

# St Thomas More Catholic School

Glendale Avenue, Wood Green, London N22 5HN

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 24 and 25 January 2018



## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- St Thomas More School offers a high quality religious education curriculum which meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory and ensures progress in the development of pupils' religious literacy.
- Pupils achieve exceptionally well in religious education given their typically challenging starting points.
- The very positive impact of teaching on the pupils' progress is supported very well by the wrap-around care for the pupils.
- Pupils demonstrate very high standards of religious literacy and understanding.
- Relationships within the school are very harmonious and reflect Christian respect and concern for others.
- Pupils' behaviour and approach to learning are excellent.
- Assessment in religious education is well established and informs teaching and learning.
- Sixth-form provision for core religious education is creative, and embraced warmly by students of all faiths.
- The subject leader models excellent practice in her approach to the Church's education mission, in her contribution to the school's Catholic life, and in her drive to achieve the highest standards in religious education.
- The contribution of the religious education department to the Catholic life of the school is exceptional.
- Governors are well informed and are regular visitors to the school. They play an active role in supporting developments and monitoring performance.

### B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- The time allocation at each key stage now meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- Pupils experience a wide range of opportunities for prayer and participation in the liturgical life of the Church.
- Key relationships with parents, carers, local parishes, other Catholic secondary schools and the Diocese of Westminster are very strong.
- The call to serve others is well articulated in the school. As such, pupils are encouraged to reflect on how they can make a personal commitment to home, school and the wider world.
- The school provides the pupils with a varied range of experiences of what it means to live according to Catholic teaching and traditions.
- Collective worship follows the liturgical year; liturgies and prayer life provide pupils with opportunities to develop spiritually and enhance their beliefs and values.
- The school is sensitive to the needs of pupils of other faiths and is a very inclusive worshipping community.
- Parents of other Christian denominations and other faiths feel welcome and valued.
- School self-evaluation is accurate and reflective. It is focused on continuing improvement and raising standards across the school to lead pupils to the fullness of life and its opportunities.
- Governors offer very good support in overseeing and reviewing the Catholic life of the school.

## A. Classroom Religious Education

### What has improved since the last inspection?

All the areas for improvement from the last report have served as a focus for development in the school since the last inspection. The teaching and learning of religious education have been enhanced; much work has been undertaken in developing both diagnostic marking and pupil response, and A Level has been re-introduced into Key Stage 5, where the uptake of Religious Studies is now healthy.

### The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

The religious education curriculum has been thoroughly revised at each key stage to ensure it is carefully aligned with the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). The department uses a good range of resources to enhance the delivery of religious education and draws on a wider range of material to add depth and scope. Religious education programmes are used creatively and supplement and enhance the delivery of the RECD resulting in a progressive and cohesive programme for each key stage, where topics are revisited allow for greater depth of provision and learning.

### Pupil achievement in religious education is outstanding

Pupils typically enter the school with prior attainment which is below national average. There is a significant proportion of pupils without prior attainment data who have not attended schools within the UK in each year group and have no English. Many join the school at other than standard times. From these challenging starting points, the school skilfully accelerates progress to ensure that it is rapid and sustained over time. Different groups of pupils including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with English as an additional language make very good progress. Pupils actively participate in lessons and demonstrate high levels of religious literacy and understanding. A significant number of pupils from other faiths make excellent progress in their understanding of the Catholic faith. Whilst in Key Stage 4 attainment is below the national average at each performance threshold in religious education, the progress of pupils is outstanding and sustained over time. External analysis indicates that pupils achieved on average half a grade higher than expected nationally in RE in the preceding year. Progress within each year group is carefully tracked against targets. Where pupils are identified as at risk of failing to achieve these targets, swift intervention measures help to ensure that pupils are supported to achieve their potential. In Key Stage 4, attainment outcomes are broadly in line with those of other core subjects. At Key Stage 5 attainment outcomes are improving and progress is within expected national ranges. Results in advanced level religious education courses have been successful with all students gaining at least a pass grade in the most recent examination series.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

