawing and now iPads are used very effectively in a variety of settings using both abstract and realistic genres. Pupils are rightly proud of this work and eager to share with visitors what they have produced. One pupil commented how delighted she was to be able to have "a great opportunity to learn so many things in so many different ways".

Pupils clearly enjoy their learning in RE and are keen to answer questions in class and also in a very informative and fruitful discussion with this inspector.

Opportunities for spiritual development are plentiful and moral development is a strength of this school.

## **The quality of teaching**

### **Grade [1]**

The quality of the teaching in the school ranges from good to very good with some lessons displaying outstanding features. Teaching in the Early Years is consistently very good with carefully planned activities and imaginative and well structured lessons. Teachers and support staff introduce children to the life and works of Jesus and His disciples in a very sensitive and appropriate way. In one lesson seen, children used torches, iPads and photos to enact the story of Jesus appearing to his disciples. The environment was also very carefully arranged by staff in order to support pupil learning in an attractive and vibrant setting.

Planning in all classes is thorough and is a key reason why teaching overall is very good.

Challenge from teachers is evident in many classes and the expectation is that pupils will learn to a high standard.

Pupil progress is being monitored but this needs to be reviewed in light of new assessment criteria and levels of attainment and shared with all staff. The school needs to revisit and refine its assessment criteria.

The school has worked hard to ensure effective marking and this is very good in the Early Years and among the older children, where “next steps” marking ensures pupils know how to improve and increase their own knowledge and understanding.

Homework is regularly given and allows pupils to do some detailed research on the lives of inspirational people and other worthwhile topics of interest.

Lesson observations have been mainly around developing Collective Worship and the school now needs to look at assessing the quality of teaching in RE across the school.

Teaching in a mixed Years 3/4 class was very good and provided very good challenge and a wide range of activities to support children’s learning. Pupils explored the sense of sound, touch and sight in very clever ways and this generated some fascinating discussion. The use of a UV torch to reveal hidden writing showed great imagination and really helped pupils understand the dilemma faced by Thomas the disciple.

Teaching in Year 5/ 6 was also very good with outstanding features. The use of scripture was very advanced in this class and pupils were confident in relating the events of Lent, Easter and especially the post-resurrection sightings of Jesus, in establishing the Early Church. The written work seen in this class also exemplified the very good teaching that these pupils receive. Questioning by the teacher was of a high order and attempted at all times to further enhance pupil understanding of the events leading up to Pentecost.

The quite outstanding artwork seen right across the school also shows that cross-curricular links are being very well used in this school.

The role of support staff and teaching assistants was also noteworthy in every class seen. Staff were employed in a wide variety of roles and settings and ensured that teaching was differentiated and accessed by all. The school strives to be fully inclusive in its provision.

## **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education**

### **Grade [1]**

The new head teacher is very focused on delivering high quality RE lessons and an imaginative curriculum in her school. Her analysis of joint lessons seen was very precise and accurate and she clearly can identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching. She is well supported by an experienced leadership team. The RE co-ordinator supports new teachers very effectively and is equally keen for the school to deliver high quality RE.

To ensure even higher standards the school needs to focus on the quality of classroom teaching and its impact on pupil learning.

The school has done some very good work on monitoring and improving marking and has been successful in this area. It now needs to monitor the coverage of RE to ensure all pupils record and

write down what they have learned. Pupils are capable of very high standards of written work, but in some classes need to be given more opportunities to record and write down their own work.

The governing body is very supportive of the school and has full confidence in the leadership team. There has been some very effective professional development in the school and the head has good plans to link up with an outstanding school in Haringey to share good practice and support staff in their development.

The school's Mission Statement is widely known and shared by staff, pupils, governors and parents.

## **B.The Catholic life of the school**

*How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?*

**What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?**

**Overall Grade: [1]**

The overall effectiveness of The Catholic life of the school is judged to be very good with outstanding features in the following ways:

Religious education is highly valued as integral to the life of the school as it seeks ways to implement fully the Bishops' Conference requirements.

Resources, staffing and accommodation are very good for the needs of this school community.

It is a well maintained and, in places, quite beautiful Catholic learning environment for young children to prosper and thrive.

Collective Worship and prayer are outstanding in the school and pupils are now actively engaged in both the planning and preparation of their own liturgies.

Links with parents, the parish and Diocese are very strong and are being regularly reviewed to further enhance links. Parents are very positive and appreciative about the Catholic life offered by the school to their children.

The head is very focused in her new role and leads by example in developing the overall Catholic life of the school. She is well supported by an experienced and supportive Governing Body.

Governors are kept fully involved in developing the Catholic life of the school.

Leadership at all levels demonstrates a strong vision and commitment to Catholic education that does inspire pupils to achieve their best.

**What has improved since the last inspection and what should the school do to further develop the Catholic life of the school?**

The main issue for the school in the last inspection was to develop the planning and monitoring of Collective Worship to ensure that pupils are inspired to respond enthusiastically and imaginatively.

The school has made excellent progress in this area and invested a lot of time and effort into ensuring that collective worship is of a high standard. Pupils now eagerly participate and, in some instances lead, in preparing liturgies, assemblies and class prayers.

In order to improve and develop further, the school needs to:

- review its current timetable provided for RE to ensure lessons are of an appropriate duration and time of day, in order to ensure optimum pupil learning in its widest sense.
- do a thorough review and consultation of its work on developing the Common Good so that pupils are able to serve the wider community and understand more fully the Gospel call to justice and service both locally and internationally.

