



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## Section 48 Inspection

### **ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

### **Part of the Holy Spirit Catholic Multi Academy**

Greenmoor Road, Nuneaton, Warwickshire CV10 7EX

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Inspection date	27 <sup>th</sup> -28 <sup>th</sup> November 2017
Reporting Inspector	Paul Nutt
Assisting Inspector	John Farrell

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School	Academy
Age range of pupils	11-18 years
Number on roll	974
Appropriate authority	Board of Directors
Chair of Governors	John Martin
Telephone number	02476 642400
E-mail address	admin@st-thomas-more.net
Date of previous inspection	20 <sup>th</sup> -21 <sup>st</sup> November 2012
DFE School Number	9374803
Unique Reference Number	125758

<b>Headteacher</b>	<b>Mr Francis Hickey</b>
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Previous inspection:	Good
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This inspection:	Outstanding
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## Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors.
- The focus of the inspection was on the quality, leadership, and impact of the school's provision of Catholic life, collective worship, and religious education (RE).
- The inspectors observed teaching across seven RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including a Year 10 class adoration in the school chapel. One of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with a senior leader.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils in Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form to evaluate their understanding of Catholic life, worship, and the impact of teaching on their learning over time.
- Meetings were held with the vice chair of directors and a staff governor, the principal, who is also the person in charge of Catholic life in the school (PICCLS), the RE subject leader, the priest chaplain and the parish priest.
- The inspectors attended assemblies in Year 7 and the Sixth Form, student-led liturgy, prayers and Benediction. They undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching, the presentation of the Catholic life of the college and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self - evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the school RE and Catholic life development plans, and a range of policies.

## Information about the school

- St Thomas More Catholic School and Sixth Form is situated in the parish of Our Lady of the Angels, Nuneaton. It also serves the parishes of St Francis, Bedworth; Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Bulkington; St Anne's, Camp Hill; St Joseph's, New Arley; St Benedict's, Atherstone.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 85%.
- The percentage of pupils from a minority ethnic origin is lower than the national average.
- The percentage of pupils speaking English as a second language is below the national average.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils in the school is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils receiving support for special needs is lower than the national average.
- Attainment on entry is higher than the national average.
- Since the last inspection, the school has become part of the Holy Spirit Catholic Multi Academy. Recommendations from the previous section 48 report have been addressed.

## Main Findings

- The Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The staff have a deep commitment to faith foundation of the whole school community. The school is very capably led by the personal commitment and untiring endeavours of the principal.
- The provision and quality of collective worship is outstanding. Worship is clearly a part of the school's daily life and routine. The guidance of the priest chaplain and access to the chapel play a vital part in supporting collective worship.
- The quality of RE is outstanding. An able team of RE specialists is well led by the head of department, with some additional teaching by Catholic colleagues from other disciplines. Pupils make very good progress within and between key stages, resulting in outstanding attainment.
- The Sixth Form is consistent with the main school in terms of Catholic life and the quality of collective worship. The uptake and outcomes at A Level have risen significantly over the last two years.
- Leadership of all aspects of the school life is very good. There is a deep commitment to the Church's mission in education, which is defended robustly at both strategic and management levels.
- The current principal, who is also the PICCLS, is due to retire shortly. The appointment of the new principal will require careful consideration, to ensure that the drive to continually improve Catholic life is sustained.

## THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

### Catholic life, collective worship and spiritual, moral and vocational development: provision and outcomes

- The Catholic life of the school is outstanding.
- An inclusive Catholic ethos pervades every aspect of daily life, and is evident immediately on entry to the school. Displays and artefacts are relevant and attractive. They promote the Catholic mission of the school.
- Much of the strength and vibrancy of the school's Catholic life comes from the work of the Core Group. This group includes not only the principal, the head of the RE department and the priest chaplain, but also other staff members from across the school.
- The prayer life of the school is very strong. It is well supported by the chaplain, who distributes different prayer books throughout the school each term. Prayers, including the school prayer, are displayed in each classroom and other spaces. Pupils' logbooks include traditional Catholic prayers. Prayers that respond to school, local, national and global events are distributed weekly. Prayer also plays a major part in worship opportunities and lessons.
- A key educational message from Pope Francis is displayed in every classroom and in pupils' logbooks: *"Dear young people, do not bury your talents, the gifts that God has given you! Do not be afraid to dream of great things"*. A papal tweet appears in every newsletter to parents.
- The chaplain and chaplaincy committee provide exciting opportunities for involvement, with which good numbers of pupils and staff engage. During the inspection, lunchtime prayers and Benediction in the chapel were led by

pupils, working collaboratively with the chaplain. This worship included Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, hymns, scripture and prayers. It was a very reverent and powerful spiritual experience.

