



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## Section 48 Inspection Report

### **ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC FIRST SCHOOL**

Woodrow Centre, Studley Road, Redditch, B98 7RY

Inspection dates: 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> June 2019  
Lead Inspector: Sister Susan Collins

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**OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:** **Good**

Catholic Life: Good

Religious Education: Good

Collective Worship: Good

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*Overall effectiveness at previous inspection:* *Good*

### **SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS**

This is a good Catholic school because:

- The headteacher and Religious Education subject leader make the promotion of Catholic Life their highest priority. They inspire other members of staff to promote it well.
- Pastoral care of pupils and their families is given great importance. Staff focus on upholding the dignity of every member of the school community.
- Great care is taken to provide a rich environment for pupils and staff to work in.
- Behaviour of the pupils is excellent in lessons and around the school.
- The governing body are kept very well informed about the faith life of the school. They are a regular presence in school and are committed to ensuring that Catholic Life is at the heart of everything.
- The school's links with the parish are strong. The school has an excellent working relationship with the parish priest. His pastoral support for pupils, staff and parents is greatly appreciated by the school community.

It is not outstanding because:

- A small minority of teaching needs to improve so that all teaching is consistently good or better.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to participate in the school's evaluation of its Catholic Life and mission.
- Pupils are not fully aware of the importance of the Church's Liturgical Year.

- Vocational development is not fully embedded into Catholic Life across the whole school.

## **FULL REPORT**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that all teaching is good and more of the good teaching is raised to outstanding.
- Give the pupils opportunities to evaluate the Catholic Life and mission of the school.
- Ensure that all pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the Church's Liturgical Year.
- Develop staff and pupils' understanding of vocation as God's calling for everyone.

## **THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL**

The quality of the Catholic Life of the school.	<b>Good</b>
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.	Good
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school.	Outstanding

### **The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.**

#### **The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.**

- The headteacher's vision is for all pupils in the school to know Christ, to have Christ in their lives and to know that God is always there for them. She ensures that all staff work together to do the very best for all the pupils in their care.
- The school revisits its mission annually with staff. As a result, everyone has a clear understanding of the Catholic identity of the school and its mission, which is referred to during acts of worship and is visible on signs and displays around the school. Parents and pupils talk positively about the mission and Catholic tradition of the school.
- Professional development of staff is given high priority. Support is provided for new teachers through 'New to Teaching in a Catholic School' and NQT days, assistant headteachers have undertaken the 4-day course for 'New to Catholic Deputy Headship' to refresh their understanding of working and leading in a Catholic school.
- The environment, in both classrooms and communal areas, actively celebrates and promotes the Catholic Life of the school. Each class has a sacred space, which reflects the seasons of the Church and supports pupils in prayer. During the inspection, one teacher encouraged the pupils to come and pray in front of the prayer focus.
- Displays around the school are of a good standard and reinforce the Catholic mission of the school. This includes a beautiful mosaic of Christ, placed at the centre of the school's prayer garden.
- Pupils are proud to participate in the Catholic Life of the school through their work as liturgy leaders, the school council and eco-warriors. Class learning journals effectively record a variety of activities that demonstrate the Catholic Life of the school.
- During lessons, staff constantly encourage pupils to think about the meaning of Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile (CSPP), and the virtues it promotes. Signs around the school, starting at the school gates, also support the pupils' knowledge of the CSPP. As

a result, pupils are confident to explain how they live as people of faith by following the virtues.

- The school supports a wide range of local, national and global charities throughout the year. Representatives from some of these charities visit the school to explain to pupils why they need their support. This helps pupils understand why they are called to serve others and encourages them to plan fundraising events. For example, Year 4 pupils organised a CAFOD fayre, Year 3 pupils carried out a Children in Need cake sale and key stage 2 pupils sold poppies.
- The parish priest has a strong commitment to the school. He celebrates Mass every two weeks and participates in regular meetings and monitoring activities.
- Relationships and sex education is taught in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church using the 'Journey in Love' programme.

