



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

120 Knoll Drive, Stivichall, Coventry, CV3 5DE

Inspection dates 2nd – 3rd June 2015
Reporting Inspector Mrs Bernadette O'Shea

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	436 (including Nursery)
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mr James Colby
Telephone number	024 76 849910
E-mail address	admin@st-thomasmore.coventry.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	January 2010
DFE School Number	331/3422
Unique Reference Number	103723

Headteacher Mrs Mary Wilson

Previous inspection: 2

This inspection: 1

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by 1 Diocesan Inspector.
- The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self evaluation of religious education (RE) and Catholic life.
- To validate the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspector observed 3 full RE lessons with the headteacher, SLT member and/or RE subject leader.
- The inspector completed a work scrutiny and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time.
- Meetings were held with the chair of governors, staff, and parish priest.
- The inspector observed a prayer service and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in RE, the presentation of the Catholic life of the school, and pupils' behaviour.
- Other documents such as RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals were read alongside the self-evaluation.

Information about the school

- St Thomas More is a larger than average Catholic primary school with a two form intake serving the parish of St Thomas More in Coventry. There are 436 pupils on roll including the nursery.
- St Thomas More serves a mixed area of housing and social need.
- The number of Catholic pupils is currently 63%.
- The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is 38%.
- The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is average as are the numbers with special needs and/or disabilities.
- Attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average overall.

Main Findings

- St Thomas More School judges its collective worship, Catholic life and RE to be outstanding. This judgement is based on the school's effective self-evaluation processes that have been validated during this inspection. As a result, the capacity for the school to build upon and maintain its outstanding provision is excellent.
- Self-evaluation for the teaching and learning of RE is outstanding. This is a reflection of the highly committed and dedicated leadership team, who are excellently led by the headteacher. They have clear and accurate processes and systems in place to ensure excellent outcomes for pupils' learning leading to outstanding levels of progress and attainment in RE. This was an area for development after the school's last inspection and the school now demonstrates excellent improvement with continued and sustained success.
- Improvement planning is robust, with regular reviews and feedback focusing on the progress of the key priorities of the school and their successful implementation.
- The parish and school work in close partnership thoroughly preparing the pupils for their journey of faith involving parents, carers and the community as integral parts of this process.
- Prayer experiences are both participative and reflective. Pupils are immersed in a community founded on teaching the Word, witness to the Word, worship, and the practical application of the Word, resulting in them being able to articulate clearly how Jesus and the Gospel relate to, and inform, their own lives. Pupils lead and manage prayer successfully demonstrating the very good progress the school has made in this area of improvement since the last inspection.
- The school is inclusive of all irrespective of gender, ethnicity, ability or disability, culture, faith or socio-economic background providing clear evidence that the school lives out their mission statement "to learn and grow as God's holy people"

Catholic Life and Collective Worship

- St Thomas More school community uses the Catholic life and collective worship aspects of their school as the core drivers for school development planning. This leads to outcomes for the pupils that are deeply rooted in its Catholic life which is underpinned by clear values.
- Self-evaluation is very effective as this is done termly using action plans and whole school development plans derived from focused evaluation days. All staff are able to demonstrate that they have contributed to the growth of the school; clearly understanding the importance of regular reviews, and the need to respond to these, to progress with the excellent outcomes that are currently evident for the pupils in their care.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic life and collective worship are informed by, and focused upon a clear understanding of St Thomas More's mission "to learn and grow as God's holy people in an outstanding environment".

- A recent questionnaire, February 2015, demonstrated that 88% of parents are very happy with the school's Catholic education.
- Performance management objectives for all teaching staff and non-teaching staff relate to the promotion of the Catholic life of the school.
- All staff receive professional development which promotes and develops their understanding of the integral nature of the Catholic life of the school into all areas of the curriculum enabling a holistic approach towards the care, commitment and the guidance of the pupils in their care.
- The school makes effective use of the pupil interviews and pupil voice (invited to governors meetings) and ensures that these views are taken into account within the strategic planning and delivery of processes and practices.
- Collective worship is a key strength of the school with an absolute understanding, through excellent induction and CPD practices, of the shared expectations of what constitutes good practice explicitly displayed both in the Mission assemblies and classroom practice.
- The quality of collective worship is monitored regularly by the senior team and feedback is given empowering staff to analyse and reflect on their practice each time.
- Pupils take responsibility for organising collective worship, both for whole school and classes within their chaplaincy role. This regular commitment is evaluated by staff and pupils say that this helps them to “improve every time we do it”.