- Pupils' views and opinions are considered when provision is planned and evaluated. They are encouraged to become more independent, for example by leading singing during the pupil-led lunchtime liturgy.
- Pupils take on responsibilities and participate constructively in the Catholic life of the school, beyond routine lessons and activities. They have a good range of opportunities to contribute, through student voice, questionnaires, and the extensive programme offered by the chaplaincy team.
- Pupils have a secure understanding of right and wrong within the teaching of the Church, and treat others with high degrees of respect. They articulate clear links between the school's values and their personal beliefs and behaviours, and understand the consequences of the choices they make. They feel very safe and valued at school.
- The spiritual dimension of the wider curriculum, is currently being developed. This supports opportunities for growth in an awareness of God and the importance of faith. There is an expectation that each individual is involved in the Catholic life of the school. Displays in science, and the verse of the week are examples of this.
- Pupils experience the presence of faith integrated within other curriculum areas. These opportunities encourage pupils to be reflective and enquiring. Examples are currently to be found mainly in the taught curriculum: music and hymns in Modern Languages, and in aspects of History and Geography.
- Behaviour, conduct and interpersonal relationships at all levels are excellent. New members of the school community, staff and pupils, speak with enthusiasm and gratitude of the inclusive welcome they have received.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of vocation and how it relates to the mission of the school and the Faith. They learn about selfless service to God and neighbour, and engage wholeheartedly with opportunities for charitable works. For example, the school's librarian, who takes part in charity work for Fairtrade, has been supported by pupil led fundraising. The pupils raised so much money that they were able to contribute to a new floor for the school chapel, as well as donating to Fairtrade.
- Pupils are involved in a range of other works of charity: Chinthowa Village link; CAFOD hunger lunches; Catholic Fellowship Walk; Macmillan Cancer Support and charities afternoon in March. All sixth formers engage with the ASDAN charity project.
- Vocation is a focus for pupils at specific times in their school life. This includes a Vocations Day for Year 9.
- In the past the school has arranged retreats to Alton Castle and Soli House. These opportunities have been supplemented by pilgrimages to Hosanna House, Lourdes. The trip last year for 30 pupils, including 10 pupil premium pupils.
- The school is currently developing its use of the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile (CSPP). They are beginning to display the virtues found in the CSPP more widely around the school and to incorporate them into classroom practice and wider planning. Pupils' understanding of their importance is

developing, and they feel ready and able to express their own views and beliefs within the secure environment that surrounds them.

- There is strong parental support for the Catholic life and ethos of the school, as shown in their responses to questionnaires. They value the school's communications with them, for example through newsletters and the website.
- Collective worship is outstanding.
- The Eucharist is seen as the heart of the school's beliefs and celebrations. Pupils are given opportunities to engage fully, which many do with confidence and enthusiasm.
- Worship has a regular place in the daily life of the school, and all pupils feel included. They respond appropriately with quiet attention and reverence, and many make an active contribution to the opportunities offered. A range of Masses are celebrated for different groups throughout the year; this includes a taught Mass for Year 7 groups, celebrated by the chaplain, and followed up with time in the RE curriculum.
- There is a weekly programme of year assemblies, which are carefully planned and evaluated by the school leadership team. Through scripture, prayers and hymns, linked to an appropriate theme, pupils are able to engage fully with the Faith in daily life.
- During the inspection, the assembly for Year 7 was on the theme of adversity. IT was effectively used to recall the recent tragedy in Manchester, to pay tribute to the work of the emergency services and the role of an ambassador for Acorns Hospice, all linked to words from Pope Francis. This inspired a thoughtful and heartfelt response; all pupils were fully engaged and reverential.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of traditional prayer and liturgy.
- The school chaplain is both a priest and a trained social worker. During his weekly three days in school, he is able to offer invaluable support to individuals and their families, for example bereavement support.
- The school have identified the need to develop pupils' participation within the wider Church. The principal acknowledges that the school is like a mini-parish, with many pupils not experiencing the development of their faith beyond the school. It is important that pupils are encouraged to become more involved in their local parishes and with other schools, particularly within the MAC.

## **LEADERSHIP**

### **Leadership of Catholic life and collective worship**

- The school's leadership is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education which they defend robustly.
- The school's principal bears strong witness to the Catholic faith and the school's mission. He is given dedicated support by other senior colleagues in pursuing the vision of the school and the Church in realising a community of faith that is inclusive for all. As a result, all members of the school family feel safe, secure and valued.
- Leadership of Catholic life and collective worship at all levels is very strong. Improvement planning is founded on sound evidence and assessment data. It

promotes the Catholic mission of the school and the spiritual, moral and vocational development of all pupils.

