

Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Thomas More Catholic High School, Crewe

URN: 139764

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Mark Davies, Bishop of Shrewsbury on:

Date: 6-7 December 2023

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....

1

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.....

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education.....

1

Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.....

1

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

✓

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

✓

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- This school is a fine example of a community which embraces Catholic social teaching, and which embeds it in all aspects of school life.
- Staff and governors fully embrace the mission of St Thomas More and serve as role models.
- Teaching and outcomes in RE are excellent.

What the school needs to improve:

- Provide opportunities for students to monitor the quality of prayer and liturgy in school.
- The current model of leadership of prayer is delivering very positive results, however dedicated chaplaincy time would be of benefit.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

St Thomas More Catholic High School proudly stands as a beacon of Christian life in its neighbourhood. It is a community which believes in every person, encourages their love of learning, their love of each other and their love of Christ. This mission is a real strength and informs all aspects of school life. Students express clearly the role that they have in enhancing the mission of the school. They are firm in their understanding of and can clearly articulate the part that they play to bring this mission to life in relationships within and without school. As a result, they flourish here and are enabled to grow in virtue and character. They know too that they are loved and valued. Catholic social teaching shines through this community, is clearly understood and firmly rooted in the warp and weft of school life. It is central to the curriculum. Various groups including the faith in action and mission teams ensure that charity work is prominent and relates directly to Catholic social teaching. Students are extremely generous in their response to helping their local, national, and global neighbours through frequent charity events. This helps them to understand that they are part of one global family with a dignity and equality of love for one another. Parents are appreciative of the school's mission.

Witness to the Catholic life of the school takes place in many forms, from the prayer stations in classrooms to the many striking visual displays and the newly commissioned and beautiful chapel. Catholic social teaching is the foundation of all that the staff do across all aspects of school life. This provision is outstanding. It is seen in documentation and most importantly echoed in the day to day. Staff fully embrace the mission of St Thomas More and are keen to serve as role models. In word and deed, they take every opportunity to celebrate the mission of this school and remind pupils that Catholic social teaching is embedded in all that they do.

As one member of staff said, 'it is at the heart and every corner of this school'. Pastoral care in the Damascus and Emmaus provisions are shining examples of a culture based on forgiveness and reconciliation. This is an inclusive Catholic community. The 'Building the Kingdom' and 'I Am' programmes each further enrich this community.

Governors take their role as custodians of the Catholic life and mission very seriously. The acting headteacher is passionate about this and lives it out in her leadership of the school. Together they are strong in their intentionality about the mission of St Thomas More and it underpins all policies procedures and planning. All related self-evaluation and quality assurance processes are strong. Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Catholic values are embedded across all plans, they are not an annex. Planning for Catholic social teaching is exceptionally strong and as a result it is firmly embedded across the whole curriculum. It is the prism through which education at this school is delivered. Curriculum leaders work together to ensure that it is planned coherently and is explicit. The school has created a foundation for the whole taught curriculum which is exemplary. Leaders value staff and staff appreciate the worth that is afforded to them. This starts at the top. Mutual respect and a shared vision mean that all can flourish. Staff say 'this is an amazing place to work.' St Thomas More High School is proud to be counter cultural. Governors and leaders are not complacent, and the governing body is always keen to improve.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

1

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

1

Students are developing excellent knowledge, understanding and skills in religious education lessons, and are making consistently good progress by knowing more and remembering more. They enjoy their lessons. Teachers of religious education are relentless in their pursuit of excellence from their classes, which students recognise and value highly. As a result, school performance data in the subject is very strong. In the best lessons seen, students are confident at articulating their understanding of the religious education curriculum and the impact this has on their lives. Teachers make clear links to Catholic social teaching across religious education lessons and consequently, students are actively engaged and see the value in the subject. Their books reflect this and show pride in their own work. Students speak of the fact that they enjoy the challenge in religious education lessons. They take the subject seriously and recognise that it is an academic discipline which grows in challenge across the key stages. They welcome that challenge. Outcomes at GCSE level are excellent.

