

Department for Formation, Office for Education

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INSPECTION REPORT

St Thomas of Canterbury R.C Primary School
Eastbourne Grove
Heaton
Bolton
BL1 5LH

Inspection date	10 th March 2015
Reporting Inspectors	Mr. A.J. Sowerby Lead Inspector Mr D. Burns Additional Inspector

Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Roman Catholic Primary
URN	
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	416
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mr Paul Lochery
Headteacher	Mrs Frances Lysyj
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Ms Ceclia Tandy
Date of previous inspection	

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
The quality of the Word of God community	1	
The quality of the Welcome community	1	
The quality of Welfare	1	
The quality of Worship	1	
The quality of Witness	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Thomas of Canterbury Primary School is a larger than average sized primary school with 416 pupils in roll. It is situated in the Heaton area of Bolton serving the three parishes of St Thomas of Canterbury (Heaton), St James the Great (Johnson Fold) and St Edmund's in the town centre. Pupils come from extremes of socio economic backgrounds due to the distance and diversity of the catchment area. Currently 93% of pupils are baptised Catholics. The indicative admission number is 60. This is an increase since the last inspection in 2010 due to the growth of the school population. The pupils who are aged 4-11 years are arranged in single age classes.

Most pupils (84%) are from White British backgrounds, with a small number of pupils (24) who are 6% of the school population for whom English is not their first language. 14% of pupils are on the Pupil Premium Indicator with 6% on the FSM register which is well below the national average. The total percentage of pupils identified with SEND is 7% with 2% supported at SA+ and statement and 6% supported at SA below the national average of 9%

An ever growing number of pupils have a range of medical conditions including hearing impairment, anaphylaxis, epilepsy and ASD. Currently there are 7 children with a Statement of Special Educational Need who receive individual one to one support. Attendance is consistently very high at 97%.

The school has a strong commitment to a range of successful accreditations including The Basic Skills Quality Mark, Healthy Schools Award, Investors in People Award, Eco Schools Green Flag, The Geography Quality Mark and the Leading Parent Partnership Award.

There are 14 full time and four part time members of the teaching staff of whom 13 are Catholic. 61% of staff hold the Catholic Teacher's Certificate or its equivalent. There have been no exclusions in the last 12 months.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Thomas of Canterbury is an outstanding Catholic Primary school. There is a genuinely warm and friendly welcome given to all. All children are offered a Catholic education in a caring and supportive environment where differences are welcomed and celebrated. The Word of God is central to the life of the school. The school works collaboratively with the parish priest and is firmly at the heart of the parish. This ensures the pastoral and spiritual needs of the learners and their families are very well met. The inspirational Head Teacher and the Deputy Head Teacher who is the R.E Co-ordinator have high expectations of adults and children. Together with the hard working staff they have created an ethos where everyone recognises the need to work together as a "family", showing love and concern for all its members. This work is further enhanced by the support of the very effective Governing Body. The children love coming to school. This was expressed clearly by all children but especially the School Council, Arts Council and Eco Group who are tremendous ambassadors for the school. They all expressed how very proud they are of all the opportunities given to them but particularly the sporting and musical provision. Pupils are friendly, polite and welcoming and their behaviour at all times is exemplary. They work hard to fulfil the high expectations of the adults who work with them. They enjoyed every opportunity to share with the inspectors their work. The staff and pupils demonstrate a very high level of respect, care and service to others. The outstanding teaching and learning; the creative and imaginative use of the learning environment particularly the library area; as well as the high quality interactive displays, which support the children's faith journey; ensure that all children receive a vibrant Catholic Education. This is also enhanced by the engaging high quality Acts of Collective Worship observed.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE

- It is an outstanding worshipping community
- There is a very high quality of teaching and learning
- The school has very strong and vibrant parish links
- The fact that the pupil voice is listened to at all levels means that the children feel a sense of great ownership of the school
- The school provides wonderful support to both local, national and international charities