Governance

- The governors hold school leaders to account for sustaining and improving the Catholic life of the school. The headteacher shares and evidences this in the headteacher's reports. Governors' minutes reflect the outcomes of both monitoring and evaluation.
- There is strong commitment from governors regarding their involvement in the school development planning, monitoring and evaluation which is reflected in their participation in a school improvement planning day, with the senior team. This is organised on an annual basis and leads to a fuller and greater understanding for all of the issues for all governors.
- The chair of governors displays a very determined and reverent commitment to the mission of the Church ensuring that the school provides a rich, broad, balanced curriculum with spiritual, moral, cultural, vocational and social development featuring as key priorities.

Religious Education

- Teaching is consistently highly effective in enthusing pupils and ensuring that they learn extremely well. All teaching observed was consistently good with a high percentage of outstanding practice. Where this was most evident was the teachers' ability to enable pupils to see the relationship between the Scripture being studied and the meaning to their life and that of others in the world. Year 5 pupils were being asked to explore, discuss and relate to “inner transformation” and “outer transformation” when they explored the Pentecost theme. Year 1 pupils, working on the same theme, could articulate how the Holy Spirit could help them through the use of some important symbols used by the Catholic Church: one boy pointed to the dove and said “the dove

reminds me of my granddad.... because I don't have to worry about him any more I know he will be at peace”.

- Senior leaders monitor and evaluate religious education thoroughly, leading to their making highly reliable judgements that progress and learning in RE are outstanding and attainment is high.
- The subject leader monitors and evaluates the RE with rigour and challenge. Clear progress can be evidenced in the pupils' work as a result of monitoring. The use of challenge thinking skills since April 2015 has raised the thinking levels and application of thought immensely resulting in sophisticated and well thought out explanations about their faith from pupils particularly in upper Key Stage 2. This has made a striking impact on the quality of learning in RE.
- Moderation of work, both within the school and as a cluster of schools, ensures that the senior team have a focus on standards in St Thomas More on a regular basis. In addition, book scrutiny and tracking of pupil progress enables the subject co-ordinator to advise staff and implement changes effectively leading to a sustained culture of effective school improvement for RE. The school's judgement of outstanding for RE is supported by these processes and the evidence observed.
- The curriculum is regularly reviewed to ensure that it is structured around the revised Curriculum Directory and focuses on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, the teachings of the Catholic Church and the relationship between life and faith

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

- The school's internal data for RE attainment show that 95% of Key Stage 1 and 90% of Key Stage 2 are working at or above age related national and diocesan expectations. The school has worked considerably hard to narrow the gap between all pupils and disadvantaged pupils demonstrating a high degree of success particularly at the end of Key Stage 2. As a result of this focus, the school has also been able to balance the boy/girl end of year outcomes so as to ensure that boys are not behind the girls in their levels of attainment and progress.
- Both formative and summative assessments, as well as unit evaluations, are carried out by the teachers and this is used to inform future planning and learning needs on a short and long term basis. Marking is of a high standard and furthers pupils' learning and depth of understanding.
- At least 10% of curriculum time is dedicated to the teaching of RE in the classroom. The RE curriculum used is “Learning and Growing as People of God” which follows the Archdiocesan guidelines for the provision of religious education and therefore fulfils the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools.
- Family life and sex education is delivered in line with the teachings of the Catholic Church using the Archdiocesan scheme. The school, in conjunction with its cluster schools, has recently reviewed their policy and content of family life education. Resulting changes will be implemented in the new academic year.

¹ As the quality of the school self evaluation has been affirmed, the judgements in this section of the report conform to those of the school.

