



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Monitoring Visit

ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Horse Shoes Lane, Sheldon, Birmingham, B26 3HU

Inspection date 24th November 2015
Reporting Inspector Tim Hughes

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	352
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mrs E McLoughlin
Telephone number	0121 743 3289
E-mail address	enquiry@sttomor.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	September 2010
DFE School Number	330/3349
Unique Reference Number	103441
Headteacher	Sister Susan Collins
Previous inspection:	1
This inspection:	1

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE





30th November 2015

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

Sister Susan
St Thomas More Catholic Primary School
Horse Shoes Lane
Sheldon
Birmingham
B26 3HU

Dear Sister Susan

Section 48 Monitoring inspection: 24th November 2015

Thank you for the welcome you, your staff and pupils gave to me when I inspected your school on 24th November 2015 and for the information you provided both before and during the inspection. I am grateful for the time given by all including the parish priest 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, the chair of governors, the subject leader for RE, and pupils. I attended the whole school Mass, observed 3 part lessons with the headteacher and looked at a sample of pupils’ written work. I visited a Year 4 RE Inspire Workshop in which pupils made their own Jesse Trees. I was accompanied by pupils on a learning walk around the school and grounds. 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’s judgement that the Catholic life and religious education are outstanding is accurate and securely evidenced. This judgement is based on sound and rigorous procedures of monitoring and consultation. The outstanding Catholic life comes from the deeply held faith commitment of the head teacher, senior leaders and all members of staff working together to ensure that Christ is at the centre of the school life. The school leaders’ determination to involve all members of the school community in reflecting upon the school’s provision, has enabled the process of self evaluation to enhance the mission of the school and ensure that the pupils find meaning in their lives through forming a relationship with God, which is rooted in the teachings of the Catholic church.

The school leaders have evolved in the way in which they judge the school’s provision and outcomes in Catholic life and RE. They have conscientiously set up regular and comprehensive systems, which provide opportunities to formally monitor religious practice and have created a climate which promotes a flowing dialogue about the effectiveness of the mission of the school.

The governors hold the senior school staff to account by requiring that they are regularly informed of the quality of the Catholic life of the school and how it may be enhanced, adapted and improved. During regular governing body meetings they will scrutinise the content of the headteacher’s and RE leader’s reports, taking in the detail and making judgements and observations about on-going developments. Additionally, governors join learning walks around the school to view, first hand, the elements of the school’s spiritual life, which are influencing the pupils’ understanding of faith, their engagement with the Gospels and their active prayer life.

The parish priest is link governor for RE and he undertakes more specific monitoring, which includes work scrutinies and lesson observations. He has regular liaison meetings with the RE subject leader and headteacher, in which he is able to make judgements about the standards and the vibrancy of the



Catholic life. The results of these appraisals are discussed with the pupils and staff and then brought to governing body deliberations during the annual school development planning process. The parish priest visits the school each week and consults with class teachers on the readings, prayers and themes of the Mass. This established routine allows him to both appraise the quality of the Catholic life of the school and to ensure that his celebration of the weekly Mass is consistent with the liturgical and spiritual themes being delivered to the pupils in school. An effective opportunity for monitoring the school's impact on the lives of its pupils is through the Legion of Mary. The parish priest together with members of the Legion will visit the households of a number of the families and in turn receive feedback from parents on how the school is engendering the children's relationship with God. This is yet another mechanism by which the governors are informed of the school's work.

The commitment of the governors to having a presence in the spiritual life of the school is evident and has led to a consistent and robust understanding of the methods and approaches to faith used by the staff. For example governors are in regular attendance during all celebrations of Mass and other school led liturgies. They provide informal feedback to both staff and governors and can comment upon the effectiveness of the school's provision, as well as providing opinions as to how developments would lead to further improvement.

Monitoring, review and development are well established, effective and consistent processes used by the school staff in appraising and improving the provision of Catholic life. The resulting evidence of conducting several detailed audits – the Jesuit Institute, the Diocesan SMVSC and the Pupils and Catholic Life Audits – demonstrates that the school staff have the co-ordinated, collective ability to develop the pupils' participation in the Catholic life of the school. The strength of the monitoring undertaken by the staff is also confirmed in the way that new initiatives, such as the establishment of Fairtrade activities and the greater links with the parish, have now become embedded in the cycle of the academic year.

