



DIOCESAN CANONICAL INSPECTION REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL, RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

St Francis' Catholic Voluntary Academy

Dalby Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, LE13 0BP

School URN:	146180
Inspection Date:	11 February 2020
Inspectors:	Mr Gregory Hughes and Mrs Deborah Tibble

Overall Effectiveness	Previous Inspection:	Good	2
	This Inspection:	Good	2
Catholic Life:		Outstanding	1
Religious Education:		Good	2
Collective Worship:		Good	2

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Francis' Catholic Voluntary Academy is a good Catholic school.

- St Francis' is a good school. The headteacher is dedicated, hardworking and has a clear vision to build on the school's current strengths and further improve. Parents state that they feel supported by the school and its community presence is valued and appreciated. They say, 'The school works hard to ensure pupils live out Catholic Values'.
- The Catholic Life of St Francis' is outstanding. The mission statement, 'In Jesus we will do our best as we love, pray, learn and play, because this is St Francis' way' is clearly in evidence and reflects the school's Catholic ethos.
- The teaching and learning of Religious Education at St Francis' is good overall. A range of teaching strategies are employed. Lessons follow the *Come and See* programme. Over time, pupils make steady progress which is in line with diocesan averages in both key stages.
- Collective Worship at St Francis' is good. Worship is reverent and prayerful. Staff take on diocesan initiatives and are keen to adopt and develop their engagement and promotion of this area of the school's mission.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Francis' Catholic Voluntary Academy is an average sized primary school situated in the Leicestershire market town of Melton Mowbray.
- The school serves the parish of St John the Baptist, Melton Mowbray.
- 46% of the pupils currently on roll are baptised Catholic, 30% are from other Christian denominations, 3% are from other faiths and 22% of pupils have no religious affiliation.
- The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or a disability is 12%, this is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is 14% - this is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The Franciscan Minoreesses built the school; the convent chapel is adjacent to the school and is regularly used by them.
- The school became part of the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust on 1 September 2018. The school's headteacher was appointed in September 2019 after serving as co-headteacher and deputy headteacher.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Catholic Life:
 - Ensure that current good practice is shared with schools in the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust.
 - Continue to promote diocesan initiatives such as the Bishop's spiritual themes and national initiatives.
- Religious Education:
 - Ensure that further opportunities for pupils to work independently and for more sustained periods of time are enabled in lessons.
 - Ensure that independent learning is promoted over scaffolding support.
 - Provide continued professional development with regard to deepening teacher subject knowledge in order to provide teachers with the ability to provide higher level questioning, challenge and enhancement of pupil understanding within Religious Education.
- Collective Worship:
 - Embed recent developments in evaluation of class and whole school liturgies so that all years are reviewing their work and critically improving input and delivery of worship.
 - Further develop and embed pupil leadership in whole school and class liturgy so that all pupils are taking greater ownership and responsibility in leading worship.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL	1
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- 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.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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

- Pupils appreciate, value and actively participate in the Catholic Life and mission of the school. The chaplaincy team is established and work closely with the lead St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi Academy trust lead lay chaplain. Prayer areas are well maintained and the Year of the Word is celebrated with carefully chosen scripture which is displayed prominently on each class entrance.
- Pupils are active members of the house families of St Clare, St Anthony, St Francis and St Elizabeth. They actively support each other in meetings which promote a safe, happy and inclusive school environment. Prayer forms a central part to each meeting.
- Pupils take an active role in the school's Catholic Life and mission both in their local community – including support for Action for the Homeless, Mission Together, the Franciscan Missions and CAFOD. An example of their involvement would be Macmillan Cancer, raising £500 with a coffee morning which included the pupils singing. Pupils show an understanding of what missionary discipleship means and recognise the importance of supporting vulnerable and less fortunate groups.
- The school has a service award which is sponsored. It is a celebration recognising acts of kindness by pupils in school and the wider community. Pupils receive the award for deeds such as: cooking a meal, litter picking and visiting older members of the community. In the parish, pupils regularly participate in liturgies at the church.
- Pupils value the opportunities provided by the school to share their faith. A chaplaincy blog is regularly updated. Pupils know the mission statement, which is rooted in the school's Franciscan heritage and said, 'We use this so that we can be good and love others just like St Francis did'.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school – outstanding

