



DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

incorporating Section 48 and Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on
behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

URN 149737

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Sheldon Road

Bexleyheath Kent

DA7 4PQ

Inspection date: 28th March 2023

Chair of Governors: Mrs Gina Millbank

Headteacher: Mrs Colette Doran-Hannon

Inspectors: Mr Stephen Beck

Mrs Patricia Horsman

EDUCATION COMMISSION

St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, Kent BR5 2SR

Tel 01689 829331

Interim Director: Angela Cox OBE



Key for inspection grades

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

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School is an established 2-form entry primary school in the Archdiocese of Southwark within the London Borough of Bexley Deanery. It is an academy that joined the South East London Catholic Academy Trust (SELCAT) in October 2022 and is funded through the Education Funding Agency.

The school principally serves the parishes of St Thomas More Bostall Park and St John Vianney Bexleyheath. The school also draws a small number of pupils from nine other parishes. The proportion of baptised Catholic pupils is 56% which has reduced significantly since the previous inspection due mainly to demographic changes.

The average weekly time given to Religious Education is 10% in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

The school takes pupils from 4-11 years of age. The number of pupils currently on roll is 420. The attainment of pupils on entry is broadly average. The proportion of pupils who attract funding through the pupil premium grant (PP) looked after pupils (LAC) or free school meal statutes is 10.8%. 14.1% of pupils are on the special educational needs register (SEND), watch and monitor pupils an additional 4.6 %. 3.3% of pupils have an education health and care plan (EHCP). There are high speech and language requirements in need of weekly speech and language therapy (SALT) sessions. 61% of pupils are from Black and minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) is 35%

The school operates excellent wrap-around care; some pupils are on site as early as 7.30 am, and the extended day service runs until 6.00 pm during term time weekdays.



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Thomas More is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- It is an exemplary and inspirational Catholic School. The mission statement, 'Do more, be more for yourself, for others and for God', permeates every aspect of school life. Its Catholic character is reflected in the school's high-quality environment. All pupils are actively involved in the life of the school and benefit enormously from the provision of its Catholic life.
- The school has sustained and built on the outstanding grade it gained at its last inspection through its clarity of vision and understanding of its strengths and areas for development, as evidenced in the excellent self-evaluation it provided for this inspection.
- Relationships within and between the school and parishes are outstanding, and governors make salient contributions to the Catholic life of the school, as evidenced by their passion and commitment to continual improvement.
- Outcomes for pupils are outstanding. The extremely high levels of concentration and behaviour for learning contribute to a learning environment with a real 'buzz'. Pupils conduct themselves well, demonstrating good manners and exemplary behaviour.
- Pupils willingly participate in and contribute to all of the opportunities provided by a dedicated and caring staff. They enjoy a wide range of events and activities that help them to develop morally and spiritually.
- The provision for Catholic life is outstanding because the mission and ethos of Catholic education underpins all the school does. Collective worship enables school community members to witness their faith in a practical yet reflective manner. It is well established and ready for further developments the school leaders have identified.
- The well-being and personal development of all pupils and staff are at the heart of this faith community. A well-being group has been established, and three team members are trained mental health first aiders.
- The leadership team are outstanding, with all demonstrating a commitment and drive for continual improvement, and they are very proud of their school community.
- Staff are highly conscientious in their vocation as teachers in a Catholic school. They provide a strong sense of spiritual purpose, focusing on ensuring the fullest personal development of all pupils exemplifying that at St Thomas More, every child does matter in this child-centred school.
- Pastoral care is outstanding and was evidenced in conversations with parents who outlined the significant support given by the school in cases of special needs and families experiencing bereavement.
- Parents are full of praise for the school's provision, how their pupils are looked after, and how they feel important in the school. The head of the school enjoys their confidence and support through her skilful nurturing of the community.



WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

With no significant areas for development, the school should;

- Extend the creativity developed in religious education into collective worship to enhance and make these celebrations more prayerful, reflective and meditative.
- Review religious education planning to bring teaching and learning in line with the new curriculum directory following diocesan guidance.