**The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget**

**Grade [1\*]**

The school clearly places a very high priority on the teaching and delivery of RE. The head in particular is very focused on ensuring that RE is at the core of all the school does. RE does receive at least 10% of curriculum time in all classes in the school including Key Stage 1. The timetables do

however show that RE is being taught in blocks that are often far too long for young children to focus, learn and concentrate appropriately. This is true in both Key Stages and needs to be reviewed by the school as soon as possible in order to further enhance the quality of RE provision in the school.

The leadership team of the school all hold the Catholic Certificate for Religious Studies.

A very generous budget is allocated to resourcing RE, some three times the budget for English and Maths for example, and this is clearly evident in the resources around the school.

The school itself is beautifully maintained and it is immediately obvious upon entry that this is a living and vibrant Catholic school. Upon entry there is an outstanding display on New Life thereby celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus. Each class also proudly proclaims its Catholic identity in its prayer corners and artefacts. Displays, artwork, icons and statues are all used in a quite outstanding way to provide and enhance a quite beautiful setting for young children to develop in.

Training has been provided for all staff in developing the Catholic life of the school and ambitious plans are equally evident for the future.

### **The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community.**

**Grade [1\*]**

This area is the one that the school has concentrated most on developing since the last inspection and it has been very successful in doing so.

Prayer and worship are central to the daily life of the school and the school is outstanding in this key area. A very good New Week assembly was seen, led by all the Leadership Team and with extensive pupil participation. Pupils said traditional prayers, were given time for quiet reflection and a small group also recited the Our Father in Polish. Pupils sang with gusto and were eager to join in and answer questions posed to them. Several other small class prayer and liturgy sessions were seen during this inspection and all were reverent, well observed by pupils, and carefully structured.

Termly Masses are celebrated, to which all parents are invited, and every class has a daily act of worship.

Pupils all have a home-school prayer book that regularly goes home. This is very effective in developing the prayer life of the school and sharing this with families and generations also. The school has also developed an area of its website for prayers and reflections to be shared.

In discussions, a pupil commented that “the atmosphere of the school is lovely”. This is reflected in the moments of prayer and worship which give great opportunities for spiritual development.

### **The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice.**

**Grade [2]**

The school does undertake a wide variety of charity projects to help the local community and the wider world. For example the school encourages children to collect for Isabel and St Clare's Hospices, for MacMillan and Barnardos and for CAFOD overseas. Opportunities have been given in the past to visit and learn about other faiths and cultures such as Judaism and Hinduism. The school has also recently started to embrace other languages such as Polish to enhance assemblies and worship. The school is also looking to develop links with schools both locally and overseas.

The school undertakes a lot of activities to enhance the Common Good and has a number of project ideas for the future. Currently this is quite clearly a key area for development for the school.

Pupils know they collect for good causes but are unsure what they are or what these charities actually do. They are also very unsure about what CAFOD does and currently have no sustainable partnerships overseas with other schools or charities. The school does have very good ICT and modern technologies to easily facilitate links with the wider world.

There are plans to establish contact with other schools, faith groups and other cultures, these plans now need to be taken further and put into action to further develop the spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils.



**Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf;**  
**Grade [1]**

The school attends a wide variety of Diocesan training and induction and has worked hard on this area since its previous inspection. All Diocesan policies and guidelines are being fully implemented. Links with parents are very good and parents are very supportive of the school and its Mission. The home-school prayer book is an imaginative and clever idea to foster links with the home, school and parish. These prayer books were seen right across the school and are a noteworthy aspect of this particular school. Parents and pupils eagerly compose prayers and share thoughts which then feed into liturgies in school. Further links are fostered by inviting parents in to attend Masses, assemblies and school celebrations. A high quality newsletter is composed by the head which includes extensive news on the Catholic life of the school and also has a prayer corner item in every edition. The school has just started "The Wednesday Word" and is looking at all times to make even closer links with the home and parish community.

**The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school.**

**Grade [1\*]**

The commitment and focus of the Senior Leadership Team to promote the Catholic life of the school is clearly evident in all aspects of school life.

There is a common purpose and shared vision among the leadership team and this is beginning to have an impact on standards throughout the school. Subject knowledge among the Senior Leadership Team is very good indeed.

The school has done a lot of monitoring and training on delivering high quality Collective Worship.

The governing body is experienced and is very supportive of the school and its aims and values.

They are regular visitors to assemblies and acts of worship in the school and also seek to further engagement with parents.

The school takes its Mission Statement very seriously and is at the heart of the school community.

The governors share the vision of the staff of the school and are very supportive of current practice and equally committed to continuous improvement and learning from best practice.

The Dean is also a frequent and always welcome visitor to the school and has provided great support over the last year in the absence of a parish priest.

Parents are very pleased with this school and its Catholic life.

The SLT has devised good and in some cases extensive plans for further developing the Catholic life of the school. It is also committed to learning from other schools, Diocesan training and the wider community. There is clear ambition to develop further in this school and therefore leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is deemed to be outstanding.



## Diocese of Westminster

Date of inspection: [date]  
surname]

Reporting Inspector: [title, initial and

### **Key for inspection grades:**

**Grade 1\*: Outstanding;**  
**Grade 1: Very Good;**  
**Grade 2: Good;**  
**Grade 3: Requires improvement;**  
**Grade 4: Causing Concern.**

### **A. Classroom Religious Education**

**What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?**

**Overall Grade [1]**

How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?

Grade [1]

Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education

Grade [1]

The quality of teaching

Grade [1]

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade [1]

### **B. The Catholic life of the school**

**What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?**

**Overall Grade [1]**

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget

Grade [1\*]

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

Grade [1\*]

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice.

Grade [2]

The partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

Grade [1]

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school.

Grade [1\*]

