



DIOCESE OF  
**SHREWSBURY**

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# **REPORT ON THE MONITORING INSPECTION OF OUTSTANDING SCHOOLS**

**St Thomas More Catholic High School, Crewe**

**URN: 139764**

**15<sup>th</sup> February 2017**

**Inspector – Mr J R Wilbraham**

The areas of focus in this monitoring inspection were :-

1. **OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS** - How well pupils achieve and enjoy learning in RE.
2. **LEADERS AND MANAGERS** – How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement of outcomes for pupils.
3. **PROVISION** – The quality of Collective Worship

This inspection confirms the School's self-evaluation which judges itself **outstanding** in all areas of its provision for Catholic Education. This is underpinned by other relevant data, documentation, observations and interviews.

## 1. OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

Outcomes for pupils in the school as a whole are high, with the school's overall *Progress 8* score of + 0.14 placing it first in Cheshire East. Results in Religious Education have consistently been among the best in the school, with grades A\*-C ranging from 81% A\*-C to 87%. A drop in results in 2016 is partly explicable in terms of change of grade boundaries but also of entry policy, with the whole cohort now being entered for full GCSE, whereas in the past a group of pupils were entered for an entry level certificate. The figure of 67% in 2016 rises to 76% when adjusted accordingly to compare like with like. Focus on Pupil Premium and EAL groups has resulted in positive value added outcomes, with EAL *Progress 8* producing a figure of +.83 (English + .44, Maths +.59) and SEN + 0.9. Progress indicators in the department show that progress from KS2 and KS3 end of key stage is good, as can be seen from the levels of progress. Some pupils make 5 levels of progress: 2016 – 12%, 2015 – 15.7%, 2014 – 21.2%.

At Key Stage 3, the diocesan scheme is followed, with adjustments to assessment and teaching methods to ensure preparation for the challenge of the new GCSE. The latest end of key stage reported levels indicated that 65% of pupils achieved level 6, with 9% achieving level 7. 13% were above target.

The standard of teaching throughout the department is consistently high. Leadership and management with effective monitoring for quality are highly effective. Resources and strategies provide stimulus and purpose for effective learning and teaching. Pupils are clear about targets and what they need to do to achieve them. Pupils engage with the subject and enjoy it and are prepared to say so, articulating their reasons for their positive attitude, while experiences within curricular Religious Education are carried beyond the classroom into the pupils' broader experiences of school life and beyond.

## 2. LEADERS AND MANAGERS

The Headteacher provides outstanding leadership and inspiration, and is supported by the Deputy and Assistant Heads, a very active and committed Governing Body, RE team and the other managers and staff of the school, who are deeply committed to the school's clearly declared values. There is palpable evidence of a unified approach and a shared vision, with the school's religious values embedded not only in policies and practices, but also in the consciousness and behaviours of the whole school community. The Headteacher and other leaders constantly and effectively monitor the development of these values and ensure their application to the whole life of the school. The system for paired lesson observations and rotation of linked team members ensures continuous challenge and freshness of approach.

Staff training, briefings and reflections provide focus on the school's mission. Regular and recent parental satisfaction surveys and the recent pre-inspection questionnaire provide positive evidence that the school lives out its values in its provision, ethos and culture.

### 3. PROVISION FOR COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Collective Worship and prayer are treated with the utmost importance as a vital component of the daily life of the school. The whole school community, staff and pupils alike, engage with this aspect of school life and treat it with respect. The strength of the Chaplaincy is the breadth of ownership and involvement, being delivered through a variety of coordinated channels, led and managed by the Head of RE, a parish priest and a staff governor, with active contributions from local clergy, along with the very effective involvement and ownership of pupils; (notably the *Utopia* and *Faith in Action* groups). A small 'sacred space' has been created and the Assembly Hall upgraded. Regular assemblies and liturgical events are well-planned and well-presented, and involve pupils in preparation and delivery, with the *Utopia* group providing a significant formative influence on the prayer and liturgy of the whole school community. This is further enhanced by the *Faith in Action* group, which extends the prayer life of the community into practical Christianity. Examples of this are the many activities and experiences such as the Bihar partnership, activities involving Christmas SVP hampers, *Operation Christmas Child*, an annual school mission, various retreats and 'Faith Days' for pupils and staff, all supported by stimulating images, murals (produced by pupils) and quotations which are displayed throughout the school. Daily form-time prayer is supported by themes and resources, including a pupil-produced prayer book, and makes effective use of the *Wednesday Word* programme of Gospel reflection. The worship and prayer activities reflect a clear indication of the school's commitment to its central values and mission and include the aspirations and needs of the pupils. Local priests lead the celebration of mass and liturgies for a variety of events such as welcoming new pupils or special feast days, and participate in a variety of other activities including 'Pupil Voice'. There are productive links with parishes and other schools in the area.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Outcomes for pupils, the provision for Catholic Education, leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school and the RE department are all confirmed by this inspection as **outstanding**. The values of the community are strongly evidenced throughout in terms of shared activities and relationships. Not only does the school strive for excellence in academic terms, but is able to ensure that this pursuit is genuinely inclusive in its provision for the education, welfare and spiritual well-being of pupils of all ages, needs and languages. There are so many opportunities for pupils to reflect on issues through the whole life of the school and the practical implications of the Catholic faith. The vast majority of pupils visibly benefit from this provision.

### IMPROVEMENT SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

The issues from the last inspection have been addressed, with the development of a 'sacred space' addressed within the constraints of space and resources.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Leaders and governors continue to explore ways of developing further the 'sacred space' as and when resources allow.
- Continue to develop and support the valuable work and impact of the pupil *Utopia* and *Faith in Action* groups within the effective chaplaincy model.