



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection Report

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Part of the Dominic Barberi Multi Academy Company
Oxford Road, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 1EA

Inspection dates: 18th – 19th June 2018
Lead Inspector: Malcolm Tipping

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS: **Requires Improvement**

Catholic Life: Good

Religious Education: Requires Improvement

Collective Worship: Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection: *Outstanding*

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

- Leaders, governors and staff are highly ambitious and passionate about the Catholic Life of the school. As a result, the behaviour of staff and pupils reflect the Gospel values.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge in Religious Education. Teachers new to Catholic schools are very well supported by the subject leader. However, Religious Education lacks sufficient challenge for pupils, especially for the more able.
- Collective Worship is integral to the life of the school and it has developed very well over the last two years. This improvement is partly due to the effective and robust monitoring of worship by senior leaders.

This is not yet Good because:

- The recommendations from the Section 48 monitoring visit, regarding the pupils understanding of vocation, has not been fully addressed.
- In lessons, some pupils demonstrate a lack of motivation to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills as learners.
- Work in Religious Education is not challenging enough for many pupils, especially the more able.
- Teachers do not always use assessment for learning opportunities to ensure that all pupils make good progress in every lesson. This is particularly true for the more able learners.

- Leaders do not ensure that the monitoring of Religious Education is rigorous, evaluated or leads to specific actions in school development planning.

FULL REPORT

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop a long-term plan for monitoring the provision for Religious Education and Catholic Life in school. Ensure outcomes from monitoring are analysed and evaluated, to fully inform school development planning.
- Ensure that the school's best practice in assessment for learning and feedback mechanisms to pupils are consistent across all classes.
- Improve the quality of work in Religious Education and ensure that both staff and pupils value this work appropriately.
- Ensure that pupils have a secure understanding of vocation.
- Provide training for school leaders in planning and delivering effective Collective Worship.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the Catholic Life of the school.	Good
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.	Good
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school.	Requires Improvement

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

- The principal is committed to the Church's mission in education. Members of staff are united with her in developing St Thomas More as a thriving Catholic community.
- Since the last Section 48 monitoring visit, the school's mission statement, 'With Christ we Achieve, Believe and Create', has been carefully crafted with the staff, pupils and governors to ensure a shared sense of belonging. This revised mission is now ready to be fully shared with the pupils, so that they can articulate and apply this sense of mission in their own lives.
- Class learning journals detail the very good work the school has completed on re-evaluating its mission. It is important that this body of work is now completed with the pupils' own thoughts about how they can live out this mission.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Staff model very good behaviours to pupils that reflect the Gospel values. As a result, the behaviour of pupils around school is very good. This is especially noticeable on the playground, where they care for and look after one another.
- The Catholic nature of the school is obvious as you enter the school site. Throughout the school there are dedicated areas of display, such as the Noah's Ark mural, which aim to encourage pupils to reflect on their learning. Currently, these

areas are underutilised. More could be done to make these areas interactive and focused on recent learning.

- When talking with inspectors, pupils said they would like a prayer garden and prayer stations around school, which would enable them to pray more informally outside of lesson time.
- Representatives of the pupils' school council and the Catholic ambassadors are very articulate about their involvement in the Catholic Life of the school. They understand their roles and responsibilities and enjoy having opportunities to plan assemblies with other children. Appropriate leadership opportunities could now be extended to all pupils. This would enable them to take a leading role in planning and delivering activities that promote the school's Catholic Life and mission.
- Pupils have the opportunity to support a variety of charities such as Fairtrade, Cafod and the Good Shepherd appeal. The school council, with the support of staff, decides which charities to support.
- Following on from the Section 48 monitoring visit, some work has been undertaken to help the pupils understand the meaning of vocation. Some pupils can talk about what vocation is, but they find it difficult to translate this understanding into their own lives. More work should be done to ensure that pupils have a secure understanding of vocation, so that they can articulate the universal call to holiness, the call to a way of life and how this influences our choice of work.
- The sacramental life of the school is supported by the parish priest who organises regular parish based catechesis for First Confession, Holy Communion and Confirmation. He also celebrates a weekly Mass with members of the school community in the parish church, which is located next to the school.
- The principal is rightly very positive about the work of the pupil Catholic ambassador team in Year 5. These pupils are very eloquent about, and committed to, the role they have in school.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school.