- The deep commitment to the mission of the school shown by its leaders is clearly shared by governors. They have a determination to continue the drive towards raising standards and improving on previous best. As a result, all leaders understand how beliefs should be made manifest in behaviour and relationships.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the wider curriculum is broad and balanced. Consequently, pupils were able to clearly explain their spiritual, moral and, most noticeably, vocational development with inspectors.
- The Catholic life of the school and its collective worship are a clear priority in planning and daily activities. This is clearly witnessed by the work and personal example of the priest chaplain. All ensure that the Catholic Faith is well taught, inside and outside the classroom, that there is respect for other faiths, and that there is a link between faith and action. Charitable works are correspondingly strong, frequent and varied.
- There is robust and energetic support for Catholic life and collective worship through the work of the Core Group and chaplaincy. Members of this team work with other colleagues and pupils to ensure a consistently high quality of experience and understanding for pupils. This is seen in class adoration and student-led liturgy, prayers and adoration in the chapel.
- Opportunities for liturgy and prayer are managed by the chaplain to ensure that Catholic life and collective worship are thoughtfully planned, delivered and monitored. Strategies for evaluating outcomes and subsequent improvement planning ensures the continuing impact and development of this programme.
- Leaders conduct a range of monitoring activities relating to provision and outcomes of Catholic life and worship. Their analysis provides a firm basis for accurate diagnosis of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- Governors have a good knowledge and understanding of the school, its aims and mission, and support and defend them well. They spend time in school and report back to the full governing body about these visits.
- Governors fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities well.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

### **Leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education**

- RE in the school is outstanding. Attainment is well above both the diocesan and national averages, in spite of a small dip at GCSE in A and A\* grades last year. Comparisons with English are favourable.
- Baseline testing has indicated higher than expected levels of knowledge and understanding on entry to Year 7. Pupils make good progress within and between key stages, developing secure knowledge, skills and understanding. However, the MAC has identified challenge in Key Stage 3 as an area for improvement, because progress here is less good than higher up the school. The department should continue to explore strategies for evaluating this and accelerating progress to maximise potential, especially in Key Stage 3.
- The numbers of non-Catholics entering the school with limited knowledge of RE is increasing. As the department recognises, this requires planning responses for the

Key Stage 3 curriculum, especially in a mixed-ability context. The school has responded to this gap in knowledge by incorporating GCSE-type skills into pre-GCSE learning programmes in upper Key Stage 3.

- Leadership of RE is fully committed to ensuring the best provision and outcomes for all pupils. There is a clear vision about how to move forward with strong, consistent support from the school's senior team.
- Leaders conduct a good range of systematic monitoring activities relating to provision and outcomes, and formal and informal discussions with the subject leader. Evaluation of monitoring is used to inform future improvement planning and forms part of the principal's reporting to governors.
- There is a scheduled programme for monitoring and evaluating RE. This comprises assessment data trawls, learning walks, lesson observations and work scrutiny at departmental level. Findings are shared with staff and governors.
- All teaching is delivered by Catholic staff, most of whom are RE specialists.
- Teachers make good use of assessment data and are well aware of pupils' abilities, prior learning and understanding. They plan very effectively to build on these, and to offer challenge for all within their mixed ability groupings. As a result, pupils are interested in their learning and all are able to make very good progress.
- Pupils are encouraged to be self-motivating and increasingly independent. They concentrate well and attainment is outstanding as a result.
- Pupils readily apply their understanding of the Faith to their daily lives.
- During the inspection, teachers used an appropriate variety of tasks and learning strategies, including pair and group work and extended writing.
- A good range of questioning is well used by staff to ensure that pupils are fully able to access the curriculum. However, higher level questioning could be used more consistently throughout the department. This would ensure that all pupils are challenged to prove religious beliefs with evidence and reasoning, and to evaluate contrasting views.
- There is a clear marking policy within the department. When it is used accurately and consistently, there are positive developmental benefits to pupils' learning, as they themselves acknowledged. However, a few inconsistencies were found, mainly with younger groups, with some assessments not completed, marking for literacy incomplete, and the quantity of work in pupils' books variable.
- Inspectors saw some effective peer assessment which shows a really reflective element to lessons. This practice needs to be shared throughout the department.
- Outcomes in the Sixth Form are strong and have continued to improve. Attainment is strong, and uptake of A Level has doubled in two years.
- Teaching is very strong in the Sixth Form. Planning is progressive and delivers appropriate challenge to all students, both through materials used and the levels of questioning and discussion. Teachers' subject knowledge is outstanding.
- Prospective Sixth Form students are invited to consider how studying RE at A Level, in combination with a number of other subjects, can lead to a range of career possibilities, beyond sometimes more limited perceptions. There are displays in classrooms that make explicit other additional benefits of studying A level RE, for example skills development.

- A taster day is held in June for prospective sixth formers. This ensures that potentially vulnerable students are identified early, and support is provided.
- The curriculum provides pupils with deep insights into the life and teaching of Jesus. It also contributes well to the development of pupils' spiritual, moral and vocational understanding found more widely within the Catholic life of the school.
- The school's relationships and sex education policy is delivered in line with the teachings of the Church, following the Diocesan programme.
- Governors have oversight of RE and fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities well.
- Governors have a good knowledge and understanding of the standards in RE. Their role as critical friend would be strengthened by closer familiarity with RE assessment data.

### **Recommendations**

#### **In order to improve the school should:**

- Plan carefully the succession of the retiring principal to maintain and develop the outstanding Catholic life of the school.
- Encourage the participation of pupils within local parishes.
- Ensure the consistent use of higher level questioning, peer assessment and marking through the sharing of best practice in the RE department.