

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

URN: 118199

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Portsmouth

19–20 June 2024

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

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

2

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

What the school does well

- The high quality of relationships between staff and all members of the school community, with children behaving towards each other with respect, support and compassion.
- The exceptional role models provided by senior leaders in their commitment and dedication to Catholic education and the whole school community.
- The support given to the most vulnerable in the school community is an excellent example of Catholic social teaching in action.
- The diverse opportunities provided for pupils to demonstrate their learning which contributes towards excellent behaviour and enthusiasm in RE lessons.
- The liturgical life of the school; where there are many opportunities for prayer, supported by the creative use of space to create an environment where faith is tangible and a lived experience for all.

What the school needs to improve

- Enable pupils to clearly articulate the theology underpinning Catholic social teaching so that they can take a leading role in responding to the demands of social justice, pro-actively finding ways of responding, locally, nationally and globally.
- Pupils need to develop their religious literacy so that they can use their knowledge, understanding and skills to effectively articulate what they have learnt, making connections between their religious learning and everyday life.
- Support pupils to articulate how their experiences of prayer and liturgy helps them to think about themselves and the world and how these opportunities inspire them to take action.

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

Pupil outcomes

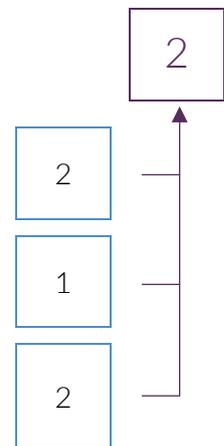
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



The mission statement, Live. Love. Believe, runs through all that the school does. It is used as the backbone of the school improvement strategy and has a significant impact on the life of the school. Leaders are dedicated to preparing the pupils to be citizens of the world, ready to carry out Catholic social action. The charism of the school is visible in the way day-to-day situations are dealt with. When an error has occurred, time is taken to unpick the situation so that the pupils involved can reflect on how they could have approached it differently and what they can do next time to more closely follow the teachings of Christ. Pupils understand that as a school community, everyone tries to do what Jesus expects of us. One pupil summed up what the school does by saying, 'We work together in harmony, putting others first.' Interactions between pupils demonstrate the mutual respect they have for each other. They speak about the importance of caring for others no matter what their background. They felt that, as a school, 'even though we're not related, we're like family.' To improve further, pupils need to take more of a leading role in responding to the demands of Catholic social teaching.

Difference is celebrated, highlighted in activities such as the street-food café where families are invited to bring food from their culture at an event which brings people of Christ together. There is a culture of acceptance and inclusivity at the school. The vocabulary of how we are God's family is used and all are valued without exception. Leaders speak of the importance of welcoming parents as well as the child 'so that they do not feel isolated and so that they feel that they, too, belong here. There is no time when the children don't feel wanted here.' Staff provide the highest levels of pastoral care for pupils, and there is an explicit commitment to the most vulnerable. The love and support provided to children with specific needs is exceptional and apparent throughout the school, and this should be commended. Several parents commented on the

difference which the school had made to them, one stating, 'Moving my children to this school was the best thing I ever did.'

Leaders, including governors, work to promote the mission of the Church through their Christ-centred approach. Strategic plans and school policies and procedures also clearly reflect the charism of the school. Through observing interactions between senior leaders and parents and pupils, there is a clear sense of the dedication and care which leaders have for all members of the school community. Catholic social teaching is central to the strategic direction of the school. Leaders' and staff's commitment to the preferential treatment of the poor is put into practice daily to effectively support those in greatest need, both materially and educationally. As a school, they have just started using the language of Catholic social teaching with pupils so that they are equipped with the tools they need to speak about social justice, and they are making good progress in this area. Although pupils are beginning to be able to express their thinking around the principles, leaders need to ensure the language of Catholic social teaching is embedded so that pupils are able to clearly articulate the theology underpinning their actions. The school's monitoring and analysis leads to accurate self-assessment of the Catholic life and mission of the school. Pupils and governors also participate in the school's evaluation of its Catholic life and mission and are part of planning developments to it. Together, this leads to effective improvement planning to further enhance the life and mission of the school. All staff feel exceptionally well supported by leaders. They feel that 'they lead by example, practising what they preach, living it every day without thinking,' also stating that 'the love and passion that they have is genuine'.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

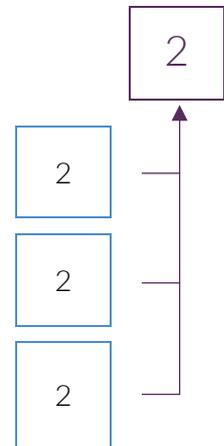
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

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

Leadership

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



Pupils make good progress in acquiring new knowledge, retaining information, and applying skills. Consequently, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs, perform well across all age groups and have a secure knowledge base in religious education. They are gradually becoming more confident in discussing what they have learned, however, they still struggle to articulate how they have made progress or identify what steps they need to take to improve further. To address this, pupils need to enhance their religious literacy. This involves not only acquiring knowledge but also developing the understanding and skills necessary to express what they have learned effectively. By making connections between their religious education and everyday life, pupils can achieve a more profound and applicable understanding of the subject. Engagement in religious education is high among pupils. They work independently, show pride in their work, and work is generally well-presented. This enthusiasm for learning is reflected in their good behaviour during lessons. They ask appropriate questions of adults and peers to deepen their understanding of the topic being discussed.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and use questioning to good effect to clarify explanations and tasks as well as to deepen learning. In several classes, tasks are adapted extremely effectively so that all pupils, including those with specific learning needs, can access the learning and be successful in deepening their understanding of the subject. Activities enable pupils to engage enthusiastically in their learning. Utilising the exceptional strength of teaching in some classrooms would further enhance the overall quality of teaching and learning in the school. The school provides pupils with diverse opportunities to present their learning. This includes using art, drama, and exploring various scenarios, all of which enriches pupils' learning. *The Big Question* is used effectively throughout the school, and verbal feedback is primarily used to discuss next steps with pupils, promoting a more interactive and immediate form of guidance to move learning on. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and understand how pupils learn at different phases. They value religious education and communicate its importance