- St Francis school prioritises the provision of Catholic Life. On entry to the school, the learning environment is welcoming. Artefacts and resources are found together with scripture, contemporary and traditional prayer promoting the school's Catholic character.
- The mission statement 'In Jesus we will do our best as we love, pray, learn and play, because this is St Francis' way' greets all visitors and stakeholders on entry to the school. The school has embraced social media to promote and celebrate the many aspects of its Catholic Life.
- Displays are engaging and celebrate the Catholicity of the school. Pupils' work is celebrated and places to reflect and pray throughout the school exemplify the importance of faith. Diocesan initiatives such as Encounter, Discipleship and Missionary Discipleship are all on view. Displays which feature Pope Francis and Bishop Patrick are used to promote Jesus' teaching of helping one another and following in his footsteps as a disciple.
- 'The Year of the Word' and the official prayer of the year have all been introduced and are clear reminders of listening and responding to the Word of the Lord. Throughout the school, liturgical calendars clearly remind pupils of the current focus in the Church's year.
- The school's behaviour policy reflects the core Catholic values of forgiveness and reconciliation. The school tackles and raises awareness of issues around racism and pupils are encouraged to observe and follow British Values whilst living in the light of Christ. The new Relationship and Sex Education programme (RSE) is timetabled and is being delivered successfully.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school – outstanding

- St Francis is a school with a welcoming learning environment – clearly promoting the school's Catholic character. Leaders across the school are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education and are passionate about developing and sustaining the school's Catholic ethos. The liturgical year is closely followed and understood by all stakeholders.
- The school has an active involvement in the local parish of St John the Baptist and the parish priest regularly visits the school to support First Holy Communion preparation. Pupils are very much encouraged to be part of the parish.
- Leaders ensure that they avail themselves of high-quality diocesan training. The development of all staff is identified and acted upon with the support and oversight of the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust. Together, they are fully committed to the Catholic Life of the school.
- Local governors and leaders monitor the school's Catholic Life closely. Local governors are experienced, engaged, enthusiastic and knowledgeable, holding the headteacher and staff to account with relevant and searching questions.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	2
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- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education – good

- Pupils enter St Francis' from a low starting point. Data is collected regularly and accurately evidences improving progress over time. Taking into account their low baseline starting point, standards of attainment are now in line with diocesan averages at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- Pupils state that they enjoy their Religious Education lessons and have to work hard. In the most successful lessons visited, pupils behaved and concentrated well. They showed an interest in their work, were actively involved in their learning and were keen to discuss and answer questions.
- During interviews with pupils from across Key Stage 2, all were able to express their religious literacy. They were articulate their learning about Catholic Social Teaching and about how they can live their lives by following the example of figures such as Oscar Romero and Mother Teresa.
- *Driver words* were used by adults in the lessons visited. The symbols of the head, heart and cloud are displayed in classrooms to promote the three attainment target foci. However, pupils' understanding of these is limited; they now need to be used in a more targeted manner in order to further accelerate progress.
- Behaviour for learning is strong throughout the school. Pupils are respectful of each other and listen intently to teacher input. Pupils are given time to reflect and, in some classes, are exposed to a rich religious vocabulary.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education – requires improvement

- The *Come and See* Religious Education programme is being used throughout the school. Teachers need to be confident to be as creative with the scheme as possible linking the topics to the school's context and making the content relevant to the pupils' lives. Teachers incorporate 'heart' and 'wonder' moments within lessons across all year groups. The school uses *driver words* to enable pupils to improve their work.
- A range of different teaching strategies were employed during visits to lessons, including opportunities to discuss and work collaboratively. Teachers were well prepared and teaching assistants were thoughtfully deployed supporting a range of ability levels effectively.
- During lessons visited, there was a significant amount of adult support observed. In some lessons, this high level of support meant there were limited opportunities for pupils to work independently. More time for independent learning and opportunities to write for extended periods of time need to be incorporated into lesson time in order to capture pupils' ideas and thoughts more extensively.
- In lessons visited, particularly in Key Stage 2, teachers' questioning was limited; pupils' responses were not always explored in sufficient depth resulting in levels of challenge which could be higher.
- Assessment in Religious Education is understood by teachers and is captured on a regular basis. Assessed pieces of work show that the pupils are capable of work of quality and quantity. Similarly, verbal exchanges with teachers shows a good knowledge that needs to be captured more readily on paper. The school now needs to work towards allowing pupils time to replicate these standards, capturing their knowledge and understanding in as much detail as possible throughout their work on each topic

The extent to which leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education – good

- The headteacher has an accurate view of the strengths and areas to improve within the school. This has been shared and is understood by all stakeholders. A tracking tool has been introduced and is helping to create critical conversations that in turn will lead to greater focus and support for pupils in lessons.
- The headteacher and, over time, the subject leader for Religious Education have engaged fully in diocesan training. The school has taken on board new initiatives and has ensured staff have been supported with training. This needs to be continued to support teacher knowledge in order that pupils can be challenged more thus promoting greater in depth in the quality of responses.
- Local governors are aware of attainment levels and the quality and quantity of work that is expected to ensure good progress in Religious Education. They are able to question leaders and hold them to account. They are aware of year groups that need focus and support in order to ensure continuity and consistency throughout both key stages.
- The senior leadership team has provided support for staff with planning, pitch and expectation. Systems are in place to check and monitor coverage and output. Expectations are shared and feedback given. Leaders now need to ensure that there is a greater emphasis on extended writing opportunities to provide sufficient evidence for the assessment of learning over time. There is scope for more independent learning and less structure and scaffolding within some lessons.
- The Religious Education curriculum meets episcopal requirements regarding curriculum time for Religious Education. The *Come and See* programme has been developed in an adequate way focusing on the needs and interests of the pupils. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP	2
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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for the Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship – good

