



## **DIOCESAN CANONICAL INSPECTION**

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

<b>School:</b>	St Thomas More Catholic Voluntary Academy
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<b>School URN:</b>	138185
<b>Headteacher:</b>	Mrs Patricia Mason
<b>Chair of Governors:</b>	Mr Michael Cummins
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	21 January 2015
<b>Inspectors:</b>	Mrs Jane Monaghan Mrs Anita Blake
<b>Overall Effectiveness:</b>	2
<b>Date of Previous Inspection:</b>	6 November 2008
<b>Overall Effectiveness:</b>	1

## **INTRODUCTION**

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 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 9 Religious Education lessons and 2 Acts of Collective Worship.

Meetings were held with the headteacher, the subject leader for Religious Education, the chaplaincy team, a representative from the Academy Trust, a group of governors and the parish priest. Discussions were also held with pupils and parents.

The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including the Religious Education subject leader's files, the headteacher's reports to governors and other information provided by the school. Inspectors also examined the work in pupils' Religious Education books.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Thomas More Catholic Voluntary Academy is a slightly larger than average primary school serving the parish of St Thomas More in Leicester. The school is part of the Corpus Christi Catholic Academy Trust. 91% of pupils are baptised Catholics, 6% belong other Christian denominations, 1% follow other World Faiths and 1% have no religious affiliation.

The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is 9%; this is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action is 4% which is below the national average.

The proportion of pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is 6%, this is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils eligible for free school meals or who are looked after.

## INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

**OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS**

**2**

**CATHOLIC LIFE**

**1**

**COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

**1**

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**3**

### KEY FINDINGS

St Thomas More Catholic Voluntary Academy is a good Catholic school.

- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding. The school's mission statement underpins the community and how it interacts. Pupils enjoy being part of the school and acknowledge Christ at the centre of everyday life.
- Collective Worship is outstanding. Prayer is evident in all aspects of school life and enriches the experiences of the school community. Pupil-led liturgy has been developed and children participate fully in this aspect of the school.
- Religious Education requires improvement. Pupils enjoy their work in Religious Education and demonstrate enthusiasm and positive attitudes to their learning. Whilst standards overall are broadly in line with diocesan averages, the rate of progress is more variable and needs to be accelerated further.

### WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- To ensure that the quality of teaching in Religious Education over time is consistently good or better throughout the school.
- To develop more rigorous and robust systems of monitoring and evaluation for Religious Education which include systematic analysis and interpretation of pupils' assessment data in order to accelerate the rate of pupils' progress further. These systems must regularly include opportunities to follow-up findings and to assess the impact on teaching and learning over time.
- To develop more formalised systems for the monitoring and evaluation of Catholic Life and Collective Worship involving all leaders and managers.

## CATHOLIC LIFE

### THE QUALITY OF 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.
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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Pupils are at the centre of the school's mission and ethos, they have a strong sense of belonging and benefit from being members of this vibrant community. They are outstanding ambassadors for the school, they appreciate and respond to strong links with the parish and they speak highly of the parish priest. The school is a regular presence at parish Masses and other liturgical services. The chaplaincy team takes a lead in planning improvements to the Catholic Life of the school. All pupils enthusiastically embrace being part of the St Thomas More family.

Behaviour for almost all pupils is exemplary; pupils are developing an awareness of vocation and freely offer their gifts in the service of others as evidenced in their support of various local and global charities including LOROS, CAFOD and the Year 6 Bazaar. Older pupils take lead roles in assisting younger children to settle into the school community, they organise lunch time activities and look after them in parish Masses. Pupils, including those not of the Catholic tradition are members of the school council, chaplaincy team and house captains. All of this involvement impacts positively on pupils' strong sense of personal worth; they are proud of their own religious identity.