Teachers are experts in, and passionate about, their subject. Their authentic subject knowledge shines through in their lessons. In the best lessons seen, teachers use questioning skilfully and give students 'wait time' to respond to questions they may find challenging. Teachers know and respect their students. They have a profound understanding of the impact of religious education on the spiritual and moral development of their classes. In turn, students feel valued in religious education, stating that it 'is a place where our views are listened to and celebrated, no matter our background.' The curriculum is carefully planned and sequential, which is both age and stage appropriate. This ensures that content is introduced systematically as learners progress through the curriculum. The head of religious education's leadership is a great strength. In turn he has a clear understanding of the strengths of his team, and how to put these to the best use for the benefit of students and the

departmental team. The commitment of the department is outstanding. Part of the success of this team is the fact that in his words 'we never give up on our students.' The students recognise this as so. The department go the extra mile and offer a breadth of extra opportunities for them. For example, students in examination classes have the opportunity to join weekend revision lessons and their teachers also provide podcasts to support revision.

There is regular and systematic review of the provision for religious education by governors and leaders. The link governor provides excellent support and challenge to the head of department through half termly meetings. Governors are fully aware of the school's current strengths in religious education and the needs for the future. The head of religious education has a clear strategy for the implementation of the new *Religious Education Directory* which is already being implemented in Year 7. Additionally, the department has incorporated terminology from the *Religious Education Directory* into schemes of learning to prepare for the future planned curriculum changes. This is a lead department who contribute to the development of whole school teaching and learning. Additionally, the department has a planned programme of professional development on Wednesday afternoons which is focussed on best pedagogical practice and on the latest subject research.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

1



As a result of a structured and thoughtfully planned programme, students are familiar with a range of different prayer and liturgical experiences. They participate well and show a respectful attitude towards it. They understand the relevance of prayer to the world they live in and respond positively to the opportunities they are given to lead and participate. Form assemblies, for example, are led by students and follow a carefully planned structure to include scripture, reflection and petitional prayers. An enthusiastic group of students in year mission teams takes a lead in supporting liturgies. These are always linked to the Church's liturgical year. The school community works in close partnership with its local parishes and is benefiting from the service of their local parish priest as much as practically possible to celebrate the Eucharist. For example, the recent Mass of Welcome for Year 7 was a joyful celebration of the new year group. The school also leads carol services in local parish churches.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school. Sacred spaces in all classrooms and the branding of classrooms walls with Catholic social teaching values, highlights the importance school places on its mission. The renaming of school half terms and staff roles in tune with its Catholic identity strongly reinforces this clear message. Students experience a variety of ways to pray. Sometimes this is entirely student-led (such as in form assemblies) or led by the personal development tutor in the daily 'Building the Kingdom' sessions. These thoughtfully planned 20-minute sessions in the middle of the day provide a rich opportunity for students to stop, reflect and pray and to apply messages from scripture in their everyday lives. In the sessions observed it is clear that staff are well-supported in delivering these opportunities and model the best practice both as leaders and participants in prayer. The new school chapel is valued by students and staff as a place for prayer, reflection and services of reconciliation. It is in regular use. The school has developed strong links with its local parishes and benefits from warm and strong partnerships with the local

parish priest. The school ensures that holy days and key liturgical opportunities are celebrated in school.

Leaders demonstrate strong leadership of the school's prayer and liturgical life. This is underpinned with an appropriate and relevant policy. Opportunities for prayer and liturgy are carefully thought out, fully appropriate to the needs of students and always in harmony with the Church's liturgical season. As a result, confidence of staff and students in leading prayer is well-developed. For example, by the end of Year 11, students are able to plan their leavers' Mass with a minimum of support. Staff speak glowingly of the support they receive in delivering prayer from the head of religious education and how this has built their confidence. Personal development leaders conduct light touch learning walks of 'Building the Kingdom' provision to check on compliance and quality and to feed back into training needs. Governors have a rich understanding through the work of the link governor for religious education of the impact of provision in this area. Governors ensure resources for prayer and liturgy are prioritised when budgets are allocated. Although there is no dedicated lay chaplain role the head of religious education leads this area and leads it well. The current model of leadership of prayer is delivering very positive results, however, dedicated chaplaincy time would be of benefit.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas More Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	139764
Full postal address of the school	Dane Bank Avenue, Crewe CW2 8AE
School phone number	01270 568014
Name of head teacher or principal	Mrs Katherine Packham (Acting)
Chair of governing board	Mr Jonathan Fisher
School Website	www.st-thomasmore.cheshire.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	South Cheshire Catholic Multi-Academy Trust
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	11-16
Trustees	Diocese of Shrewsbury
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	15 th February 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Jane Beever	Lead Inspector
Martin Reynolds	Team Inspector
Marcela Foong	Team Inspector

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement