CATHOLIC SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INSPECTION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND ACADEMIES

Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for

St Thomas More's Catholic Primary School

URN: 116377

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Philip Egan, Bishop of Portsmouth on:

Date: 8-9 March 2023

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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

- All members of the school community live out the Catholic vision of St Thomas More's School with joy and commitment. They share a common purpose in following the teaching and examples of Jesus, and as a result, pupils seek opporuntunities to grow in virtue and serve those in need.
- Leaders and teachers are commited to the value of religious education; pupils approach their learning in RE with enthusiasm and are developing secure knowledge and understanding.
- The headteacher and other leaders in the school provide an exceptional model of Christian leadership; they have created a culture in which all feel valued and supported.

This Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection was carried out under canons 804 & 806 of the code of canon law. For maintained schools and academies in England it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.48 of the Education Act 2005. For maintained schools and academies in Wales it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.50 of the Education Act 2005.

- There is a strong partnership between the school and parishes which contributes to the Catholic life of the whole community.
- There is a wealth of opportunities for all members of the school community, including parents and parishioners, to experience a range of ways of praying.

What the school needs to improve:

- Refine task design when planning RE to ensure challenge for every child.
- Agree and implement a policy which ensures that pupils understand what they need to do to improve their learning in RE
- Develop children's participation in liturgy by widening the opportunities for pupils to respond within liturgies and enabling them, particularly those in Key Stage 2, to plan and lead liturgies.

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

All members of St Thomas More's school community embrace the vision that 'everyone will leave our school feeling they have achieved more than they ever thought possible, and they will make a difference to the world by serving God by helping others.' Pupils speak with great pride about their school, and say that they feel happy and safe, valued and well cared for by the staff. They highly value the roles and responsibilities they have in school, particularly spiritual leaders, playground buddies, house captains and school councillors. Pupils take a leading role in responding to the demands of Catholic Social Teaching, they are keen to make a difference, both within the school and in the wider community. This is demonstrated both in material fundraising, and in spiritual care for their community; for example, the Cafod Club recently wrote prayers which are being shared online each day during Lent. Pupils are able to make very clear links between their actions, scripture and the theology underpinning Catholic Social Teaching. The pupils recognise and celebrate the embedded culture of welcome in their school which encompasses all members of the school community, showing a deep respect for those of other faiths and for their own personal dignity.

Staff are exemplary role models to the whole community; the pupils spoke of their patience, kindness and care. Staff readily embrace opportunities to support one another, such as the recent introduction of 'Guardian Angels', and speak highly of leaders who have created a caring culture and a joyful, supportive community that is felt by all. The inclusive nature of the school is a testament to the commitment to care for all pupils, especially the most vulnerable, as they bear witness to the school's Catholic life and mission. The vision statement is understood and lived throughout the school by the children and staff. The life and mission of the school are deeply

rooted in the Word of God, which is shared and celebrated in many different ways. The vast majority of the parents who responded to the parent survey were extremely positive about the school, with one parent commenting, 'St Thomas More's is a fantastic school, with its Catholic faith at the heart of it, always.'

School leaders and governors are committed to ensuring that Christ is always at the heart of the school. The development of the Catholic life is embraced by leaders; policies and procedures reflect the Catholic identity of the school and a respect for the well being of all. In their decisions, school leaders demonstrate an exemplary commitment to the pursuit of the common good and to the service of those in need. Professional development is effective and well planned to ensure that all staff understand the vision and mission of the school. Links with the local parishes are exemplary, with regular opportunities for the children to take part in parish Masses, as well as undertaking ministries in the parish. Leaders are committed to supporting the diocese and the headteacher is active in the local partnership of schools as well as the Primary Catholic Partnership SCITT. The school has developed highly successful strategies for engaging parents to the benefit of pupils. This has included workshops to promote understanding of children's learning, and the provision of opportunities for families to pray together such as the STMS Prayer Book and the development of the chapel which is open for family prayer at the beginning and end of the school day. Leaders and governors are extremely ambitious for the Catholic life of the school and contribute both to its evaluation and implementation. The headteacher provides an excellent model of Catholic leadership which steers the vision of the school at every level, with a governor commenting that 'his belief and vision is a golden thread throughout the school.'

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

Pupils talk enthusiastically about their learning in RE lessons, with one pupil commenting 'in RE we learn to speak from the heart.' They are religiously literate, and able to use their knowledge, understanding and skills to reflect spiritually and to think ethically and theologically. Pupils' behaviour during lessons is good because they enjoy learning. The teachers plan opportunities for them to relate their learning to their own experiences. In the Reception class, children were able to reflect on the Temptation in the Desert by being 'tempted' with a bag of sweets or some chocolate. The use of scripture is clearly embedded in the pupils' learning, they are able to talk confidently about a range of scripture they have read and draw on previous learning to illustrate a point they want to make in their learning. Task design enables all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), to participate in the lesson. For some pupils, this involves a high level of support from learning support assistants who show an exceptional level of care for each individual. Pupils' positive responses to the tasks they are set indicate that, in some cases, they could take more initiative in their learning. Improved task design would ensure challenge and enable pupils to reflect more fully on what they have learned to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills. Some children struggled to articulate an understanding of how well they were doing, or the next steps needed to improve their work.