The views of the pupils have been strategically included in self evaluation. In the course of the past two years the school leaders have established a 'Catholic Life Group' predominantly comprising pupils. The group has been proactive in composing and administering a Catholic life questionnaire and conducting an audit of prayer focus areas. The results of this authoritative, pupil led monitoring have directly influenced the school development plan and provide sturdy evidence of the effectiveness of monitoring at all levels at St. Thomas More Catholic Primary School.

The structure and cycle of the school development plan (SDP) places Catholic life and RE at the very front of the school leaders' thinking. The governors and school staff work in a detailed and coordinated manner to collate all of the strands of evidence and bring them to bear when determining targets for improvement. For example, in the SDP 2015 the governors assessed the need to work more closely with other schools in the diocese and forge greater global links in order to be a more outward looking community and strengthen the school's confidence in sharing the qualities identified through self evaluation.

The outstanding monitoring of the prayer life and collective worship throughout the school provides a reliable picture of the significant impact that all acts of worship have on the mission and ethos of the school. The self evaluation process undertaken by all involved, confirms that the celebration of the Eucharist and prayer are at the heart of the school. There is clear evidence of the active participation of the pupils and the enthusiasm and joy they demonstrate in all aspects of worship.

Religious Education

The tracking of pupil achievement in RE, the outcomes of the school's sturdy procedures for monitoring teaching, the book trawls and moderation of work all confirm the school's own appraisal that the provision of RE is outstanding.

The RE leader maintains detailed and informative records of achievement, which not only provide a picture of pupil progress from the baseline entry levels at reception to the final end of key stage 2 attainment, but also are clear in identifying the specific needs of key groups. For example the governors were recently able to examine the specific needs of the upper key stage 1 boys and sanction interventions to support their learning and progress.

The observation of teaching is shared, regular and organised to take account of all aspects of the liturgical year. The outcomes of these observations are fed in to staff training with the strongest



elements of RE teaching being modelled to improve performance. The effectiveness of this strategy is clearly identifiable in the quality of the teaching, which is never less than good with most being outstanding. Comprehensive documentation accompanies these observations so that individual teachers and their support staff colleagues are given written feedback to use as a tool for development and for the governors to have authoritative reports to include in their school development planning discussions.

The scrutiny of pupils' work occurs twice per year providing the opportunity to assess pupil progress over time. The senior staff explore the comparison of standards in RE to other core subjects. They note the relative quality of the work and examine how the pupils are responding to the values underpinning many of the curriculum activities in RE; here the richness of the pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational development is clearly evident. This detailed analysis allows the planning of RE to be targeted to greater achievement and the deeper understanding of Gospel values.

Pupil discussions are seen as crucial to monitoring RE. The governors and school staff take account of pupils' views through formal questionnaires and informal conversations during learning walks. This evidence is expanded by the views of the pupil membership of the Catholic Life Group.

As the school increases in size the school leaders are developing their capacity to support this incremental growth through more finely tuned self evaluation procedures. For example the governors and senior staff are conscientious in working with and supporting more recently appointed staff. The views of new teachers and their aspirations to maintain the outstanding provision in RE are considered and both time and resources are given to secure high quality standards and performance.

The commitment of the staff and governors at St Thomas More Catholic primary School is evident in the reliable and accurate process of monitoring and self-evaluation. Comprehensive monitoring is seen as integral and necessary to the development of school improvement plans. The frequency and rigour of their examination of their own provision involves the whole school community- the senior leadership team, staff, pupils, parents and governors. Lesson observations, learning walks, book trawls, pupil discussions, audits, performance management, tracking and analysis of data are methodically undertaken, clearly documented and have led to the school consistently maintaining outstanding Catholic life, collective worship and religious education.

Yours sincerely

Mr T J Hughes
Diocesan Inspector