Date Published: 2nd June 2023



Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.	1
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Catholic Life

	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.	1
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	1

Religious Education

	1
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	1
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.	1

Collective Worship

	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship.	1
The quality of provision for Collective Worship.	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	1



CATHOLIC LIFE

1

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

- The school's mission leads with the strapline 'Do more, be more for yourself, for others and for God'. These keywords are known and embraced in the school's Catholic identity by all in what is a distinctively Catholic school.
- The philosophy of servant leadership permeates all aspects of staff and pupils' school life.
- The school's Catholic life is enriched by pupils from other faith communities being utilised in learning about other faiths. Pupils take an active part in all the school's religious celebrations.
- The school provides pupils with a broad range of leadership opportunities through groups including UNICEF, Sanctus, Mini Vinnies, Well-being, The Chooks and Sustainability Council, all of which encompass the values of the school's mission statement.
- As a diverse school, it has developed the talents of EAL pupils by creating a language ambassadors' group. Its members are keen to share their own cultures across the school, lead assemblies, and provide sessions for all-year groups around other faiths.
- The school values pupils' talents, not just academically but holistically. They encourage pupils to truly understand building their community and working together as a team.
- Pupils are listened to and have the opportunity through restorative justice to solve conflicts. They commented on how they felt their views were valued and, as a result, demonstrated high levels of self-esteem. They take pride in helping and encouraging others, as exemplified by their coming up with proposals for C4CBC (Clubs for Children by Children).

The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding

- All staff are committed to the development of the Catholic life of the school. Each staff meeting is opened with a prayer and contemplation to live out the gospel values.
- Staff continue to foster conduct and behaviour rooted in the Gospel values underpinning the school mission statement.
- Every classroom has a prayer/focal point which is monitored and regularly updated by the highly effective Sanctus group, a group of six pupil chaplains. Religious artefacts/displays throughout the school are linked to the liturgical year and/or the school's values.
- Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is highlighted in lessons across the curriculum and religious education lessons, and pupils and staff discuss how these skills apply in everyday life. The school's accreditation as a Gold Rights Respecting School from UNICEF also indicates that CST is embedded throughout the school.



- The pupils undertake many roles to improve their knowledge of liturgy and liturgical ministries, by holding weekly prayer and liturgical dance club sessions that are timetabled for each year group to access. These are planned and run by pupils for pupils. This enables the pupils to develop their liturgical knowledge and learn different ways of praying and how this links to their school life and everyday life.
- The effective pupil chaplaincy group utilise a quiet space for individual and group prayer for every year group and a liturgical dance team who practice during lunchtime.
- The school is a model for developing future Catholic school leaders partly due to the opportunities staff explained they had for their personal and professional development. This is a school strength and provides succession planning at school level.

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

- Leaders and governors show their commitment to the Catholic life and mission of the school by putting Catholic life at the forefront of all that they do for the school. They share a commitment to sustaining the strong Catholic ethos of the school and Catholic community, with two governing body members being parish priests.
- The senior leadership team have embedded transparent systems and procedures for monitoring and self-evaluation in religious education, and a comprehensive action plan has been developed and is reviewed every half term.
- The religious education lead provides half-termly progress reports in religious education, which enables staff and governors to monitor and question developments. Governors are accordingly well informed about the provision of the subject across all year groups.
- Staff professional development (CPD) in relation to the Catholic life and mission of the school has included individual and whole staff training. This has enabled staff to become aware of their values and virtues and how to support pupils and their colleagues in living the school mission statement and modelling servant leadership.
- Parent workshops are held for parents, focusing on educational aspects and resources are shared on how they can support their child.
- The school is kept up to date with advice from the diocese. It maintains contact with other Catholic leaders through the headteacher and the religious education leader, attending diocesan meetings and sharing good practice with other schools in the diocese, deanery, and SELCAT.
- The school's rationale is evangelical by example, and the impact this has had on individual lives was articulated by staff, pupils and parents. A very high number of parental questionnaires were received, and were virtually all positive. One parent wrote, *'I cannot rate this school highly enough. My children are happy, settled and well-educated within the Catholic faith embedded in all aspects of their days'*. Another wrote, *'The school offers strong pastoral care and ensures spiritual guidance to pupils that will benefit them so well as they grow'*.