### **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school.**

- Governors and senior leaders are wholly committed to promoting the Catholic Life of the school, which they place at the centre of their vision and planning. The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership of all aspects of Catholic Life. The newsletter to parents always starts with a section about the Catholic Life of the school.
- Leaders have planned carefully for the subject leader's recent paternity leave. Effective temporary leadership was put in place. The previous subject leader has supported the work of the school through his absence and since his return both leaders are working together, proving to be an effective team.
- Governors are overwhelmingly positive and proud of their school. Their regular presence in school, both formally and informally, as well as updates in the headteacher's and the subject leader's reports, keep them well informed about all aspects of Catholic Life. They ensure that it is at the forefront of all that they do. They recognise and appreciate the work of senior leaders in developing Catholic Life.
- Completing sections of the annual self-evaluation of governing body audit has supported the governors in knowing the strengths and any areas for development well.
- Senior leaders have sought the views of parents and carers about Catholic Life. There is an annual parents' questionnaire and views of the parents are appreciated. The website is very informative and sacramental preparation is well attended.
- Leaders and governors regularly attend diocesan training and, as a result, they are well informed to actively promote its policies and initiatives.
- The governors have taken effective action to meet all the recommendations from the previous diocesan inspection and monitoring visit.

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

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

**How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.  
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.**

- Many pupils enter school with limited knowledge or understanding of the Catholic faith, however, pupils make good progress over time and achieve well.
- The Religious Education subject leader has a secure knowledge of standards of teaching across the school. Planning for lessons is good and in line with diocesan expectations. It is detailed, takes account of previous learning and includes a range of activities for the pupils to undertake.
- Teaching across the school is good with some outstanding features. This is achieved through teachers' questioning, the well-established routines for learning and the good pace of lessons, which enables pupils to stay focused and motivated. Pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons.
- The subject leader's own teaching is outstanding and other members of staff would benefit from observing his practice.
- Throughout the school, teachers create very positive environments for learning. They have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and engagement with lessons.
- Teachers manage time well to secure good learning in lessons. Pupils are encouraged to apply their Religious Education knowledge to how they live their lives.
- Most staff have a good subject knowledge of Religious Education. However, the school has experienced a high turnover of staff (mainly due to maternity leave), which has meant that the subject knowledge of some teachers needed developing. The school has given appropriate support and this needs to be ongoing for some members of staff.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to support the pupils' learning.
- Pupils with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language are well supported. All adults are aware of their prior learning and are very effective in enabling all pupils to concentrate and improve their learning.
- Assessment of Religious Education is thorough using the new age-related standards. Moderation takes place within school each term to ensure consistency of standards across all classes. Moderation also takes place across the academy, which means that staff can be confident in their judgements.
- Analysis of assessment data is used well to target support. For example, when data showed that lower attaining pupils in Year 1 were not making enough progress, the subject leader provided support. This helped pupils to record their work in a wider range of ways, which developed their learning.
- Pupils recognise that the Bible is a special book. They have a good knowledge of the life of Jesus and enjoy finding out about the miracles he performed.
- Pupils work is regularly marked. When marking, some teachers use questions that challenge pupils. These develop their learning from Religious Education (and how

it applies to their own lives) as well as reflection. However, not all pupils respond to these questions.

- The Religious Education curriculum is based on the diocesan scheme, 'Learning and Growing as the People of God,' and follows its recommendations in terms of planning and assessment.
- Pupils learn about other faiths, and as a result they have a respect for people from other cultures and faiths.

### **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.**

- The subject of Religious Education is well led. The leader works closely with the headteacher and other senior leaders to monitor books, complete learning walks, moderate data and talk to pupils.
- Following any monitoring in Religious Education, leaders are focused on areas of development for staff and have detailed support systems in place to improve teaching.
- Senior leaders and governors ensure that Religious Education has full parity with other core subjects.
- Governors fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities regarding Religious Education. Through their active participation in monitoring, they ensure that the requirements of the Bishops Conference are met with regards to curriculum time and the priority that Religious Education is given.
- Training is regularly provided for staff. New staff attend all relevant training offered by the diocese and the local cluster of Catholic schools. Staff are willing to listen to and act on advice, to improve teaching and learning.
- Governors have a good understanding of Religious Education provision. Standards and progress are regularly reviewed, and they receive high quality reports from senior leaders. They have taken part in learning walks, book trawls and interviews with pupils. Therefore, they have a secure understanding of how monitoring has a positive impact on teaching and learning and know the strengths and areas for development.