In-school analysis indicates that very good progress is made by most pupils, but with a greater degree of stretch and challenge learning could be extended even further, particularly for higher ability pupils, and thereby improve outcomes at all key stages. Topic support documents for pupils at early stage language acquisition help to support progress of those new to English at Key Stage 3. The department has adopted the diocesan Year 7 benchmarking assessment as a diagnostic tool to measure pupil progress. Termly key assessments points and analysis provide regular opportunities to measure pupil progress. External moderation with schools across the trust is conducted to ensure that the levels and grades awarded are accurate. Teachers have very strong subject knowledge which actively contributes to learners' progress, motivating and enthusing pupils to engage in their learning. Lessons are well structured and the most effective teaching observed promoted pupils'

engagement and discussion, offering a range of strategies to ensure individual learning needs were met. Teachers used higher order questioning to probe and check understanding of key ideas and nurtured positive, respectful relationships with pupils. Pupils display very impressive levels of religious literacy at each key stage. In a Year 11 lesson on 'the problem of evil and suffering', pupils were able to express, understand and accurately demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of such key concepts as omnipresence, omnibenevolence and omniscience. Observation of a Year 7 lesson indicated pupils knew about the Sacraments of Initiation, with very clear understanding of signs and symbols of the sacraments. Evidence from pupils' written work indicates that pupils generally demonstrate pride in their work. Detailed feedback is typically focused on moving learning forward, and pupils generally respond positively to this, although practice is not yet consistent across the department.

**The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education is outstanding**

The school now has the task of sustaining current results and maintaining the drive towards continued improvement. School leaders, staff and governors are now well placed to take the school forward. Together with the senior leader with responsibility for Catholic life across the trust schools, the subject leader creates and articulates a dynamic vision for religious education. Leaders and managers provide effective monitoring and evaluation of religious education to maintain and develop the school's high standards. Staff are supported in their continuing subject development through regular training, and well established systems are in place to support, encourage and challenge pupils. Systems of monitoring and assessment are well established and enable the school and subject leader to accurately track pupil progress over time. As a result, pupils demonstrate a confident religious literacy. The school has an identified focus on continuing to raise standards of attainment and progress, particularly for higher attaining pupils and has very good capacity to implement this. School self-evaluation is accurate and reflective. It is focused on continuing improvement and raising standards across the school.

**What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?**

- In order to secure more consistent levels of outstanding teaching throughout, the department needs to provide more opportunities for pupils to take greater responsibility for moving aspects of their own learning forward.
- Continue to develop the consistency of marking feedback across all members of the religious education team.

## B. The Catholic life of the school

### What has improved since the last inspection?

Issues arising from the previous inspection have mostly been addressed. However, the newly appointed chaplain can only offer the school limited time. The variety of worship and prayer life has improved and links with local parishes and feeder schools are strong. The proportion of classroom religious education has been increased to 10% of normal curriculum time.

### The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

**is outstanding**

Following very recent adjustments to the school timetable, religious education now meets the requirements of Bishops' Conference and governors have given assurances that this will continue. Religious education plays a central role in achieving the mission of the school. The department is well resourced and is generously funded in line with other core subjects. The department is situated in well maintained, dedicated classrooms adjacent to the chapel and the curriculum is delivered by subject specialists. The school also benefits from outstanding support from the designated religious education governor.

### The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

**is outstanding**

The subject leader is deeply invested in ensuring that the Catholic life of the school is visible to all, and clearly appreciates the centrality of religious education and its impact on the daily life of the school. Pastoral leaders value the support they receive in delivering Gospel messages, providing a consistent experience with regard to the school ethos to a diverse faith community. Collective worship follows the liturgical year; liturgies and prayer life provide pupils with opportunities to develop spiritually and enhance their beliefs and values. Priests from the local parishes and other religious enrich the prayer life of the school. Parents and carers appreciate opportunities to be included and respond positively to the invitations offered throughout the year. The prayer life of the school is very well embedded, collaborative and often engaging; prayers in different languages point to the inclusivity of this worshipping community. There is some evidence of pupil evaluation of the opportunities offered, and the school is committed to further developing this, and to realise the opportunity to build on pupil involvement through the role of Liturgy prefects. Opportunities such as the voluntary Mass and the daily 'Moment for Jesus', provide pupils with the space for quiet reflection, personal petition, sharing and discussion, which they value. As one Year 7 pupil noted, 'we pray as a community and listen to each other'.

