

Report of the Denominational (Section 48) Inspection of
Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School
Park Lane, Peterborough, PE1 5JW

DFE No: 874/3378
URN: 110854

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Chair of Governors: Mrs Ann Morris

Headteacher: Mrs Anne-Marie McElhinney

Denominational Inspector:

Mrs W. Lashmar

Date of Inspection: 27th February 2014

Date and grade of previous inspection: October 2012. Grade 2

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DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL.

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School is a two-form entry primary school for pupils from 4 to 11 years. The school serves the parishes of St. Peter and All Souls, Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Luke's and takes pupils from across Peterborough. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. There are 410 pupils on roll, 61% of who are Catholic and 31% are of other world faith backgrounds. 17% of teachers and 55% of teaching assistants are Catholic. 90% of pupils speak English as an additional language. The school provides a breakfast and after school club. The school has been awarded its second Inclusion Charter Mark.

Key grades for inspection

1. Outstanding 2. Good 3. Requires Improvement 4. Unsatisfactory

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL.

Grade 2

St. Thomas More is a good Catholic school with several outstanding features. The rich diversity of faiths and cultural backgrounds are celebrated within the extremely strong Catholic identity permeating the life of the school. Pupils say, "In this school we have lots of different religions but we are taught to respect things that are different and celebrate things that are the same". Pupils thrive in this nurturing, cohesive community ensuring that relationships and the behaviour of pupils within the school are very good. The school provides well for the wide range of different pupil needs. There is a great variety of out of school activities, which are enthusiastically supported. The committed leadership of the headteacher, RE leader and governors continue to inspire a strong spiritual purpose throughout the school and prayer and worship are of central importance.

The RE subject leader and the headteacher have established systematic strategies for monitoring teaching and pupils' learning. The areas of improvement from the last inspection have been addressed through training and a strong commitment from staff. The school's capacity for continued improvement is very good.

What the school needs to do to improve further?

- Develop systematic moderation of assessment judgements to ensure consistency across the school.
- Embed the RE tracking system across the school to ensure pupils' good progress is sustained in all areas.
- Continue to build pupils' skills and extend their ability to independently organise and plan whole school worship.
- Ensure that the reporting systems following the monitoring of the Catholic life of the school are as formalised and systematic as those for religious education, so that leaders and governors can be effective and precise in evaluating and implementing improvement, to ensure the excellent outcomes for pupils are sustained.

PUPILS. How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups.

Grade 2

The Catholic life of the school greatly benefits the pupils. There is a strong sense of family and community. Pupils thrive in the cultural diversity and inclusive ethos of the school. One pupil said, "This school gives you belief and encourages you to have faith in God. It teaches you to believe in yourself and build unity and friendship with others and to have teamwork. We learn this from Jesus and the Bible and the adults show us how". Another pupil commented, "Our school is a special place because it encourages respect and there is no bullying". Pupils undertake responsibilities such as membership of the school council, becoming 'play leaders' and supporting those new to the school. Involvement in charity fundraising encourages a developing awareness for those in need. Pupils appreciate the caring attitude of staff and know their achievements are valued, " Teachers are really helpful and care about us". Pupils' views are sought through the School Council and interviews with teachers and senior staff. The headteacher is extremely astute in identifying talents and skills, and encouraging expertise amongst adults in the community, to the benefit of all pupils in the school.

During worship and prayer pupils listen attentively, respond appropriately, pray reverently and contribute thoughtfully. They know and use traditional prayers but also have opportunities to pray spontaneously. Pupils say they enjoy quiet reflection, singing, going to church, being in Mass and making their own prayers. The parish priest has an excellent working relationship with the school and regularly meets with the headteacher to plan a worship programme linked to the liturgical year, which includes Reconciliation and Stations of the Cross in Lent. Assemblies are also based on RE topics and a Christian 'value for the month'. Pupils are encouraged to make decisions and are given the responsibility of choosing and writing their own prayers. Classes have weekly prayer monitors who can organise class worship.

Pupils make good progress from their starting points, including pupils with English as an additional language. They achieve age appropriate levels of attainment and some exceed this. Standards of attainment are comparable to or exceed those in other core subjects in the school. Pupils say they enjoy RE better than some other subjects because, "We do a variety of things to help us learn, like art, drama, music, dance, discussing and writing. The subject

is fun". In lessons observed pupils were keen to learn, worked co-operatively and remained focussed. RE books show evidence of good curriculum coverage, with a variety of activities including prayer, opinion, description, art and drama. They are well presented with precise, helpful marking to which pupils are always expected to respond.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS. How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the school?

Grade 1

The school is welcoming and inclusive and works closely with the parish. The parish priest serves on the governing body and his support and advice is highly valued. The headteacher and governors are passionate about promoting the Catholic life of the school. One governor remarked, "The school is 'living the faith'. As Jesus says, 'Love one another as I have loved you', there is a value on individuals here". Leaders and governors have a clear vision, which energises and inspires the whole school community. The Catholic Mission of the school and spiritual development of pupils are central and governors regard the headteacher as the 'custodian of spiritual life'. They retain the ethos of the school through monitoring and planning, which inform Performance Management objectives for both the headteacher and staff. Governors fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities. They are supportive, visit the school regularly and attend assemblies, Mass and other celebrations. Catholic Life is assessed through following the pupils' faith journeys, observing and talking to pupils, and 'feeling the spirituality of the community'. Governors report their evaluations to the whole governing body and are kept informed of termly progress in the headteacher's report. Reporting back on Catholic life now needs to be as formalised and systematic as that for religious education. The school nurtures partnership with parents by inviting them to assemblies, involving them in assertive mentoring, communicating through newsletters and the website as well as using many opportunities to talk to them informally. Pupils show care and concern for others by the respect they give each other and the support offered to local, national and international charities such as local organisations that feed the homeless, McMillan Cancer support, and a fund to build a school kitchen in Malawi. The school has good links with other schools and the local community.