- Governors are highly ambitious and passionate about the Catholic Life of the school and are beginning to make a significant contribution to its strategic direction. They are now more involved in monitoring and ask strategic questions at governing body meetings. However, the impact of their involvement in the strategic monitoring cycle for Catholic Life needs to be further developed.
- The governors have provided a termly award, the Cup of Catholicity, for the pupil who best demonstrates a commitment to their faith and Catholic values. Pupils are very keen to live out these values and become recipients of this award.
- The principal and governors are actively addressing the issue of appointing practising Catholics as the two most senior leaders in the school. This will enable the school to meet all the requirements from the Bishops' Conference.
- The Dominic Barberi Multi Academy Company (DBMAC) supports the school through its strategic plans. However, the DBMAC Catholic Life committee has yet to produce a formal strategy of support specifically for Catholic Life.
- The principal monitors the Catholic Life of the school informally. She has a secure knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development. This monitoring now needs to be more structured so that governors, staff and pupils are included in the process. Monitoring should then be analysed and used to inform school development planning.
- The principal has grown a supportive team of staff, who are willing to develop the Catholic Life of the school. All staff, including those who are new to teaching in a

Catholic school, say that they have been fully welcomed into the faith life of the school. They are positive about the support and professional development they receive and are passionate about working in a Catholic school. One member of the senior staff said that, "Faith breathes life through the school", and that it is, "a privilege to be able to reflect with the children on their gifts from God. I personally love this!"

- The Religious Education subject leader has strongly supported staff new to teaching in a Catholic school. She has enabled staff to: observe prayer services to ensure a shared understanding of expectation; have training regarding the order of the Mass; visit the parish church to understand key artefacts and symbols and attend staff meetings on the ethos of the school.
- All staff have a Catholic Life performance management target which is distributed from the DBMAC.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of Religious Education.	Requires Improvement
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	Requires Improvement
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.	Requires Improvement
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.	Requires Improvement

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.

- The majority of pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons and are able to relate previous learning to new learning. They are able to work collaboratively in groups or independently and many demonstrate good behaviours for learning. However, some pupils, especially the more able, need to be further challenged. Pupils sometimes display poor motivation to learn and a lack of engagement.
- Many of the pupils, who spoke to the inspectors, felt that their Religious Education work was not challenging enough. They would like their lessons to have clearer explanations and to be, 'more fun'.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment in Religious Education is in line with diocesan expectations. However, an increase in pupils' extended writing in Religious Education would provide greater evidence for these teacher judgements.
- The quality of work in pupils' books lacks consistency and is often untidy. Expectations should be raised so that the quality of written work in Religious Education improves across school. This work needs to be valued more by staff and pupils.
- The amount of work in books and learning journals meets with diocesan expectations and there is a variety of activities and recording style. However, the amount and frequency of extended writing within Religious Education needs to be improved. This work should enable pupils to reflect on the demands of religious commitment in everyday lives.
- The learning journey folders across school are a very positive reflection of the variety of activities which take place during Religious Education lessons. They are beautifully presented and well looked after. The liturgical year and work on other

faiths are clearly evident. In these journals, pupils are able to pose thoughtful questions and show an understanding and interest in cultural and moral issues.

- Pupils have a reasonable understanding of key stories and events in the Bible. They are able to talk about the Old and New Testaments such as the creation story, Noah's Ark, Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac. Their understanding of the Gospel writers and their role in documenting the life of Jesus is less well developed.
- In the best lessons observed, teachers used assessment for learning opportunities and feedback mechanisms to structure questioning, so that progress within the lesson for all groups of learners was swift. Some other lessons lacked pace and teaching assistants were not used well to ensure impact for key individuals or groups across the whole of the lesson. Teaching observed in key stage 1 was more engaging, with a faster pace, resulting in better progress for all groups of learners.
- The Religious Education subject leader and principal should now ensure that the school's best practice in assessment for learning and feedback to pupils is consistent across all classes.
- Teachers new to school say that they are well supported in their understanding of the Religious Education curriculum. They have received formal and informal support from the Religious Education subject leader and are able to ask questions to improve their knowledge. They have been given opportunities to observe more experienced teachers model lessons for them.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

