

Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

URN: 141635

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. David Oakley, Bishop of Northampton on:

Date: 15-16 November 2023

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The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- The school mission *'Try to be like Jesus in all that we think, do and say'* permeates through the school in all interactions between adults and pupils.
- Pupils consistently exhibit exemplary behaviour in lessons, liturgies and throughout the school, demonstrating a remarkable level of calmness and respect.
- The dedication of all staff members is evident as they work diligently and are fully committed to advancing the Catholic mission of the school.
- The school has established strong links with the parish and local community, strengthening the vibrant life within the school.

What the school needs to improve:

- Continue developing pupils' understanding of the demands of Catholic social teaching and the underlying theology.
- Plan and design tasks that enable all pupils to demonstrate their knowledge against the learning intention.
- Develop pupils' ability and opportunities to plan, deliver and evaluate prayer and liturgy.

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:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

2



St. Thomas More Catholic Primary School embraces an inclusive environment, extending a warm welcome to all. Stakeholders understand and embody the school's mission statement '*Try to be like Jesus in all that we think, do and say*'. Pupils express how this mission shapes their choices and serves as a guide for reflecting on their behaviour towards others, resulting in exemplary conduct. This ethos is central to all relationships within the school, where adults treat pupils with care, fostering a sense of being valued and loved within the school community. Recognising their uniqueness, pupils willingly share their talents, fostering a deep respect for their own dignity and that of others; this was evident in the Key Stage 2 assembly. Parents value the opportunity that school provides for their children to '*develop a strong understanding of their relationship with God*'. Actively engaged in charitable initiatives, the Mission Ambassadors take a proactive role in selecting causes to support, this year directing their fundraising efforts to a local care home. Their empathy for those in need reflects a commitment to fulfilling their duty as Catholics to help others. The school also supports Cafod and other national and local charities, often linked to the need of members of their community.

The mission statement is displayed prominently throughout the school and children can express and discuss it. At the beginning of each school year, every class engages in activities related to the mission statement and their class saint. Staff actively participate in reviewing and revisiting the mission statement, ensuring alignment with the school's vision. The school cultivates a joyful and supportive community where children feel safe, confident that any adult, will offer support, one pupil said, '*we can count on our teachers*'. All staff are dedicated to educating the whole person, offering strong pastoral care with a commitment to the well-being of the most vulnerable. Christ is central to the school's ethos, fostering a lived sense of community in relationships. Staff serve as

exemplary role models and children express pride in speaking about them. One parent wrote, *'The head teacher is a shining example to her staff and she makes each and every member of her team, child and parent feel like an integral part of the St Thomas More family!'* The school has adopted the Ten:Ten programme for relationship, sex and health education, the scheme is approved by the diocese to meet statutory requirements and remains faithful to teachings of the Church.

As guardians for the Catholic life and mission of the school, leaders and governors understand and deliver the Church's mission for education. Regular review of the Catholic self-evaluation document by the head teacher, senior leaders and governors ensures they stay informed about the Catholic life and mission, religious education and collective worship, identifying areas of strength and weakness, which leads into the action plan. The head teacher's reports, presented regularly at governors' meetings, further keep them updated. Governors engage in monitoring and evaluation, articulating the view of parents and pupils obtained through recent questionnaires. This engagement is evident in the governor minutes, reflecting a collaborative relationship where they challenge the head teacher and feel heard. Leaders, staff and pupils express enthusiasm about the links and relationships with the local parish, with many participating in weekend masses and engaging in service. Recognising the challenges of teaching, leaders and governors establish supportive structures for high-level pastoral care for staff. The Mission Ambassadors and other pupils highly value the Catholic life of the school, expressing eagerness to expand their role and actively contribute to evaluating the provision.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

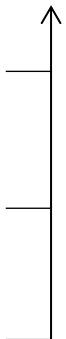
The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

Leadership

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

2



The Come and See programme is embedded throughout the school enabling knowledge, understanding and skills to be built upon, in line with the *Religious Education Directory*. As recommended by the diocese, the Early Years Foundation Stage are trialling the new Directory, *To know You more clearly*. Pupils are given the opportunity at the end of every religious education lesson to reflect spiritually on their learning, developing their religious literacy and this is aided by a whole school oracy focus. Most pupils could recall previous learning and how this linked to their new learning. There is an appropriate amount of work in the books, which is of a good standard and well presented. The pupils are proud of their work. The religious education books have parity with their English books. Teachers regularly share pupils' work, which encourages others to make improvements. Behaviour for learning is exemplary, consequently they engage and concentrate well, showing a willingness to improve their knowledge. The pupils value and enjoy their religious education. However, some pupils cannot articulate how well they are doing or their next steps. The school data shows attainment for all pupils in line with or better than writing, with most pupils meeting or exceeding age-related expectations by the end of each key stage. This is analysed and validated by leaders and governors.