- The sacramental programmes are well developed and are reviewed by governors, senior leadership team, staff, parents and pupils. Parents praise the sacramental programmes finding them “very useful and informative”.
- Parents value the work of the school considerably and comment that the Catholicity of the school is “integral in all they do”. They were also very keen to point out how caring the school is towards their children. Their extremely positive comments about the pastoral care, social, moral and spiritual guidance of the school further supports the school’s evaluation of outstanding in their provision for spiritual, moral and vocational development.
- Collective worship is of high quality and a strong partnership exists between the parish and school. The parish priest visits the school regularly supporting the pupils’ learning in the classroom when requested as well as the development of their prayer life and liturgy.
- Pupils’ behaviour is exemplary. They are very proud of their school and the work they do. Pupils are able to describe the work they do for charity with interest and enthusiasm: examples include raising money for CAFOD and Mary’s Meals. They demonstrate an excellent understanding of the British Values underpinned by their very secure understanding of the Gospel Values taught across the school at all times. Pupils fully understand the importance forgiveness plays in living as a follower of Jesus.

Recommendations

- Further embed the monitoring and evaluation of Catholic life through ensuring that all staff and pupils are involved and engaged in the evaluation of Masses, liturgies, assemblies and prayer services becoming critical friends and boosting their evaluative skills. Ensure these evaluations are recorded regularly.
- Consolidate the newly introduced “challenge thinking skills” questions that have been thoroughly evident since Easter 2015 in all books and lessons observed, to deepen and clarify pupils’ understanding of the meaning of what they have learnt in the scripture studied and ensure this is embedded as part of rigorous school policy.
- Ensure that the newly formed mission and strategy governors’ committee is focused on a thorough self-evaluation of the school with clear criteria for their foci and accountability regarding Catholic life and RE teaching.



June 2015

Diocesan Education Service,
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Dear Parents and Carers

Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, 2-3 June 2015

I am writing this letter to share with you the findings of the diocesan inspection of your children's school. Diocesan inspection now explores in detail the school's own view of itself as expressed in its self-evaluation. For this reason, much of the report is more technical than used to be the case. You are still entitled to have a copy of the full report should you want one and it will be available on the school website or by request from the school office.

St Thomas More is a school with an outstanding Catholic ethos. The headteacher and her senior leadership team lead with clarity and vision ensuring that the pupils in their care are receiving excellent RE and Catholic life provision. Together with the governors, they have evaluated their school with a deep commitment towards improving on previous best. They have implemented rigorous strategies to ensure that both the delivery of lessons and participation in collective worship is at its highest. Catholic life and collective worship are strengths of the school. The children display, at age appropriate levels, a wide and deep knowledge and understanding of Catholic beliefs, teaching and sources, celebration and ritual, social and moral practices and way of life as well as engagement with their own beliefs and values together with questions relating to meaning and purpose. Their participation in the lessons and collective worship planned and provided for by the teachers is exemplary, demonstrated by very attentive listening, lively discussions and carefully thought out answers to questions as individuals, in pairs and groups. Standards in RE are very high. Almost all pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are working at, or above national and diocesan expectations, with a large proportion exceeding them. The school has worked hard to narrow gaps in attainment between learner groups, that is pupils in receipt of pupil premium and some boys, and can demonstrate this with the 2015 outcomes. The school provides many opportunities for the pupils to "learn and grow as God's people" in their personal development provision and continually evaluate this effectively. Parents were unequivocal in their support of the school and the excellent education and pastoral care received.

We have recommended that the headteacher involves staff and pupils more in the evaluation of their own liturgies, that the school continues to embed the highly successful new initiative to develop and challenge the children's thinking skills, and that the newly formed mission and strategy governors' committee ensure they have clear criteria for their accountability regarding the Catholic life and teaching of RE in the school.

I would like to thank your children for their fantastic welcome and the continued courtesy shown throughout the inspection. A further thank you goes to the headteacher, her staff and governors and the parents interviewed.

Yours sincerely

Bernadette O'Shea
Diocesan Inspector