



# St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

URN: 118767

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of **Most Rev. John Wilson**, the Archbishop of Southwark

25–26 January 2024

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

#### 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

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

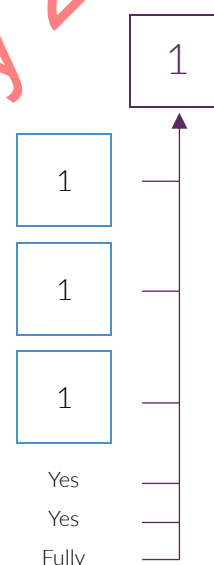
#### Collective worship (p.7)

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

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



## What the school does well

- Pastoral care is a significant strength. It inspires pupils to respond respectfully and willingly in the service of others.
- The partnership between leaders at all levels is highly effective.
- Prayer and liturgy are supported enthusiastically by both staff and pupils, reflecting the importance the school places on prayer.
- Pupils know they belong to an overtly Catholic family that has love of each other at its heart.
- The use of extensive and creative resources inspire pupils to develop their learning.

## What the school needs to improve

- Create a wider range of tasks in religious education to give further opportunities for higher level independent thought for more able pupils.
- Write clear and focused areas for improvement as part of the self-evaluation process for prayer and liturgy.
- Celebrate Catholic life and mission and key achievements more explicitly.

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## 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

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Pupils are genuinely happy in this Catholic family. At every turn, it is clear they choose to play a full part in the Catholic life and mission of the school. Pupils make the right decisions for the right moral reasons as seen in their exemplary behaviour and the way they treat other kindly. Nobody is left to be alone. The way pupils embrace and live the values of social justice is a significant strength of the school. They have a very deep understanding of why it is important to love and serve others equally as God's children. It is evident in all activities designed to serve the wider community, for example the fundraising Big Lent Walk and contributions to the Gillingham Street Angels. It is further reflected in the pride they have in the Oscar Romero Participator Award. Pupils particularly enjoyed telling of the way they raised money to support the Cafod helping farmers project. They gifted money for chickens. Pupils willingly take on leadership roles that help the community. Year 6 leaders and the Growing in Faith team are models of mature, Christian leadership. A parent described the teachers and support staff as people 'who clearly love our children'.

The welfare of pupils, families and teachers, is at the heart of everything the school does. The school's mission statement reflects this vision for a loving and praying family. The pupils' version shows they recognise they are cared for and valued as individuals. They understand their responsibilities to create one family that 'walks in the footsteps of Jesus'. All staff fully embrace the vision of the school. Pastoral support for all pupils gives them a deep sense of belonging. This constitutes a significant hallmark of the school. It is evident in the way teachers, including support staff, care for each other and pupils. A teacher said, 'I feel blessed to work here and make a difference'. The school's deep commitment to inclusion is reflected in the highly effective work of the Oasis club and draw-and-talk therapy sessions. Emotional learning support assistants (ELSA) provide excellent support for pupils with social and emotional needs. The school environment, with many artistic and creative religious displays, bears witness to the school's Catholic identity and ethos. Each classroom has a carefully created and prominent prayer focus. Parents comment on how nurturing and caring the school is and hold the school in high regard.

Leaders and governors are effective role models of Catholic leadership. They are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. Leaders, including governors, and staff all share the head teacher's vision of providing excellent pastoral care to pupils. It is a school that deserves to be celebrated more widely. They have created a friendly, caring and nurturing learning environment. As a result, all pupils, whatever their backgrounds, settle quickly into a warm and secure environment. Leaders are equally attentive to the pastoral needs of members of staff and ensure that every member's needs are understood and catered for. Staff morale is high and they are clearly supportive of each other. Plans for further spiritual growth reflect governors understanding of and commitment to the school community. The head teacher knows the school well and understands the importance of growing an authentic Catholic school. She is strongly supported by all staff whose commitment to pupils results in a school in which God's love is present. Links with the parish are central to the Catholic life and mission with the priest and deacon visiting regularly. Relations with parents are excellent. There is now a further opportunity to celebrate the key achievements in this area more explicitly. The relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) policy is up to date.

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## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

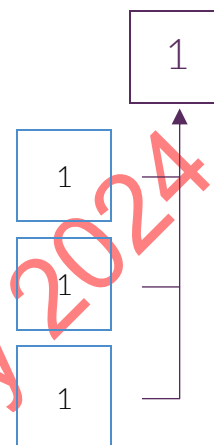
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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



The total engagement of pupils in lessons is a joy to behold. They speak enthusiastically about their learning. Pupils want to make progress because of the genuine warm encouragement and praise from teachers. They know teachers want them to do well. Applying what they have learnt through scripture, helping them to understand how to live their lives as Christians, is a notable strength although teachers are aware that further challenge will help pupils develop deeper and independent thought. One class took 'love is kind and patient' and wrote a letter to a world leader explaining why we need love in society. Pupils appreciate opportunities to explore and develop their learning in a variety of ways, for example by exploring passages of scripture through art and role play. In a key stage 1 lesson pupils learnt by re-enacting the presentation of Jesus in the temple. Pupils, appropriate to their age, are religiously literate. Pupils' written work is of a consistently high quality. It reflects a ready response to high expectations. They are very proud of their achievements. Attainment in religious education is consistently above that of other core subjects. Nearly all pupils, including those with special education needs and / or disabilities, make consistent and impressive progress. Some exceed their expected levels of progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. There is now further opportunity for children who are more able to think and apply independent skills to their learning in a wider range of tasks.