Most teachers are confident in religious education subject knowledge and those who are not are supported by a program of professional development and by school leaders and the Catholic life lead for the Trust when needed. All teachers are committed to the importance of religious education and understand the impact it has on the moral and spiritual development of pupils. Planning using Come and See and Insight enables learning to be linked to pupils' current assessment data. All staff use praise appropriately and in the moment feedback, which motivates pupils to work hard. Most staff use questioning well to identify understanding and re-phrase explanations as needed. Staff have worked hard to offer pupils a variety of ways to express their learning and most of the time

this enables the needs of all pupils to be met. Additional adults are well deployed, demonstrate strong professional relationships with pupils and provide effective support.

The use of Come and See enables leaders and governors to deliver curriculum aims in line with the Directory. They ensure that religious education is held in parity with the other core curriculum areas with evidence in policies, reporting, timetabling, budget and resources all supporting this. The headteacher, who is also the subject leader, ensures that professional development opportunities are available. Come and See teacher notes and the Catholic Basics training materials are shared with all staff. The headteacher has a clear vision for the development of the subject; this needs to be implemented to further improve teaching and learning in religious education. There is evidence of both leaders and governors monitoring and self-evaluation. There are a variety of opportunities for engaging enrichment activities that enhance pupils' learning including the use of external visitors. The headteacher has identified this as an area that she intends to improve and has a clear vision for developing this.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

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

2

Leadership

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

2

Pupils value and respond to the experience of prayer and liturgy, a feeling of reverence was observed during the Key Stage 2 worship where all pupils were actively engaged. This was also evident during morning prayer. The pupils enjoy the variety of opportunities that they have including, Sacred Space, assemblies, reflections, Masses and preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Communion and Confirmation. Pupils can articulate their understanding of the traditional Catholic prayers, their own prayers and can discuss how the liturgical year influences these. Various forms of pupil participation were noted, including silent reflection, scripture, response to prayer, singing and listening to music.

Prayer and liturgy form the heart of St. Thomas More school, playing a central role in the school's prayer life with a daily pattern of devotion. Significant events in the school community, whether joyful or sorrowful, are recognised through prayer, and scripture holds a pivotal position in all worship. The headteacher sets an example of good practice for the staff, empowering them to serve as role models for the pupils. The school have a well-developed Chaplaincy Team made up of school staff and members of the parish; they are skilled in helping pupils participate in worship. This needs to be developed further, to enable pupils to plan, lead and evaluate prayer and liturgy in line with the liturgical norms of the Church. Staff and pupils are encouraged to use their talents to enrich the school's prayer life. This was evident when a very talented pupil played the piano during assembly. Each classroom has well-kept and resourced prayer tables conducive to prayer. The headteacher had an inspirational vision for a prayer garden that she, along with the school community, have worked hard to deliver. When this area is complete, it will enhance the school's prayer life and offer opportunities for independent prayer and reflection. The school has established links with local clergy and plan regular opportunities for pupils to attend Mass at the church. Parents value the

opportunities that the school offer for them to attend assemblies, Masses and other liturgies throughout the year, they feel very involved and welcomed.

The school's policy for prayer and liturgy is well developed, this aids successful planning by staff. Leaders and Governors have a well thought out and planned calendar reflecting the liturgical year including celebrating holy days of obligation. The sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation are taught in school and pupils and parents value this provision. Leaders understand the variety of ways of praying, and this, combined with their awareness of the needs of the community guides their approach to prayer and liturgy. An illustration of this is the way the school comes together in prayer, following cases of bereavement and need. The headteacher initiates all meetings with prayer, emphasising the importance of it within her life, therefore setting a precedent for others. She and governors acknowledge the significance of prayer and liturgy in budgeting and resource allocation. This enables the Chaplaincy Team to deliver high quality prayer and liturgy, which is valued by everyone. Monitoring and evaluating of the provision, by leaders and governors, forms part of the school's self-evaluation process. The staff speak of pupils' involvement, and this needs to be more explicit so that the pupils are aware of the role they have in the process.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas More Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	141635
Full postal address of the school	Northampton Rd, Kettering NN15 7JZ
School phone number	01536 512112
Name of head teacher or principal	Sophie Howes
Chair of governing board	Crofton Alexander
School Website	https://www.stthomasmorekettering.co.uk/
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Academies Trust
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	4 to 11 years
Trustees	Diocese of Northampton
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	15 th November 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Grade 2

The inspection team

Amanda Dowling	Lead inspector
Laura Maw	Team inspector
Name of inspector	Lead/team

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