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP is outstanding

The quality of Catholic leadership is outstanding. There is very strong leadership at all levels of the school community which contributes significantly to the outstanding provision for Catholic Education that the school currently provides. The Head Teacher and the Deputy Head Teacher who acts as R.E. Co-ordinator provide an extremely clear vision for the school. They provide outstanding role models for the whole school community and as a result the development of the Catholic life of the school is at the forefront of the school's work. They are supported by a knowledgeable Governing Body, and the parish priest who is a very regular visitor to the school. The school has a clear plan for developing R.E across the school and this is reflected in the priority it is given. Evidence for this can be found in the school's clear self-evaluation plan, which is based on the 5Ws model. The school is aware of its next steps and has clear plans for implementing them. As a result the inspectors can verify that this evaluation is both accurate and reflective. The effective Governing Body has a clear sense of vision and is fully involved in the development of the school. Evidence of this can be seen in the way it holds all staff accountable for their actions whilst providing clear leadership in terms of the support it provides to the school. An example of this can be seen in the way they encourage all members of the school community to report about their work to the various Governing Body committees.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD is outstanding:

The Religious Education of the pupils is at the centre of the Core Curriculum. The school's new Mission Statement is clearly evident in all areas of the school. It is child centred and reflects the determination of all to ensure that the school provides the highest quality of Catholic education to all who attend the school. The staffing and resources devoted to RE are of the highest standard, reflecting its significance and importance in the school. The quality of teaching is outstanding with some examples of excellent practice across all key stages. Pupils are challenged to engage with the Big Questions of the purpose and meaning of life throughout the curriculum. This could be seen particularly in those lessons where children were challenged to implement the gospel message in their own lives. Examples of this were seen in Year 3 where children were asked to be gospel detectives and reflect upon how they could follow the gospel message of forgiveness in their own lives, in reception where the children were inspired to follow the example of the Zacchaeus and in Year 6 where they were encouraged to research and make presentations about the miracles of Jesus and their meanings. Scripture is clearly known, understood and made relevant throughout the school. The staff and pupils demonstrate and can articulate the centrality and importance of the Word of God. There is evidence on the displays in the classrooms, corridors and halls of the importance of this. The home, school and parish links are inclusive, creative and effective. Pupils are actively trained in outreach to the local community. This can be seen in the vast number of charities that the school supports. These are not just the Catholic charities such as CAFOD and St Joseph's Penny but also the support the school gives to other local charities such as Bolton Urban Outreach & Grub Tub

The Inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm their judgement:

- Overall the standards of attainment, progress and hence achievement are outstanding. As the curriculum is based on the mission of the church it is challenging, interesting and fulfilling. The children are developing the age appropriate knowledge and skills. The school has incorporated "The Way, The Truth and the Life" scheme. This is well supplemented by other R.E. resources so that as a result standards of teaching are outstanding with many examples of excellent practice.
- Work in R.E is clearly as excellent as work in other subjects due to the high priority given to it in school. This was seen by inspectors during the scrutiny of both the R.E and Literacy books. Marking was consistently good in R.E. Standards in RE are excellent. The children are encouraged to take the initiative and lead their own learning thereby developing their independence. This is evident in all classes. There are regular visits into and out of school to enrich the RE curriculum such as participating in joint Diocesan and parish masses.
- The school has worked collaboratively to gather evidence so that the school has a clear strategy that includes all members of the school community in implementing the 5Ws across the school.
- The introduction of school prayer leaders has further enhanced the development of the Catholic Life of the school and enabled children to take an active part in it. This was evidenced by watching a number of them

lead a voluntary act of worship during the lunch time break which linked into the message given at the morning's assembly.

THE QUALITY OF WELCOME is outstanding:

St Thomas of Canterbury School is a school where everyone feels welcome. Parents were keen to express their views by saying "You get a real welcome with a staff member on the gate every morning" whilst another commented that "the staff treat every child as being special and that they treat them as they would their own" The importance of the dignity of the individual is clearly evident at all levels. This could be seen in the way that all pupils and staff are treated. Relationships are of the highest quality. All members of the school community demonstrate a very high level of belonging and ownership of the school. Pupils are given a high level of responsibility in creating and sustaining the schools sense of welcome. Parents are very welcome into school and are encouraged to engage in their child's learning. This could clearly be seen in the way that staff from the Foundation Stage classes met parents at the start of the school day and discussed with them any concerns that they had. The school has excellent procedures for welcoming new members of the school communities. Parents were keen to express their appreciation of the way that the Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher and Parish Priest work together to ensure that all children settle in and are quickly made to feel welcome in school.

The school has a very active P.T.A. who make very welcome members of the wider local community. Further evidence of this sense of welcome could be seen in the links that the school makes through its link with children in other schools and the parish.

The inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm their judgements:

- New families are welcomed into the school with warmth by the opportunities which are created to visit the school and meet the whole team. Parents voiced to the inspector how the staff went out of their way to make them feel part of the community of St. Thomas of Canterbury through the organisation of a variety of different social and fund raising activities.
- Parents are kept informed and up to date about the curriculum and events in school through the use of the school newsletter and school website.
- The school also ensures that the voice of the children is heard and respected. The School Council, Eco Group and Arts Council were keen to express their opinion about the changes they had brought about in school such as the provision of improved play facilities and the development of a Peace Garden. They are also extremely proud that the school has introduced the children's own School Improvement Plan.
- Within school relationships are of the highest quality. The school provides a wide range of fund raising and social activities to which all members of the school community are welcome. This has helped develop in both parents and children a great sense of social awareness and community spirit.

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE is outstanding:

The staff and pupils demonstrate a very high level of respect, care and service to others. This was witnessed in all classes where children feel confident and secure enough to tend to their personal needs without interrupting the learning or having their dignity abused. The structures and procedures ensure that all pupils and staff feel safe and are treated with respect and dignity. This was evidenced in the way that members of staff cared for children who were hurt or unwell. The outreach support provided by the school ensures that the needs of parents and young families are met in a structured and sensitive manner. All pupils and staff feel safe and free to express their opinions and know that these will be valued. This was seen during discussions with the children who expressed their opinions about the variety of opportunities provided for them and how they felt empowered to express their opinions. Importance and recognition is given equally to all. The budget, staffing and resourcing decisions demonstrate a consistent commitment to Catholic stewardship throughout the school. The quality of outreach support provided by the school is absolutely outstanding as senior leaders live out the gospel message to care for others in their service to the community. Examples of this include the joint fund raising efforts with the parish to support the CAFOD Water Aid Project in Ethiopia and the local Bolton food banks.

The Inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm their judgement:

- The physical, spiritual and mental well-being of each person is central to the school's mission. Children are caring and have a true sense of right and wrong. The school is a very caring community where everyone is valued. Children during lessons listened respectfully to other pupils' ideas. This has ensured that outstanding behaviour occurs across the school and the welfare of children is very well catered for.
- Calm support is offered by sensitive adults when children have difficulty remaining on task. Such role models ensure learning and good relationships develop. The school stresses the importance of reaching out beyond its own community so that children feel part of God's world. The charity work is a living example of this as children support CAFOD, St Joseph's Penny and many other charities chosen by the children.
- The school goes to great lengths to ensure as far as possible children are free from worry and a happy, calm atmosphere is the norm. The school provides Bubble and Circle Time so that the children have ample opportunities to share any concerns that they have with skilled and supportive members of staff. The informed parish priest provides similar support for the well-being of members of the staff.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORSHIP COMMUNITY is outstanding:

The school provides a variety of worship opportunities for pupils throughout the school (prayer, reflection, liturgies) including small and large groups – which are appropriate to their backgrounds and faith experiences. All children are encouraged to participate in voluntary acts of worship which are appropriate to the Liturgical Year for example the children in the Prayer Club prayed reflectively together at lunchtime on the meaning of the Beatitudes in their life. The JAM (Jesus and Me) provides additional opportunities for quiet prayer and reflection. The inclusive and reflective collective acts of worship help pupils to grow in confidence in prayer and develop a relationship with God. This could be seen in both the assemblies where staff and children work together collaboratively and the acts of worship where all the children were provided with the opportunity to reflect quietly upon the meaning of the gospel message. The provision and development of a variety of places for personal prayer across the school showed the whole school's commitment to the development of the Catholic Life of the School. The school has strong links with the parish of St. Thomas of Canterbury's where they participate in a variety of masses and other liturgical celebrations. One example of this are the class masses which are child friendly acts of worship.

The inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm their judgements:

- The parish priest regularly celebrates Mass which the children attend in church. The school shares the celebration of Mass with the parish. Key events are celebrated with special Masses: at the beginning of each school year and at the beginning and end of each term, the parish and school feast day, Holy Days and at the end of the year.
- There are strong links between the parish and the school particular with regard to the preparation of the children for the Sacraments of Initiation.
- During Advent, Lent and the Easter season the school holds assemblies, liturgies and times of reflection and reconciliation that are all shared by the whole school and parish community.
- There is a daily act of collective worship. These take place in a variety of formats but also are linked clearly to the Liturgical Year. Children pray in classes, small groups and individually with great reverence, respect and thought.