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is outstanding

- Pupils are actively involved in religious education lessons and are given the opportunity to sing, use drama, role play and other mediums that encourage deeper thinking.
- Teachers track pupil progress using "Target Tracker", updated every half term. Pupils are assessed on whether they work below, within or securely in their age-related band. The religious education leader knows the pupil data well and ensures its effective utilisation.
- In lessons observed every task was differentiated by the level of challenge involved through the use of CH, MCH, MoCH (Challenge, More Challenge, Most Challenge). Pupils were able to choose which level at which to work; this varied from task to task, depending on how confident or secure the pupil felt about their prior learning.
- In Key Stage 1, greater-depth pupils develop their skills and knowledge further by making links to their own lives. Key stage 2 pupils explore linking their skills and knowledge beyond themselves by applying them to real-world issues. This continues to be developed so that by the end of Year 5, pupils are making links to scripture, UNICEF and Catholic Social Teaching. In Year 6, pupils are applying all of them to real-world issues. Planning for this is well established.
- At the start of each topic, the pupils have the opportunity to ask questions through a planned 'I Wonder' session using religious literacy, which is very secure and in classroom discussions being used appropriately. After working through the modelled examples, pupils also have the opportunity to choose the challenge of learning from at least three planned learning objectives.
- Evidence from data suggests that pupils attain well within the religious education curriculum, with increased numbers of pupils securing their understanding of the topics studied to a higher level. Book scrutiny confirmed significant pupil progress over time.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding

- The religious education leader is strategic. She works alongside teachers to develop their subject knowledge and pedagogical expertise, giving them independence and confidence. Non-Catholic teachers confirmed how well supported they felt in developing their subject knowledge.
- As a result of precise planning, pupils are exposed to various media and genres, enabling quality and variety within their work, including Lectio Divina, which was a direct action from the previous inspection. Adaptation in planning is key throughout, and planning shows clear differentiated tasks to match the varied needs of individual pupils.



- Teaching and learning are centred around one question underpinning the topic's teachings. The pupils review this question at the beginning and end of each lesson recording their responses.
- Higher-achieving pupils working at greater depth can further explore their skills and knowledge through higher-order questioning, research and the use of staggered starts to allow them to focus on the task at hand. In a Key Stage 2 lesson, for example, pupils constructed and took part in a 'conscience alley' to reflect as either supporters or opponents of the crucifixion. They considered what they might whisper to Jesus whilst he was on the path carrying his cross. The ensuing discussion was of a very high order, demonstrating empathy, passion and the ability to defend one's position.
- Pupils are assessed on the work they have carried out throughout the topic, which gives teachers a sound judgement regarding the level at which they are working.
- Pupils with SEND are supported with materials that enable them to learn the same skills as their peers in a way that is accessible to their needs.
- There are further opportunities for hooks during the lessons through videos, art, 'pose, pause, pounce and bounce' (PPPB), generating a sense of awe and wonder.
- Mini plenaries are well used within lessons enabling the learning to be moved forward and address any misconceptions.
- Well-developed live marking enables the pupils to reflect on their learning and their next steps to improve. Their religious education work is also celebrated by the senior leadership team, shared on Twitter and included in the weekly newsletter.
- Self-evaluation by pupils and their peers is regular and forward-thinking enabling pupils to articulate their next steps.
- Pupils demonstrate respect for themselves and others through relationship health education (RHE) lessons using the Ten-Ten curriculum content. They reflect and evaluate what they already know and how to incorporate what they have learnt into everyday life. Parents expressed considerable satisfaction with the school's approach in this area.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding

- The religious education scheme of work follows the Religious Education Curriculum Directory and is monitored to ensure that lessons reach and exceed expectations set nationally.
- All staff are aware of their role as leaders in the Catholic community. As part of this role, all staff members are expected, regardless of experience, to teach religious education in the classroom, which is of a high calibre and links to the distinctly Catholic ethos of the school and the Catholic Social Teaching principles. Attainment and progress are shared with the SLT and the governors, where pupils are tracked over the year with updates shared in a Governor's reports.
- Leaders are involved in the analysis and action planning to highlight staff who need extra support and pupils who need further help on their religious education journey.



- All staff consider implementations and developments. They are aware that these are best served through engagement in well-developed self-reflection opportunities and a collaborative approach that aids overall school development.
This is tailored to their individual needs with coaching and time spent working through planning and lesson delivery in order for implementations to be effective.
- The governor with responsibility for religious education is one of the parish priests who attends meetings to discuss the areas of the school development plan, which are religious education focused. This, in turn, gets fed back to governors at full governing body and governor curriculum committee meetings.
- Quality assurance is rigorous and regular, and feedback to staff both praises and identifies areas for development and next steps. Evidence of quality assurance includes lesson observations, learning walks, book monitoring, pupil interviews and data analysis.
- Creative aspects of religious education are central to using a spiritual journal. This enables pupils to share their knowledge and develop others, and it also aids with assessment and planning for the next lesson.
- The school holds visioning days on nominated Saturdays when governors can look at books and talk to leaders about progress and achievement and triangulate this against the data provided. This has developed a knowledgeable and well-informed governing body actively maintaining standards.