The mission statement, 'Love one another as I have loved you' is a prominent feature of school life and underpins the community spirit of the St Thomas More Catholic Voluntary Academy family. Staff are committed to its implementation and receive support from the school's senior leadership team. Clear policies provide the highest levels of pastoral care for all pupils. Parents hold the school in high esteem and are highly appreciative of the opportunities that the school provides for their children to develop morally and spiritually. The 'statements to live by', 'silent listening' and 'good values' initiatives practised in the school impact greatly on pupils, parents and the wider community. Parents reported favourably of occasions when these are emailed to them so that they too can enter into the discussion and support their children in the Church's mission. 'Lucky we have such an amazing community,' is among the many positive comments made by parents and carers. A Relationships and Sex Education programme has recently been introduced in collaboration with other schools in the Corpus Christi Catholic Academy Trust and again parents and carers appreciate the fact that their views were sought and considered. A recently convened Religious Education workshop helped to develop parents' understanding of the Catholic Life of the school, they are encouraged to discuss and express their views in this aspect of the school's work. The school has high expectations of moral and ethical behaviour with all policies rooted firmly in Gospel values.

The school's leadership including governors is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. They are inspiring and enthusiastic and this results in the development of the school's Catholic ethos being viewed as a core leadership responsibility with the Catholic Life of the school being afforded the highest priority. Systems for analysing the Catholic Life of the school are now developing; the subject leader for Religious Education is working at this aspect of the role in order to provide a challenging and firm basis for the school's strengths and areas for development. The governing body is ambitious for the Catholic Life of the school and influential in determining the school's direction in this area. A thorough and more complete understanding of all aspects of Religious Education will lead to an even more positive impact on their monitoring role.

## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

### THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship. 

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- The quality of provision for Collective Worship. 

1
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- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship. 

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Collective Worship engages all pupils and inspires them; this enthusiasm for Collective Worship is reflected in the quality of prayer opportunities, the participation of pupils and their confident, joyful singing. The chaplaincy team takes an active role in leading the community life of prayer, they are instrumental in preparing and delivering high quality Acts of Worship and are effective role models. There is a deep sense of respect for different faiths as evidenced in pupil to pupil relationships, hall displays and the sharing of different prayer experiences. This makes an extremely positive contribution to the spiritual development of all groups of pupils.

During the Act of Worship observed on the day of inspection, all aspects of provision were of a high quality which impacted favourably on the responses from pupils and adults alike. Collective Worship is clearly central to the life of the school, it is the essence of school celebrations and is given the highest priority in terms of resourcing and planning; it is cherished by the school community. Initiatives such as 'silent listening' and the resourcing of the 'Let us Pray' materials all enhance the delivery of Collective Worship. The 'silent listening' session observed was an opportunity for reflection, with meditation having a very positive effect on pupils' spiritual growth. Parents commented with conviction that 'silent listening' extended to home and the family; that it is a worthwhile experience and another way of engaging in prayer with their children. Pupils are encouraged and are very comfortable in sharing their thoughts during these sessions. Collective Worship experiences led by members of staff have a clear purpose and mission and are instrumental in supporting the school's ethos. Themes chosen are appropriate and reflect the Church's seasons which develop pupils' understanding of the liturgical calendar and the wider universal Church.

Leaders and managers including the lay chaplain who also works with other schools in the Corpus Christi Catholic Academy Trust have excellent knowledge of planning and delivering high quality experiences of Collective Worship. The school has been instrumental in attaching great importance to the role of the lay chaplain and leader of Collective Worship together with the subject leader for Religious Education, however these roles now need to be defined more clearly so that the overall work of the subject leader for Religious Education can focus on the monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of Catholic school life, supported by the school's senior leadership team. Liturgical development has been given priority within the school's programme of continuous professional development for all staff. This has resulted in a whole-hearted and positive response to the recent training. Leaders of Collective Worship are highly effective role models of practice for both staff and pupils, they are a presence in the school and supportive of the community. The views of pupils, staff, parents and carers regarding the quality and significance of Collective Worship are sought by the leadership team and are responded to. The monitoring and evaluation of this aspect now needs to become more formalised and strategic.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

### **THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

<b>3</b>
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- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and managers (including governors) monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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3

