

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***

DFES No: 874/3378
URN: 110854

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Chair of Governors: Mr B. Killeen

Headteacher: Mrs A-M. McElhinney

Denominational Inspector:

Mrs M. Betts

Dates of Inspection: 17th October 2012

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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. Pupils come from the parish of St Peter and All Souls, as well as from the surrounding parishes of St Luke's, St Jude's, and Our Lady of Lourdes. There are 412 pupils on roll, 60% of whom are Catholic. 31% of pupils come from other world faith backgrounds. A high proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic groups and most of these pupils speak English as an additional language. The school provides a breakfast and after school club. The school has gained the full International Schools' award.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL.

Grade: 2

St Thomas More School is a good Catholic school with many outstanding features. The extremely strong Catholic identity permeates the school's daily life. The committed leadership of the Headteacher and Deputy is instrumental in inspiring a strong spiritual purpose throughout the school. This very effectively promotes the pupils' personal development and faith awareness which reflects in their good behaviour and positive attitudes. The school provides for a vast range of different pupil needs which ensures the nurture, care and well-being of all. Relationships within the school are good and reflect Christian love and concern for others. Pupils are very proud of their school describing it as a place where "we all feel welcome and are kind to each other". Prayer and worship are of pivotal importance in the school's life. Religious education (RE) has a high profile. The pupils' spiritual and moral development is outstanding.

The Headteacher and Deputy have a good overall view of the school's strengths and development needs. This term has seen the introduction of a new religious education (RE) programme that promotes more challenging learning and enhances teachers' subject knowledge. The last diocesan inspection development areas of differentiating tasks for different ability pupils, is now fully in place and the recording of assessment levels has been started. All staff are committed to the success of the school and are willing to improve their skills through training opportunities. The school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

What the school needs to do to improve further?

- Embed RE assessments firmly into school practice linking these with National Attainment levels so that pupil progress can be recorded.
- Develop RE marking further by challenging pupils to improve their work and extend their learning towards their next target level.
- Embed the practice of asking for pupils' evaluations of RE, worship and Catholic life to enhance the school's monitoring procedures.
- Give pupils further opportunities to organise and plan their own classroom worship.

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

Grade 2

Pupils benefit well from the school's Catholic ethos. They can articulate how what they are taught and learn, impacts on their lives. One pupil said "we are all trying to be like Jesus". Pupils display respect and trust towards each other and to adults. They willingly undertake responsibilities and show care and support to the younger children through for example "play leaders". The pupils demonstrate a developing awareness of those in need through their charity fund-raising. They praise the friendly, caring attitude of the teachers who listen to

them, help to solve any problems and encourage their learning. Pupils' achievements are recognised, praised and valued. Their views and ideas are sought through the School Council.

All pupils respond well to worship and the prayer life of the school. They participate respectfully and with ease. Pupils have opportunities to pray spontaneously and create their own prayers as part of their RE learning. They enjoy worship especially through high-quality singing and when they have opportunities to listen to or present class assemblies. They appreciate the quiet times given them to reflect on the theme to apply it to their own future actions, and explain this as "a time to think about God". Worship contributes very well to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The pupils are developing a sound knowledge of religious education. They achieve age appropriate RE levels of attainment. Most pupils enjoy their religious education lessons especially when linked to cross-curricular subjects and practical activities. Their RE books are very well presented, with a good variety of written work. These also show good coverage of the curriculum.

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

Grade 1

The Headteacher and Deputy are deeply committed to promoting the Catholic life of the school, They communicate a clear vision for the Catholic ethos which inspires all in the school community. Attractive displays around school confirm the Catholic identity. Leadership promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development very well. The school provides a variety of ways of promoting partnership with parents, one being by encouraging them to help with their child's learning at home and another by inviting them to class assemblies. During the Reception class assembly parents and their children created their own family flower as an additional activity to aid their RE learning. The school has strong links with the parish through the close involvement with the school of two parish priests and many parishioners.