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COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding

- Since the last inspection, the school has commendably provided the pupils with opportunities to reflect and meditate that reflect the Gospel of the day or the season of the liturgical year. They can now engage in silence and draw on personal relationships with Jesus.
- Pupils understand the purpose of prayer and liturgy which extends their knowledge of scripture. Their singing is delightful, as is the use of liturgical dance.
- Pupil-led class acts of worship take place twice a week, and pupils demonstrate confidence and spirituality in planning and delivering their liturgy. It would now be opportune to develop further the creative possibilities of these celebrations.
- The school takes pride in the opportunities it provides for student leadership, which enables prefects to plan and deliver the Monday Gospel assembly focusing on the Gospel from the previous Sunday.
- Evidence suggests that the pupil chaplaincy group is effective in the delivery of the mission of the school.
- Monitoring the class prayer book is another role of pupil prayer leaders, and school leaders use their reports in their self-evaluation process. Pupils take opportunities to pray for things that matter to them which was witnessed from Early Years where pupils are helped to gain confidence in praying aloud with their peers through the use of a 'prayer bear'.
- Masses and class assemblies are written with the pupils and shared with the parish priest, who advises of any changes needed. Class assemblies are planned according to the liturgical year, with a gospel or parable at the root of the message being given.
- Year 5 pupils delivered Stations of the Cross and produced thoughtful and reflective artwork linked to this. The parish priest introduced the pupils to Benediction at the end of the Christmas and Easter terms.
- Every pupil takes an active part in all the school has to offer, including religious celebrations such as Eid, Diwali, Advent assembly, and Masses.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding

- Scripture and liturgy are at the heart of every school day. There is a wealth of different opportunities for collective worship, and every class has a timetabled daily collective worship either as a whole school or at a class level.
- Pupils plan, deliver and lead worship and have public and private prayer opportunities.
- Current affairs are used effectively to help place pupils in the present, and scripture is also used to help develop pupils' faith experience. Providing further creative options within pupil lead worship would enable them to appreciate more fully the different ways to pray.



- Pupils pray formally at least three times a day, in the morning at the start of the school day, at lunch and at home time. They are also exposed to prayers that they should know at their age. Times for additional prayer that is spontaneous are provided, and this comes across as a natural response and is well-modelled by staff.
- The school makes excellent use of an established Oratory. The pupils can visit the Oratory for prayer time, meditation, adoration, reflection and learning sessions with the priests. It is used for many Lectio Divina sessions and for learning about signs and symbols.
- The religious education leader invites parents with their toddlers to a 'stay-and-pray' session each week focusing on prayers they will learn in school and completing activities based on the Sunday gospel. This is well attended, and parents commented on how much they appreciated these opportunities, which made them feel valued members of the school community.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding

- Governors are active in challenging and supporting leaders at all levels. They evaluate collective worship and discuss the progress of the priorities against the action plan to ensure that leaders are clear. They share the vision for the school, which they drive to be an outstanding Catholic Community. They visit the school and share information gathered with other governors, which leads to further challenges and support for school leaders.
- Governors and leaders ensure that reconciliation is available for pupils and staff at key points in the year, often inviting visiting priests to ensure everyone can participate.
- Collective worship is planned to ensure that every pupil is engaged and spiritually involved. It is delivered on a moral and spiritual level that enriches the nature of each of them and takes them further on their life journey, using the school's mission statement and gospel values as guidance.
- Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to participate and to respond, either by taking an active part in introducing the worship or by listening, watching and joining in on the offered worship.
- Each year group has resources they follow and use, which they can access on google classroom with advice from their teacher.
- Recent training on the order of Mass has been delivered by one of the parish priests to all teaching staff so that all staff can better understand when they participate in the Church's calendar, such as Holy Days of Obligation.
- A parent wrote, *'The approach to religious education is fun and interactive, and my children always recite bible stories and sing beautiful songs sang at school'*.