Enthusiasm and drive from the headteacher and the RE leader, together with the determination of the governing body have ensured systems are in place for monitoring and analysing findings for the provision of religious education. The RE governor, headteacher and RE subject leader work closely together to scrutinise data, discuss findings from monitoring activities such as lesson observations, work scrutiny and governors' learning walks. This gives direction for the RE action plan. Systems are in place for reporting back to ensure governors are fully informed of strengths and areas for development in religious education. The introduction of the 'Come and See' RE programme has enhanced teachers' subject knowledge and their confidence in its delivery. A consultant from the Nottingham diocese has provided quality training and there is a clear message to all that religious education is a core area of learning and therefore a high priority. A generous budget ensures that RE is well resourced, with equality to the allocation for other core subjects.

PROVISION. How effective is the provision for Catholic education: Grade 2

Worship and prayer permeate the school day and there are many opportunities for pupils and staff to pray together in different forms of worship. These take place in a variety of settings including the distant parish church and the secondary school chapel. Pupils are at ease saying formal prayers for example, 'Hail Holy Queen' said in breakfast club, as well as using their own words. Assemblies and other forms of worship are well attended by parents. A calm atmosphere is created for prayer and reflection and quality resources used, for example, visual stimuli, prayer tables, dance and song were utilised in a sharing assembly led by younger pupils. A Key Stage 2 assembly observed was based on WW1 reflections following a visit to the theatre and included a Wilfred Owen poem, Silent Night sung in English and German and pupils' own prayers about remembrance, unity, peace and forgiveness. The parish priest makes a significant contribution to the sacramental life of the school and pupils have the opportunity for Reconciliation during Advent and Lent.

Overall, lessons are good and some are outstanding. In the most effective lessons thorough planning and careful differentiation based on assessment and experiences of pupils secure purposeful learning. High quality questions challenge and stimulate pupils' thinking and motivating tasks are chosen which engage, inspire and develop learning. For example, Y6 say they understand bible stories better after role-play. Groups making posters for community and world peace said the activity was "teaching us to share, be patient, be kind and to love your enemies even though they might be nasty to you". All types of assessment have been reviewed and 'Assertive Mentoring' is now established. Marking is precise, affirms achievement, and challenges pupils to improve their work. Every pupil has a progress record based on *National RE Levels of Attainment* which follows them throughout their school life. Pupils self-evaluate and in one book a pupil wrote, 'I am good at giving reasons for the way different people react to different things...I want to improve my opinion for holiness'. These developments enable pupils to make good progress. Teachers now need to moderate assessment judgements to ensure consistency across the school.

The quality of the curriculum is good and meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference with 10% of curriculum time used for religious education. The school has invested in the 'Come and See' RE programme which has impacted on pupils' learning. Teachers are more confident and it has helped pupils develop faith specific vocabulary, like resurrection and saviour or altar and chalice, for example. Other World Faiths are studied. Teachers use Scripture to encourage the pupils to listen, read and think about what it means for them in their lives. In a KS2 class a reading from Hebrews stimulated some discussion about what faith is. One pupil suggested it was 'trust and belief'. Religious education is enhanced through links with other curriculum areas, engaging displays and thought provoking prayer tables, visits such as the Y6 retreat day and the use of expertise like the parish priest, Fr. Paul, who visits the classrooms regularly, to supplement learning or if requested in response to questions from pupils, for example, why do we have Advent candles? Teaching assistants are an excellent resource with expertise and commitment to the RE programme and Catholic life of the school. The curriculum contributes well to the excellent spiritual and moral development of the pupils.

The inspector wishes to thank the headteacher and all members of the school community for their very warm welcome and for contributing to a very interesting visit.

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Letter to pupils explaining the findings from the Diocesan Inspection

24th March 2014

Dear Pupils,

Diocesan Inspection of St. Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Peterborough.

Thank you for making me so welcome at your school. Thank you to all those pupils who spoke to me and answered my questions, especially the groups from Year 2 and Year 6. I was very interested to hear what you had to say about your school. I enjoyed being present at your assemblies and sharing your Religious Education lessons. Well done to everyone involved.

Here are some of the things I especially liked:

- The strong Catholic ethos of your school centred in prayer and worship.
- You treat each other fairly and show respect to everyone in your school. You are well cared for by your teachers.
- The school provides very good opportunities for you to develop personally, spiritually and morally.
- You work hard and respond thoughtfully to teachers' comments. You know your strengths and what to do to improve.

I have asked your teachers and governors to make sure that they regularly check and keep improving the Catholic Education in your school so that it is the best it can be. I think you would learn from planning and preparing more of your own whole school acts of worship. I have also asked your teachers to make sure that when you are assessed they all agree on the standards you have achieved and to make sure they track your progress carefully so that you continue to achieve well.

Thank you again for your help. I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs J.W. Lashmar
Diocesan Inspector