Teachers show good subject knowledge appropriate to the phase in which they are teaching. They hold the teaching of religious education in high regard, and this is conveyed to the children who in turn value it highly. In some classes, high quality questioning enables the children to think more deeply about the learning, making links and building on their understanding. This was evident in a lesson where pupils were exploring the links between the miracle of the widow's son, Catholic

Social Teaching and a time when they had been called to show compassion in their own lives. Sequences of lessons are well planned using the diocesan approved scheme; teachers now need to refine planning in individual lessons to ensure that they are always building on prior knowledge and learning, and that task planning ensures challenge for every learner. Teachers have shown great creativity in planning and delivering opportunities for pupils to present their learning in a variety of ways.

Teaching staff speak highly of the support they receive from the headteacher and RE leader, both in planning lessons and in wider professional development. Teaching of religious education, as well as professional development around Catholic life and mission, forms part of the induction of new staff, with teachers new to the school attending diocesan training. Staff spoke very positively of the way in which they had been supported by the RE Leader to improve teaching and learning and reframe a task to enable children to think more deeply. The recently-appointed chaplain has also been effective in providing staff with support, particularly in the planning for Catholic Social Teaching. Leaders ensure that pupils are provided with engaging enrichment activities, for example, a 'synagogue' had been constructed in a shared area to enhance pupils' understanding of other faiths. Governors and leaders ensure that RE is give a high status in the school, religious education is embedded in the school's cycle of self-review, and monitoring activities have ensured that teaching is good throughout the school. Leaders now need to share a vision of strategic action and well targeted planning around the teaching and learning of RE.

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 participate enthusiastically in prayer and liturgy by reflecting in silence, joining in prayer and singing readily. They recognise the ways in which prayer and liturgy influence the life of their school, with one pupil stating 'our time in liturgical prayer makes us unique and more special.' The pupils welcome opportunities provided to them to experience a wealth of prayer and praise that are part of the Catholic tradition. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the STMS Prayer Book which they had been given, several of them said that they prayed with it every day at home and it was used in pupil-led worship in class. The excellent links with the parishes have enable pupils to undertake liturgical ministries in Sunday Masses, such as reading prayers and being a part of the cleaning rota. In Years 5 and 6, pupils are given the opportunities to prepare and lead prayer and liturgy, and they do this with enthusiasm. They have also been involved in evaluating the quality of prayer and liturgy, and can talk confidently about the elements of a well-planned liturgy. This has not yet been extended into other year groups, although there are plans to do this with the support of newly-appointed spiritual leaders. In larger groups, children were keen to respond but this was often limited to 'hands-up' opportunities to specific questions.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school and there is a daily pattern of prayer that reflects the rhythm of the prayer life of the Church. There is a wealth of opportunities for all members of the school community to experience a range of ways of praying that are part of the Catholic tradition. For example, during Lent, parents and parishioners are invited to join the children for Stations of the Cross before school, and a member of the parish leads a Rosary group after school in the chapel. The school makes imaginative and creative use of the physical environment to provide prayer spaces which are well used and cared for. The recent addition of a chapel has had a very positive impact on the whole school community, who cherish it and make

extensive use of it. Prayer stations have been developed throughout the school, and there is an opportunity to request a prayer intention on the website, all of which reinforce the centrality of prayer to the whole community. The recent appointment of the school chaplain, who leads liturgical singing once a week, has enhanced the opportunities for and response to singing as part of prayer and liturgy. The school has worked hard to develop exceptionally strong partnerships with families and parishes, and include them in the prayer life of the school. In Year 6, staff support children to plan and lead liturgies, and this good practice should be extended to other year groups, particularly Key Stage 2.

Leaders ensure that prayer and liturgy are at the heart of all that happens at St Thomas More's School. Governors embrace the opportunity to be involved in the prayer life of the school, and frequently join the pupils to share Mass and other liturgies. Leaders ensure that the school timetable and calendar are planned to offer opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist regularly and at key times in the school year such as the Feast of St Thomas More in June. Staff spoke highly of the support they had received from leaders in planning prayer and liturgies, particularly when new to the school. All leaders prioritise prayer opportunities in the school and recognise the impact that it has on the quality of relationships across the whole community. This will stand them in good stead to support the staff in their understanding and development of a strategy for building up pupils' participation in planning, leading, and responding to liturgy.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas More's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	116377
Full postal address of the school	Hook's Lane, Bedhampton, Havant, PO9 3DR
School phone number	02392 475909
Name of head teacher or principal	Mr Jeff Sendall
Chair of governing board	Mr Paul Baker
School Website	https://www.st-thomasmores.hants.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	2 - 11
Trustees	Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	20 June 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Veronica Woodward	Lead inspector
Michael Lobo	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