Teachers enthusiastically take up the school vision that everybody can learn. They have secure subject knowledge, in part because leaders invest in training and professional development. They are focused on improving outcomes for all pupils, especially for disadvantaged pupils. Monitoring, assessment and analysis of pupils' progress is consistent and leads to appropriately targeted interventions. Pupils with special educational needs make at least expected progress and arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils are effectively supported in their learning by adults. A range of strategies are used effectively to promote excellent attitudes to learning. Pupils are frequently affirmed and rewarded for their efforts. Teachers in all key stages have high expectations and plan challenging and focused learning activities. Targeted questioning is used very well to assess understanding, monitor progress, and reinforce the learning objective. As a result, pupils are excited and engaged and demonstrate very

positive attitudes to their learning. There is excellent provision across the school for pupils to learn about other faiths.

Leaders and managers have a strong and highly effective partnership that ensures religious education is a particular strength of the school. This reflects its position as the core of the curriculum in this Catholic school. Educating the whole person is based on their belief 'that the human and the divine are inseparable and every child should reach their full potential'. Governors are experienced and have a deep understanding of the importance of teaching the faith in a creative and enjoyable manner. They know the school well and are fully informed through their visits and reports and through the link governor and religious education committee. They meet with the head teacher regularly to review steps to further progress. The head teacher demonstrates strong and knowledgeable leadership. She is ably supported by senior staff and a subject leader who is highly effective and extremely supportive of teachers. There are regular training sessions and informal discussions that ensure teachers continue to develop subject knowledge and expertise in the classroom. She keeps up to date through her links at Diocesan level and other schools, for example with moderation and sharing good practice.

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## Collective worship

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

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

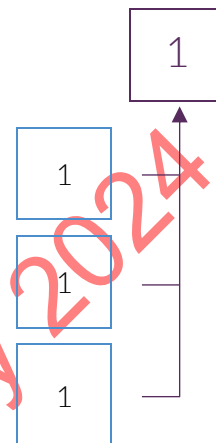
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

#### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

#### Leadership

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



Prayer and liturgy engage all pupils and inspire them to reflect and pray individually and as a school community. Pupils pray very respectfully and with great reverence. Their response is heartfelt. Pupils understand why they pray and do so happily, evidenced by assemblies and other occasions when they pray, for example in class or on their own in the prayer garden. Pupils appreciate the diverse opportunities to pray. They all know and join in the five-finger prayer and the rosary. They reflect silently and sing beautifully. Pupils are at ease when offering their own intentions. Pupils are used to preparing and leading times of prayer acts of worship. They enjoy the opportunities to prepare and lead prayer and assemblies acts of worship, irrespective of their faith. The key stage 2 assembly was totally pupil-led. Pupils confirmed that they not only prepare and lead assembly, but that every class is given the opportunity to do so. They recognise prayer is part of the daily rhythm of school life and is not an addition to the day. The manner in which pupils are comfortable praying together and offering intentions, demonstrates that living in a praying community has an impact on their spiritual development. They understand the value of prayer. Pupils happily compile the class prayer book and contribute to the Oscar Romero prayer station in the library.

Prayer and liturgy are a natural part of the life of pupils and teachers. There is a rich and well-planned programme of assemblies and religious celebrations that put prayer and liturgy at the heart of school life. There is a clear purpose, message and direction, with themes that reflect a deep understanding of the liturgical year. 'Go forth' is the message of prayer and liturgy. It reflects the school's ambition that the prayer and reading scripture inspire pupils to live their lives. For example, following an assembly, pupils were asked to go forth and write a letter to people wanting a Catholic school. Chaplaincy provision is greatly enhanced by the priest and deacon who are regular and valued visitors. Pupils speak warmly about the many prayers and assemblies because they offer highly effective spiritual experiences. They understand the need to pray. The prayer garden and the Oscar Romero prayer station are much valued resources. They reflect the deeply prayerful vision the school has for the pupils to talk with God in their own way. Pupils proudly show them to visitors and confirm they use them regularly.

Prayer and liturgy are an integral part of each day because leaders and managers are clearly committed to the provision of highly effective and spiritual liturgical celebrations. They articulate a deep understanding of their role as Catholic leaders and fully embrace their vocation serving in a Catholic school. As a result, prayer is central to being with God in many ways throughout the day. Governors know the school well. They monitor the provision for prayer and liturgy thorough regular visits to discuss provision and by participating in assemblies and Masses. They demonstrate a profound understanding that prayer in all its forms is the foundation of creating a genuine prayerful community. The purposeful way in which leaders and governors fulfil their role provides a highly effective support to staff and pupils. This can be further strengthened by focussed consideration of improvements in the self-evaluation process. The head teacher is passionately committed to growing a family of prayer. She works well with governors and is well supported by staff. Pupils witness models of excellent practice. Leaders and governors fully support parents as the first educators. Parents speak very highly of the school and confirm that they are invited to join whole school and class Masses.

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## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	118767
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8873732
Full postal address of the school	St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School, Romany Road, Rainham, Gillingham, ME8 6JH
School phone number	01634234677
Head teacher	Vicki Gallagher
<b>Chair of Governors</b>	Clare Clark
School Website	<a href="http://www.stthomascanterbury.org.uk/">www.stthomascanterbury.org.uk/</a>
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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	10 November 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Damian Fox  
Patrina Begley

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