- The school meets the requirements of curriculum time as set out by the Bishops' Conference.
- The recommendations from the Section 48 monitoring visit have not been fully addressed. In particular, in conjunction with the leadership of the school, the governors should implement a strategic plan for the monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education.
- The Religious Education subject leader has very good knowledge of the curriculum and is passionate about her role. She has supported teachers new to the school with their planning and arranged suitable professional development for staff.
- The Religious Education subject leader has had a limited monitoring role. She has recently directed staff to record assessment data using a new method provided by the diocese. Although, there is analysis of this data it has not had enough impact on improving teaching and learning. Some moderation of work has taken place using samples of work from across the school.
- Leaders do not ensure that the monitoring of Religious Education is rigorous, evaluated and leads to specific actions on the school development plan. This should be addressed to ensure that the Religious Education action plan is specifically focussed on current areas for development, which have been identified through the analysis of recent data and monitoring.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The quality of Collective Worship.	Good
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.	Good
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	Good

**How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.**

- Collective worship at St Thomas More School is good and is improving.
- Pupils are mostly reverent and engaged during assembly and liturgy. They are exposed to and have knowledge of a variety of prayer experiences linked to the liturgical year and key themes such as vocation.
- Pupils enter the hall reverently for whole school assembly, demonstrating calm and orderly behaviour. They take part confidently and operate presentations successfully, so that other pupils can join in responses and sing.
- Pupils are familiar with prayer being led by a variety of adults. Some pupils are involved in planning and delivering liturgies in a variety of contexts such as Catholic ambassador assemblies, class liturgies and as part of whole school gatherings.
- Pupils in Year 5 are part of a chaplaincy team - the Catholic ambassadors. They plan and deliver, with support from adults, Collective Worship opportunities for other classes and help the principal organise whole school assemblies. As a result, these pupils are confident in presenting and sharing their faith through prayer.
- There is an established culture of prayer in school. The pupils know a number of traditional prayers including the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, and the Creed. In addition, there are opportunities for pupils to write prayers of thanks and forgiveness.
- When asked where they could take part in prayer, pupils were confident to tell inspectors that it could be done anywhere in school. They did, however, wish that more specific prayer stations could be placed around school.
- Mass is celebrated weekly for part of the school in the parish church. Whole school Masses take place between three and six times a year. A number of pupils act as altar servers for school Masses and parish Masses at the weekend.
- The school are actively seeking ways to increase the involvement of the parish priest in the chaplaincy provision for pupil.
- Acts of Collective Worship in class generally follow the gather, listen, respond, go-forth model. In the best of these class acts of worship, open prayer and inspirational music is used to enhance the spiritual nature of the worship. During the inspection, the prayer services in Early Years and Year 2 stood out as being quality experiences of worship.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

- Governors are rightly very proud of the development of Collective Worship over the last two years. Following more robust and effective monitoring of Collective Worship, the leadership of the school has invested time and resources to develop this area of school life.

- There is a more formal plan for regular monitoring of Collective Worship. This formalised process of monitoring and evaluation should now include both staff and pupils in the analysis of outcomes.
- Collective Worship is integral to the life of the school. School leaders have clearly promoted pupils leading Collective Worship. As a result, the Catholic ambassador team are particularly active in leading prayer with other pupils.
- The principal generally leads whole school acts of Collective Worship, supported by her senior team in her absence. With further training, this could now be formally distributed through the senior staff of the school. This would give pupils the opportunity of seeing them all as faith-filled leaders of worship on a more regular basis.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Unique reference number	139530
Local authority	Oxfordshire
<i>This inspection was carried out under canon 806 of Canon Law and under Section 48 of the 2005 Education Act.</i>	
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	225
Appropriate authority	Board of Directors
Chair	Sally Reckless
Principal	Breda Bowles
Telephone number	01865 373674
Website address	www.st-thomas-more.oxon.sch.uk
Email address	stthomasmore@dbmac.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 th June 2013

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- The school is an average sized primary school and serves the parish of St Thomas More, Kidlington and St Hugh of Lincoln, Woodstock.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 54%.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is significantly below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is significantly above the national average.
- Attainment on entry is below the national average.
- Since the last inspection the school has appointed a new principal and senior team.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors – Malcolm Tipping and Rebecca Nash.
- The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality and leadership of the school's provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- The inspectors observed teaching across five Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship.
- Meetings were held with the acting chair of governors, the Religious Education link governor, the principal, the Religious Education subject leader, the assistant principal, parish priest and newly appointed teachers to the school.
- The inspectors attended a whole school Collective Worship, three class-based liturgies and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in Religious Education, the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the school development plan, the Religious Education action plan, teachers' planning and learning journals.