The majority of pupils enjoy their work in Religious Education; they demonstrate enthusiasm and positive attitudes to learning. In summer 2014, standards were significantly above diocesan averages for the end of Key Stage 1 whilst at the end of Key Stage 2, they were slightly below and lower than the previous year. Attainment on entry to the school is high with the vast majority of pupils demonstrating skills and knowledge that are at least in line with expectations for their age. This means that standards at the end of Key Stage 2 could be even higher. Analysis of current data and work in pupils' books indicates that standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in summer 2015 will be at least in line with diocesan averages. Whilst it may therefore be stated that overall, outcomes in Religious Education are good based on diocesan averages, the rate of pupils' progress is more variable and could be accelerated further. At present, the school is not yet undertaking careful analysis and tracking of the rate of progress of different groups of pupils. This should be implemented without delay.

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education over time is not consistently good and therefore requires improvement. Some effective teaching was observed however, this was not always sustained as evidenced through an analysis of pupils' work and learning over time which, in some cases, lacked sufficient depth and challenge. Teachers' level of subject knowledge in Religious Education is variable throughout the school. Where it is

good, teachers plan and differentiate tasks effectively which results in pupils making more rapid progress due to work being correctly pitched and challenging. Differentiation is more often achieved through outcome rather than providing a range of tasks appropriate for pupils' different levels of ability. Of the 9 lessons observed during the inspection, a majority had differentiation of this type and this was confirmed in the work scrutiny. Most teachers have a clear understanding of the value of Religious Education and communicate this effectively. There were examples of systematic assessment of pupils' understanding in some lessons where questioning was effective and provided opportunities to deepen thinking and understanding. Marking and feedback is provided for pupils, however improvement points and pupils' responses to marking are not consistent. Pupils are not always sufficiently guided to know what is expected of them in order to improve their work. There is evidence of pupils using self-assessment through the use of the 'I can' statements and this sometimes promoted greater confidence in pupils' work and achievements, however, the system is not used consistently throughout the school.

Systems of monitoring and evaluation for Religious Education are not sufficiently rigorous in order to provide an accurate diagnosis of the school's strengths and areas for development; the school's current self-evaluation is inaccurate. Plans have recently been devised for improving outcomes in Religious Education; these include an analysis of baseline information and more careful tracking of pupil groups however, these have not yet been implemented. Senior leaders now need to take a more strategic 'whole-school' view of Religious Education and support the work of the subject leader for Religious Education even more in order to demonstrate a greater impact on standards. The subject leader for Religious Education is hard-working and deeply committed to her role. She is moderating assessments with other schools to ensure accuracy; this should continue to be a key focus for future work and should also be disseminated to staff in order to impact further on standards. Leaders and managers, including governors are aware of current developments in Religious Education but have not fully incorporated these into its practice of monitoring and evaluation. Systems need to be established to ensure consistency and rigour in order to move the subject forward. Where monitoring does occur, there is little evidence to suggest any follow-up or measurement of impact. Staff have a shared vision for the subject and are keen to move forward with developments. The Religious Education curriculum is thoughtfully planned and contributes effectively to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Effective links are formed with other agencies, the wider community and the local parish. The curriculum enables pupils to gain first hand experiences of the liturgical life of the Catholic Church and other local religious and belief communities. The curriculum for Religious Education meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

## WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN

Within the report, the following grades are used:

<b>Grade 1</b>	Outstanding
<b>Grade 2</b>	Good
<b>Grade 3</b>	Requires Improvement
<b>Grade 4</b>	Inadequate

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

<b>Grade 1</b>	Outstanding	The school is a highly effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are exceptionally well met.
<b>Grade 2</b>	Good	The school is an effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are met well.
<b>Grade 3</b>	Requires Improvement	The school is not yet a good Catholic school, it is not inadequate however, there are aspects that require improvement. There will be a monitoring visit within the next 12 months and the school will be re-inspected within 3 years.
<b>Grade 4</b>	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.