- In the Acts of Worship observed during the inspection, pupils acted with reverence and participated enthusiastically and joyfully in singing. Pupils state that they value and appreciate the opportunities which are provided for reflection.
- Pupils are beginning to develop their skills in planning and leading acts of worship, although this is more evident in class-based liturgies than in whole school Acts of Worship. Worship opportunities are well structured with elements of Gather, Word, Response to the Word and Mission.
- Pupils are able to create a prayerful atmosphere, using music and a range of artefacts. Most pupils have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year. However, during the inspection, some choices of music and artefacts were not liturgically correct nor suited to the theme of the liturgy.
- Living and working in a faithful, prayer community is having a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of pupils. Pupils report that they understand how reflection on scripture informs their lives stating that this helps them to be 'peacemakers'.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship – good

- Prayer is prevalent throughout the school and forms an important part of school celebrations. Opportunities for spontaneous prayer are provided each lunchtime in the school's prayer garden and indoor prayer station, which is facilitated by the school's chaplaincy team. Pupils speak highly of these opportunities for prayer.
- Acts of Worship are centered on clear themes, often linked to Catholic virtues; scripture had been chosen carefully to reflect the chosen theme. However, the link between scripture and theme could have been made more explicit to pupils ensuring that they understand fully how scripture shapes their lives.
- Recent improvements introduced by the Trust lead lay chaplain have resulted in greater priority being given to planning and evaluating Collective Worship. The newly introduced liturgy books are beginning to raise the profile and importance placed on Collective Worship. Both planning and evaluation have been strengthened as a result, with pupils' responses becoming more spiritually deepened.
- School leaders have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year and are skilled and committed to providing good quality Acts of Worship for pupils, providing opportunities for a variety of forms of worship.
- Opportunities for Collective Worship are planned in a way which facilitates attendance by other members of the community. Parents say that they value this opportunity to attend liturgies.

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

- The headteacher and Trust lead lay chaplain are experienced and have an expert knowledge in planning and delivering quality Collective Worship; they are dedicated to providing high quality worship opportunities for pupils. This now needs to be disseminated to other members of staff.
- Liturgical themes are made relevant to pupils through contemporary prayer opportunities such as sign songs and liturgical dance.
- Leaders place a high priority on the professional development of staff. They have engaged well with diocesan training and have ensured that new staff members are fully inducted. This has resulted in a consistent approach to the planning of Collective Worship.
- Newly established systems have strengthened the evaluation of Collective Worship. However, they have had insufficient time to embed and therefore are yet to impact sufficiently on the development of pupils' liturgical skills.

SCHOOL DETAILS

School Name	St Francis' Catholic Voluntary Academy
Unique Reference Number	146180
CMAT	St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust

The inspection of this school was carried out on behalf of the Bishop of Nottingham under Canon 806 of Canon Law in accordance with the *Evaluation Schedule (September 2018)* for diocesan canonical inspections in the Diocese of Nottingham. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. The process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule is in line with the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA).

During the inspection, the inspectors observed 8 Religious Education lessons, 1 whole-school and 3 class Acts of Collective Worship.

Meetings were held with the headteacher and the Year 2 teacher (who is also the assistant headteacher), the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Academy Trust director of performance and standards, the Trust lead lay chaplain and local governors. Discussions were also held with pupils and parents.

The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including reports of the local governing body, action plans, the school development plan, monitoring forms, assessment information and parental response forms. Inspectors also examined the work in pupils' Religious Education books.

Chair of Governors:	Mrs Helen Webb
Headteacher:	Mrs Gosia Brown
Date of Previous School Inspection:	30 June 2015
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WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN

Within the report, the following grades are used:

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

In the context of the whole school, the overall effectiveness grades have the following meaning:

Grade 1	Outstanding	The school is a highly effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are exceptionally well met.
Grade 2	Good	The school is an effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are met well.
Grade 3	Requires Improvement	The school is not yet a good Catholic school, it is not inadequate however, and there are aspects that require improvement. There will be a monitoring visit within the next 18 months and the school will be re-inspected within 3 years.
Grade 4	Inadequate	There are features in need of urgent and immediate attention. The school is not meeting the basic minimum requirement for adequacy as a Catholic school. The school will receive an annual monitoring visit and will be re-inspected within 3 years.