- Pupils are comfortable with their feelings and have a good and knowledgeable vocabulary. Each class has a special area of focus. The children know many school prayers and compose powerful prayers for themselves. In many classes there were examples of displays of the children's own prayers.
- Attractive displays which were seen around school are used to show and stimulate prayer opportunities. Hymns, music and singing enhanced the quality and enjoyment of prayer in school.
- The Gospel values are clearly evidenced throughout all the policies and procedures and have a significant impact on learning and the life of the school.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS is outstanding:

All staff act as excellent role models for the children and help them in recognising that God is with them in every aspect of school life. Adults and pupils witness to the Mission Statement of the school, which informs everything and is explicit in policies and the lived experience of the whole community. Adults act as role models of the school's mission and values and as key promoters of the ethos of the school for the pupils and the school community's witness to the wider community. The staff and pupils feel confident and secure in their witness to Christ, the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. Pupils are confident in witnessing to the beliefs and values of a Catholic community and are actively encouraged and supported in being pro-active citizens who participate in the decision-making processes at a local and national level. This is seen in the way the school promotes support for various charities so as to promote support for the Common Good.

An explicit Catholic culture permeates the whole of school and is clearly identifiable through relationships, decision-making and actions.

The Inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm their judgement:

- The entire school community recognises that God is at the heart of the school in their actions and their relationships. All live the word of God. The mission statement is the powerful tool which is used to demonstrate how the school bears witness to a loving God. All members of the school family meet God each day and strive to meet all the challenges involved in this witness.
- The school mission is known and understood by all at appropriate levels. Relationships are outstanding at St Thomas of Canterbury and a strong sense of teamwork and belonging exist.
- The children have a highly defined sense of fairness and justice. They know their responsibilities in terms of equal opportunities, stewardship and reconciliation.
- The inspectors noted at all times behaviour was outstanding. Children are respectful of each other. Adults working as a committed team have high expectations of the children and in this atmosphere the children thrive.

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- To continue to implement the 'CARITAS in Action' Scheme.
- To develop a consistent approach to pupil self- assessment in R.E.

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making our visit to St. Thomas of Canterbury so enjoyable when we came to inspect your school for the Bishop. We really enjoyed being with you. Thank you for looking after us so well and helping us to feel very welcome. St. Thomas of Canterbury's is an outstanding Catholic school.

We enjoyed being part of your lessons and were sorry not to see everyone. Thank you for showing us so much of your work and activities. We could see that you are very proud of your school and all that you have achieved together. We were particularly impressed that you thought that the most important part of your learning and life together was that you *'felt connected to one another as all part of God's family'*. We know the Bishop will be delighted to hear this.

Your teachers are really helping you to learn very well and we were very impressed by your excellent relationships and behaviour. It was good to see so much of your new Mission Statement coming through everything you are learning; your relationships and the special way you make everyone feel valued. It is wonderful to see a school made up of pupils and adults who get on so well together so that everyone is cared for as a member of God's family. This is a true reflection of being part of a Catholic community where everyone is welcome and has a place.

You continue to use the RE programme very well, whilst your teachers have found many interesting and creative ways to enhance the R.E. they teach you. You are a very creative school and we were most impressed by the way you work together so co-operatively in your lessons. The prayer services we saw were very good and uplifting experiences. Your teachers have started to implement the new CARITAS in Action Scheme well and we have asked them to continue to develop this with you. We have especially asked them to continue to develop the work that you are doing on the self- evaluation of your work in R.E. so as to help you all understand more about your faith and relationship with God.

God bless you all and have a really happy Easter holiday.

Yours sincerely,

Mr A.J Sowerby
Mr D. Burns
(Section 48 Inspectors)

Summary Report to Parents

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Thomas of Canterbury Primary School is a larger than average sized primary school with 416 pupils in roll. It is situated in the Heaton area of Bolton serving the three parishes of St Thomas of Canterbury (Heaton), St James the Great (Johnson Fold) and St Edmund's in the town centre. Pupils come from extremes of socio economic backgrounds due to the distance and diversity of the catchment area. Currently 93% of pupils are baptised Catholics. The indicative admission number is 60. This is an increase since the last inspection in 2010 due to the growth of the school population. The pupils who are aged 4-11 years are arranged in single age classes.

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THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

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AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

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