ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY
ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Hadfield Street  Higher Broughton  Salford  M7 4XG

The Inspection judgements are:

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<th>Description</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Explanation of the Grades</th>
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<td>Overall effectiveness of the school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 = Outstanding</td>
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<td>Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school</td>
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<td>2 = Good</td>
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<td>The quality of Collective Worship</td>
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<td>3 = Satisfactory</td>
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<td>Achievement and standards in Religious Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 = Inadequate</td>
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<td>The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education</td>
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<td>The quality of the Religious Education curriculum</td>
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The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Thomas of Canterbury is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the parish of St. Thomas of Canterbury in inner city Salford, an area of considerable social and economic disadvantage. There is a high incidence of unemployment, deprivation, crime and violence in the area around the school. The church is situated close to the school. The age range of pupils is 3 to 11 and the indicative admission number is 30. There are 238 pupils on role of whom 179 are from Catholic backgrounds. Two thirds of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, the largest groups being African and those from Eastern Europe. The number of pupils learning English as an addition language is three times the national average. 96 pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and 60 pupils have been identified as having special education needs. 1 learner has a statutory statement of special educational need. Of the 10 full time teachers 8 (80%) are Catholics and 3 hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies with 4 currently studying for this qualification.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Thomas of Canterbury’s is an outstanding school. It has a strong Catholic ethos. Leadership and management ensure a welcoming, caring, happy and stimulating environment in which all aspects of the pupils, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Teachers are well supported by the good deployment of the teaching assistants, administrative staff and site manager. Staff at all levels, including secretarial, janitorial and dinner staff are positive role models for pupils and are dedicated, committed and hardworking. They provide strong positive role models demonstrating a Catholic vision of education whilst embracing pupils of diverse faiths and cultures without barriers. Learners are well behaved and have excellent manners. They have good attitudes to their learning and respond well to their enthusiastic teachers. The Religious Education curriculum is well planned and further enhanced by the provision for prayer and worship and the quality of relationships. The school is firmly at the heart of the parish it serves and jointly leads the Sacramental Programme with parishioners.

Improvement since the last inspection

The last Section 5 inspection in November 2008 judged the school to be outstanding. Leadership and management have maintained this standard ensuring that all staff are supported in the delivery of Religious Education and prayer and worship. The school has achieved the following awards including Active mark and the Quality Mark for Basic Skills. In July 2009 the school was awarded the Leading Aspects Award for its work with EAL children and is a “hub” school for English as an additional language within the Greater Manchester Challenge. It is used as a training venue for Pie Corbett – a scheme for improving children’s writing – also for assessing children’s progress and, because of its outstanding status, for Early Years and Foundation practice. The premises have undergone extensive alterations and decoration with the extension to the foyer, office and headteacher accommodation providing excellent safeguarding facilities for pupils and staff. The After School Wrap-around Care Club is very well attended. St. Thomas of Canterbury is rightly proud to have been awarded the Most Improved School in England status based on Key Stage 2 results over the past 3 years.

Capacity to improve

The school’s self-evaluation is thorough, objective and realistic. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is well supported by his deputy, management team and the hardworking staff. The parish priest and governors also give excellent support. There is a genuine commitment to ensuring that all involved in the school community recognise the important part they play in its future development. Capacity to improve is therefore outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

There are no significant issues to address. The headteacher and governors are fully committed to continue to build upon their success and develop each initiative to ensure the realisation of the Mission Statement that “We are a Catholic school and welcome all into our vibrant community. We strive to make Jesus the centre of our lives…”
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The Mission Statement, reviewed by all stakeholders in 2008, permeates all aspects of the life of the school and is prominently displayed, with the children’s version, throughout the premises and fronts all documentation. The success of St. Thomas of Canterbury is due chiefly to the exceptional team spirit pervading the school which enjoys strong leadership by the dynamic headteacher and dedicated deputy who is also the co-ordinator for Religious Education. They enjoy the wholehearted support of the hardworking staff and active governing body. The school benefits to the full from a knowledgeable and supportive parish priest together with a governing body, which discusses and revises Religious Education policies on a regular basis. A shared vision for the ongoing development of the school as a Catholic community is reflected in governor appointments of committed Catholic teachers where possible and by their funding for teachers to study for the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. The parish priest, who is the chair of Governors and the designated governor for Religious Education, visits school daily demonstrating excellent knowledge and understanding of school life. The headteacher and governors work well together as an effective team. They ensure that all pupils, regardless of race, religion, ability or social standing, have equal opportunities in a cohesive, supportive and safe environment which is accessible to pupils with a very wide range of additional needs. The school is firmly at the heart of the parish is serves and enjoys close, harmonious links with other schools in the neighbourhood and further afield. The leadership and management of the school provide a warm, welcoming haven for all, especially those who are traumatised, disadvantaged or have sought refuge. They ensure that the safeguarding of all who work and learn therein is paramount.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is outstanding. Prayer and worship throughout the school are carefully planned, organised, celebrated and recorded. They are a key feature of the school and pervade all aspects of school life. They are underpinned by a clear education policy which includes prayer and worship thus ensuring rich and meaningful opportunities for learners to develop their prayer life. Whole school Masses are celebrated at the beginning and end of each term, on Holy Days and special occasions. These celebrations are planned and led by different classes on a rota system in order that all pupils have an opportunity to participate using music, drama, readings and singing. Assemblies and services reflecting the liturgical year are celebrated with the parish priest, parents and parishioners. The Year 5 assembly, led totally by the learners, during the inspection was based on Black History Month featuring the lives of Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King. This outstanding cross-curricular assembly included music, drama, readings, singing and prayers for peace and harmony to celebrate diversity and the school’s multi-cultural family. Present at the celebration were 30 pupils from a school exchange in Cornwall. No pupil is withdrawn from prayer and worship and all pupils fully participate. The singing during the assembly and the excellent Lenten Mass led by Year 3 learners was outstanding. The pupils sang with gusto.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school has assessed achievement and standards in Religious Education as good. Inspection evidence indicates that they are outstanding. On entry to Foundation Stage learners are well below national expectations especially in their personal, social and emotional development and their communication skills. In Foundation and Key Stage 1 they make excellent progress. They are able to express themselves confidently both verbally and in their recorded work. The Nursery children are aware of their place in the family of God, that He wants them to take care of themselves and others and of His beautiful world. Lower Key Stage 2 pupils are very familiar with bible stories, the liturgical year and the Sacraments. By the end of Key Stage 2 learners are able to debate the need for reconciliation and how this begins with the desire to change ourselves. They are able to explore the feelings of others by relating to and exploring incidents in their own lives. The older children have good factual knowledge of the Catholic Religion and are very familiar with the bible. All children are able to use and understand religious vocabulary and language relative to their age. Very clear strategies and systems are in place ensuring that this aspect of school life and curriculum has been prioritised in order that excellent standards have been achieved. All learners know the difference between right and wrong and are developing a strong sense of responsibility. The school and class councils, friendship and playground buddies have enhanced this. A number of local and worldwide charities are supported. Across the whole community there is a feeling of self-worth and self-esteem. Learners understand that they have a responsibility to protect God’s creation including respecting people of other faiths and cultures.
THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The inspector agrees with the school’s evaluation that the quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is outstanding. The teaching observed during inspection had been carefully planned with a clear focus leading to well-structured lessons incorporating a good range of activities with which to enthuse learners. All lessons are based on diocesan guidelines. Excellent resources have been purchased and are used effectively to enhance the learning process. Planning is consistent across the school and opportunities for collective worship are incorporated into this planning. Teachers and pupils make good use of information and communication technology in their lessons. Assessment has been fully implemented to evaluate teaching and learning. Pupil tracking and levelling have been introduced with plans to develop these further by using diocesan guidelines. The school’s marking policy is consistently applied. Teachers have high expectations and use a variety of approaches to meet the needs of all learners. Teaching assistants and the learning mentor provide very good support for learners requiring extra help. The church musician teaches singing and holds choir practices adding another excellent dimension to the pupils’ learning. Pupils have excellent attitudes to their learning and their behaviour is exemplary at all times. They listen attentively and are eager to ask and answer questions in a sensible manner showing a genuine enjoyment in their work co-operating well in pairs and groups. All teaching observed during the inspection was outstanding including the lesson in church with the parish priest.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. Religious Education has a high profile in the school both as a key element in school improvement and financial planning. At least 10% of teaching time is allocated to the subject. Diocesan guidelines are followed and supplemented by activities relating to the liturgical year. Teachers’ planning is thorough and, together with children’s learning, is monitored by the headteacher and the co-ordinator for Religious education who undertake lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils’ work. A significant number of pupils still arrive well into Key Stage 2, often with little or no English. However, through careful planning all children are receiving their entitlement with those children whose English is poor receiving a more practical Religious Education curriculum with extra assistance. The learning mentor supports families by his nurturing group and by home visits. An impressive range of extra curricular activities enhances the curriculum these include sports, science, ICT, Spanish, Art and cooking. There is a residential visit to Robin Wood, Todmorden for Key Stage 2 children. Community cohesion is promoted through links and exchange visits to other local schools including two Catholic schools in Walkden and Helmshore, a Church of England school in Trevithick, Cornwall and a school in Kenya. Religious Education has a high priority in school and, together with prayer and worship, features regularly in staff meetings. Religious practices and curriculum are under constant review. Appropriate feedback is given and acted upon by individuals and whole staff to ensure good quality teaching and learning. Curriculum Religious Education and prayer and worship are linked together to ensure that both knowledge and understanding and spiritual development are promoted to the full.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school has assessed the leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education as outstanding. Inspection evidence supports this judgement. The co-ordinator for Religious Education, who is also the deputy, has excellent knowledge of her subject, a clear vision for her role within the school and provides strong leadership and direction. She leads by example and keeps excellent records. This includes the use of monitoring and evaluation to determine and identify priorities for further development. The co-ordinator leads staff through regular staff meetings and continues her own professional development by attending diocesan courses and through the involvement of the diocesan teacher advisers. She is fully supported by the headteacher, staff, parish priest and governors. Governors are kept fully informed of developments in curriculum Religious Education and prayer and worship through written and verbal reports from the headteacher, the co-ordinator, the curriculum committee and by their regular visits to school. Resources for Religious Education and prayer and worship are plentiful. Excellent and attractive displays throughout the premises reflect the faith life of St. Thomas of Canterbury’s where Religious Education and prayer and worship have a high profile and where the headteacher, co-ordinator for Religious Education and the governing body take very seriously their roles in ensuring the catholicity of this diverse school.