to pupils. Lesson planning is linked to current assessments, helping pupils learn effectively. Effective planning ensures that pupils are engaged in learning which meets the needs of all pupils, including the most vulnerable. Innovative approaches are employed to meet these diverse needs, ensuring that every pupil can succeed. Teachers use questioning to gauge understanding, adapting explanations and scaffold tasks to improve learning. Celebrating pupils' efforts also leads to high motivation. Teachers recognise the importance which religious education has on the moral and spiritual development of pupils. Providing pupils with additional space and time for reflection in lessons would further strengthen this.

The religious education lead has an inspiring vision of outstanding teaching and learning and a high level of expertise in securing this vision. Her depth of theological knowledge enables her to effectively develop teachers' skills and understanding. This clear vision and expertise in teaching and learning improves the provision of religious education through strategic planning of the development of the subject. Leaders ensure that religious education is effectively planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils and to secure coherence across different key stages and phases. Engaging enrichment activities enhance pupils' learning, and thorough self-evaluation by leaders and governors informs strategic actions that lead to good outcomes. Through an even more forensic approach to analysis and self-challenge, strategic action would lead to outstanding outcomes. The subject is accurately evaluated through monitoring by both senior leaders and governors. Leaders and governors ensure that religious education receives the same level of attention as other core curriculum subjects in regard to professional development, resources, timetabling and staffing. They also guarantee that whole-school policies, including reporting to parents, are applied equally across all core subjects. Professional development opportunities for teachers is effective, focussing on both subject knowledge and pedagogical skills.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

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

2

Pupils at the school actively engage in celebrations of the word, finding joy and a sense of community in these spiritual activities. They participate in them by reflecting in silence, joining in community prayer with confidence and singing with enthusiasm. They understand the importance of scripture to worship and can describe the parts of the Church's liturgical year, articulating how it influences the prayer life of the school. The school's environment fosters the development of a deep and personal relationship with God among the pupils. One pupil's remark highlights the school's supportive atmosphere: 'If you are embarrassed to pray at home, you know that it is ok at school'. Pupils work well with others to prepare engaging experiences of liturgy, undertaking ministries willingly. The newly formed team of chaplaincy ambassadors help to prepare the prayer spaces in the school. By Year 6, pupils have full responsibility for the planning, delivering and evaluation of pupil-led worship. While pupils deeply value their experiences of prayer and liturgy, they are still developing their ability to fully articulate how these experiences influence their decisions or inspire them to take action. This reflective process is an important part of their spiritual growth and understanding.

The prayer garden has been thoughtfully developed and has a tangible impact on the children. They spoke with affection about how at breaktimes, or at any time when they are struggling, they can go out for support, sitting and talking with Mary whose statue is central to the area. It is a cherished space, regularly used by pupils for reflection and support. This statue helps pupils to feel connected to Our Lady, and many children spoke of their relationship with her which the prayer garden has enhanced. One pupil stated, 'Mary is our mother, so it is like you always have your mother with you.' The school maintains a consistent daily pattern of prayer and liturgy, offering diverse ways of praying that are integral to the school's life. The worship cycle is well-planned to reflect the liturgical year, using seasonally appropriate scripture passages and artefacts to support pupils' understanding of the rhythm of the prayer life of the Church. The school provides pupils with regular opportunities to deepen their relationship with God through masses, liturgies, and retreat days at Verbum Dei, all of which further enrich their spiritual lives.

Links with the parish are strong and the parish priest speaks highly of the relationship with the school. Events such as Sunday Masses led by school pupils in the parish strengthen these bonds and provide additional opportunities for community worship. A few pupils spoke with pride on showcasing their musical talents during whole-school gatherings, however, by nurturing the creative and artistic skills and expertise of pupils and relevant staff, prayer and liturgy in the school would be further enhanced.

The school's policy on prayer and liturgy is well formulated and fit for purpose, however, it could be improved by providing specific guidance for staff on how to structure celebrations of the word. Staff, including senior leaders, serve as inspiring role models for both colleagues and pupils in their participation and leadership of prayer and liturgy. The school creatively and imaginatively utilises available spaces to create a rich, prayerful environment. Religious artefacts and reflective quotes are thoughtfully placed throughout the school, ensuring that the centrality of prayer permeates every area. Leaders, including governors, demonstrate the importance of prayer and liturgy through strategic budget-setting, rigorous monitoring, and purposeful planning. High-quality professional development ensures that all staff members understand the significance of prayer and liturgy and feel confident in leading these activities. Overall, the school creates a nurturing and spiritually enriching environment where pupils can grow in their faith, develop leadership skills, and feel supported in their spiritual journey. Through carefully planned activities, dedicated spaces, and strong community ties, the school ensures that prayer and liturgy are central to its mission and daily life.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	118199
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9213314
Full postal address of the school	St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School, High Street, Carisbrooke, Newport, PO30 1NR
School phone number	01983522747
Headteacher	Margaret Sanderson
Chair of Governors	Alexandra Pettitt
School Website	www.stthomaspri.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	26 June 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Jeff Sendall

Veronica Woodward

Lead

Team

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