### The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice –

**is outstanding**

Support for a range of charities illustrate the school's care for the wider community, encouraging pupils to help and consider the needs of others. Impressive sums of money are raised for a variety of local and national causes. Leaders demonstrate a purposeful commitment to ensuring that many pupils and families living in deprived conditions within the school community are supported to minimise barriers to learning, and therefore ensure that the awareness of the needs of others starts within the community itself. The school further serves the local neighbourhood in providing English lessons for parents of those within its community. Outreach work includes caring for others in need, such as supporting ongoing projects focused on homelessness, and serving the local elderly community through the senior citizens Christmas party, or collecting items for Christmas hampers and Easter eggs, which enable pupils to play a full part in the local community. As such, pupils are

encouraged to reflect on how they can make a personal commitment to home, school and the wider world. Pupils are very proud of their school and feel safe. They are given many opportunities to develop independence and responsibility through the prefect system, peer mentor scheme, school council representatives, Head Boy and Girl teams and are proud to serve their school in this way.

**The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf**

**is outstanding**

The school has very good links with the parish, the deanery and the diocese, recognising that it is part of a wider Catholic family. Leaders avail themselves of diocesan training to support their development and partnerships with parents are seen as central to the school's understanding of itself as a Catholic community. Parent views and feedback are regularly sought and used to inform school policy, and attendance rates at parents' evenings are excellent in all year groups. The school is strongly committed to its central role within the Cardinal Hume Trust and uses the opportunities this provides as a means to further develop staff and support school improvement across the trust. As such, the school puts itself readily at the service of the diocese, and welcomes members of the diocesan clergy in to celebrate with the school. Communication with parents is a strength of the school, with regular weekly newsletters, termly publications and a parent forum, all of which offer a means to strengthen partnerships. As a result, parents are appreciative of the school and value the Catholic education it offers. Parents of other Christian denominations and other faiths feel welcome and valued.

**The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school**

**is outstanding**

The school's mission 'to lead those in our care to grow in their faith and to benefit from an enriching education' is reflected in the school's commitment in striving to achieve academic success and ensure the best possible life chances are available to the community entrusted to their care. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have a clear, shared vision for the school, focused on improving standards. They demonstrate a purposeful commitment to continued school improvement and to ensuring that the Catholic ethos of the school permeates all areas of school life. The head of Catholic ethos and life, together with the subject leader, work tirelessly to provide the entire community with ways to encounter a richness of opportunities to experience this. Governors play an active and evaluative role in the school, know the school's strengths well and commit fully to further development, playing an active part in the school community. They are committed and conscientious in their role.

**What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?**

- To develop the role of the recently appointed chaplain as a visible, spiritual guide and leader of staff and pupils.
- To further develop the role of pupils in planning, preparing and leading school Masses and liturgies through Liturgy prefect system, under the guidance of the school chaplain.
- To continue to develop global links and service relating to the Common Good, building on newly established connections.
- To further inspire and motivate all staff to share in the collective responsibility for development of Catholic life of the school, building capacity and broadening this focus beyond that of the subject leader.

## Information about this school

- The school is an 8 form entry Catholic Academy school in the locality of Wood Green.
- The school serves the parishes of St Paul's Church, Wood Green, St Monica's Church Palmers Green, St John Vianney, Tottenham and St Francis De Sales, Tottenham.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 58%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 32 % and from other faiths is 6 %. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 36 %.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 3.
- There are 38 % of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 12 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average.
- There is an above average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 338 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (31 %).

<b>Department for Education Number</b>	309/4703
<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	I39/362
<b>Local Authority</b>	Haringey

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11-18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	1087
<b>The appropriate authority</b>	The governing body and academy trust
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Meadows
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Martin Tissot
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8888 7122
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stthomasmoreschool.org.uk">www.stthomasmoreschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@stthomasmoreschool.org.uk">office@stthomasmoreschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30 April and 1 May 2013
<b>Grades from previous inspection:</b>	
<b>Classroom religious education</b>	Very Good
<b>The Catholic life of the school</b>	Very Good

## Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 21 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 3 assemblies and a number of acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

## Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

## Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

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