### **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

The quality of Collective Worship.	<b>Good</b>
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.	Good
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	Good

### **How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship. The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.**

- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is very good and is given the highest priority. As a result, both staff and pupils value times of prayer.
- The school provides a good range of opportunities for the community to pray and worship together, which reflect the Catholic character of the school. All acts of worship have a liturgical structure, are regularly planned and led by both staff and

pupils. Class Collective Worship journals record the worship that takes place on a regular basis.

- Staff show the greatest reverence during times of prayer and act as role models for the pupils. Therefore, pupils are keen to participate in worship, they are reverent, sing joyfully and can articulate the positive impact that the worship has upon them.
- The range of opportunities for pupils to plan and lead Collective Worship has increased following a review of Collective Worship with a diocesan advisor. As a result, the quality of liturgy and prayer in the school has improved.
- The parish priest celebrates Mass in school fortnightly and this is valued by all members of the school community. For the school's feast day, pupils are taken on coaches so that they can experience Mass in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, which is a distance away from the school.
- During the inspection, Mass was celebrated in the school hall. This was planned by key stage 2 pupils and was a reverent and uplifting occasion. Pupils participated fully, where they sang with joy and great enthusiasm; this greatly enhanced the celebration. They also took a lead in reading the liturgy of the Word and bidding prayers. The attendance of parents, parishioners and governors helped to make the Mass very special.
- The school delivers a good programme of sacramental preparation for First Holy Communion with support from the parish priest. This programme is well attended by parents. It is planned with engaging workshops, including the use of art. The crosses that the pupils made from clay during one workshop made a beautiful display in school.
- Pupils have a growing knowledge of traditional prayers, with each year group learning and using new ones. Traditional prayers are also promoted on the school's website to encourage family prayer at home.
- Pupils respond positively to opportunities to participate in voluntary prayer. Pupils pray the rosary weekly during May and October. During the inspection, the liturgy leaders led a prayer service at lunchtime focussing on being compassionate and loving. This linked to June being the month of the Sacred Heart. This was well attended by pupils from across the school. Reflections produced during the service were displayed around the school prayer focuses.

### **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.**

- Collective worship is central to the life of St Thomas More School.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the liturgical year, but they need to ensure that they share this knowledge fully with the pupils.
- Staff have received training on Collective Worship that has improved their skills and knowledge. They have used this training to plan worship and to support pupils in leading times of prayer. Consequently, staff are increasingly leading prayerful experiences that are meaningful to pupils.
- The subject leader regularly meets with staff and all staff have a performance management target linked to Collective Worship.
- Planned monitoring of Collective Worship takes place each term, which includes the active participation of pupils and governors.
- Governors have a visible presence in the school. They regularly attend Masses, class and phase worship and meet with staff. The subject leader gives the governors a detailed report on progress each half-term. As a result, they have a good understanding of the quality of Collective Worship.

- Great effort is made to include families in the prayer life of the school through inviting them into Masses, Gifts of God assemblies and sending home prayer bags.

## SCHOOL DETAILS

Unique reference number	116910
Local authority	Worcestershire
<i>This inspection was carried out under canon 806 of Canon Law and under Section 48 of the 2005 Education Act.</i>	
Type of school	First School
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range	4-9 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	212
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair	Anthony Tamburro
Headteacher	Teresita Moriani
Telephone number	01527 525821
Website address	<a href="http://www.stthomasmorefirst.com">www.stthomasmorefirst.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@st-thomasmore.worcs.sch.uk">office@st-thomasmore.worcs.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	July 2014

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL**

- St Thomas More is a one and a half entry Catholic first school serving the parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Redditch.
- Currently 62% of the pupils are baptised Catholics.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with special education needs is above the national average.
- Just over half of pupils are white British which is below the national average. The highest minority ethnic group is White Other which includes an increasing proportion of pupils from a Polish background.
- The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is above the national average.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION**

- The inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector.
- The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality and leadership of the school's provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- The inspector observed teaching across part of eight Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. These lesson observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship.
- Meetings were held with a group of governors (including the chair and vice-chair of governors, the Catholic Life link governor, who is also the parish priest and a foundation and parent governor), the headteacher and the Religious Education subject leader.
- The inspector attended a whole school Mass, and class-based worship led by Year 4 pupils. She undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in Religious Education, the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school, and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the school development plan, the Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship Plan and looked at learning and Collective Worship journals.