The Headteacher, as religious education subject leader, ensures this subject has a high profile across the school. She provides support and guidance for staff especially for those with a non-Catholic background, and arranges a variety of training opportunities. A clear direction for improvement has been set. Staff's performance management objectives support the school's Catholic ethos. The budget provided is generous and in line with that given to other core subjects. Religious education is well resourced.

Governors fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities. They are supportive and well informed about the work and monitoring outcomes through the Headteacher's report. Governors visit the school regularly and feedback their evaluations to the rest of the governing body.

The school is a welcoming and inclusive community where all members are respected. The rich diversity of cultures within the school is positively valued as exemplified by the displays around the building. Teaching about other faiths has a positive effect on pupils' understanding of beliefs within the local community. Pupils and visitors from other religions contribute to the learning. The pupils show their compassion for others by organising fund-raising for local, national and international charities, for example for building a school kitchen in Malawi. The school has very good links with other local schools.

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

The quality of worship and sacramental life of the school is good, with pupils experiencing a wide range of opportunities such as being involved in Mass, prayer, and liturgy in a variety of different groups and settings for example in the secondary school chapel and the distant parish church. Worship is well planned using visual presentations, bible and other stories, drama, and song to promote pupils' interest and develop their thinking. For example key stage 1 assembly was enriched by the pupils' enthusiastic singing. A calm reflective atmosphere is created such as that exemplified by the breakfast club's quiet beginning of the day, using themes related to RE topics and the "Value of the Month" to make an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. The attractive prayer tables in each classroom provide a clear focus. The parish priest makes a significant contribution to the sacramental life of the school. The older pupils have opportunity for reconciliation during Advent and Lent.

The quality of religious education lessons is good overall. Teachers plan well with clear learning objectives made explicit to the pupils. In the most effective lessons pupils' own ideas are used as a stimuli for tasks; questioning challenges and extends pupils' thinking; and the learning intention is fully fulfilled. Visual presentations and practical activities are used well to gain pupils' interest and develop their learning. For example, pupils very effectively learnt the creation story by working in groups to produce each day's creation features using craft materials and the story being told using these. Teaching assistants are well informed and committed to the RE programme.

Assessments are undertaken and these are linked to National RE Attainment levels. These are recorded so that pupil progress can be tracked and analysed. All work is well marked affirming achievement but does not challenge pupils to improve their work in line with their RE targets.

The quality of the curriculum is good, and suitable for the age and abilities of the learners. It fulfils the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. 10% of curriculum time is used for religious education following the "Come and See" programme. Scripture is used well during teaching. For example during the creation story the repeated biblical phrase "God saw that it was good" was known and understood well by pupils. Religious education is linked to other curriculum areas particularly to literacy, drama, poetry, art and information, and communication technology (ICT). For example, one class were examining traditional artists' interpretations of the return of the prodigal son. Other faiths are studied. The curriculum contributes well to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Attractive religious education and thought-provoking displays around school give added value to this core subject.

The inspector wishes to thank the Headteacher, staff and children for their very warm welcome and for contributing to her very enjoyable and interesting visit.

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Letter to pupils explaining the findings from the Diocesan Inspection

17th October 2012

Dear Pupils

Diocesan Inspection of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Thank you for making me so welcome at your school. Thank you to all those pupils who spoke to me especially the group from Year 6. I was very interested in your views of your school. I enjoyed being present at all your Religious Education lessons. It was a great privilege for me to be present for the Reception Class 'Breakfast' assembly, Key Stage 1 'Sharing' assembly and Year 5 Class assembly. Well done to everyone involved.

Here are some of the things I especially liked:

- The strong Catholic ethos of your school that provides many opportunities for prayer, worship and Mass.
- You are friendly and considerate to each other and are well cared for by your teachers.
- The school provides very good opportunities for you to develop personally, spiritually and morally.

I have asked your teachers to consider when they are marking your RE work to check that you know what you could do to achieve the next level. I have also asked them to seek for your ideas as to what you like about RE lessons, assemblies and life at your school and how these could be made even better. I have also asked them to give you more opportunities to plan your own classroom worship.

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

Yours sincerely

Mrs M. Betts
Diocesan Inspector