



St Thomas Catholic Primary School

URN: 118777

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Most Rev. John Wilson, Archbishop of Southwark

14–15 November 2024

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

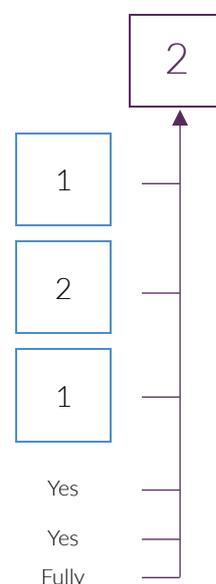
Collective worship (p.7)

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

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection



Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' conference.
- The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection.

What the school does well

- Staff, children and parents describe St Thomas' Catholic Primary school as a family where pupils develop a strong sense of worth.
- The school provides a religious education curriculum in which all pupils develop good subject knowledge, through an engaging and enjoyable approach.
- The vibrant and attractive environment at St Thomas' enhances the Catholic life and mission of the school whilst celebrating the achievements of the pupils.
- Worship is an integral part of daily life at St Thomas' and children regularly contribute their own prayers, including those written in their home language.
- Behaviour at St Thomas' is excellent: children say that adults lead them through the example set by Jesus Christ.

What the school needs to improve

- Identify the best practices in religious education and share these models, in order to strengthen the learning of all pupils.
- Develop deeper understanding for all pupils, through the use of planned questions and other assessment opportunities in lessons.
- Provide regular opportunities for pupils to plan, lead 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

Pupil outcomes

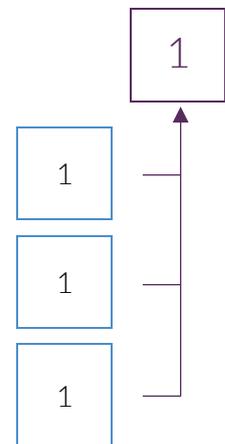
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

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

Leadership

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



Pupils celebrate being part of St Thomas' Catholic Primary School, knowing that they are valued and cared for by all staff. They have a clear understanding of how the school fulfils the mission of the Church, and regularly put the school's motto – 'Aspirational, Christ-centred, Togetherness' (ACT) - into action. One pupil explained how the motto leads to learning and action, 'I aspire to be an artist, to be more like Christ, and we do not leave anyone out.' Pupils show a clear respect for their peers and adults, including those from other cultures or faiths, through their exemplary behaviour in all areas of the school, and at all times of the day. They express a clear understanding of gospel values and the impact of Catholic social teaching, and they are keen to put these teachings into action. One pupil reported needing to 'brighten up people's lives by doing God's work'. The faith groups, including those pupils who attend the Mini Vinnies and Cafod clubs, demonstrate the confidence and the articulation from which to further develop their leadership skills. Similarly, in regard to the school's chaplaincy provision, while pupils take a full part, they have expressed a desire to further develop their leadership responsibilities.

There is a clear Catholic identity at St Thomas', with staff, pupils and parents knowing and understanding that the school is rooted in the word of God. Staff members are fully committed to the mission of the school, energetically delivering activities within and beyond the curriculum. Many staff members are also deeply involved with parish activities, enabling pupils to see and understand the clear link between the church and the school. The pupils know and value that their school is inclusive, in how families from different cultures are made welcome and celebrated. All members of staff provide strong role models in caring for pupils, in both classrooms, playgrounds, and other spaces across the school. Pupils know that the adults care for them, a feature that parents are grateful for. One noted, 'Care seems to me to be at the heart of the mission of this school.' The school's provision for relationships, sex, and health education is planned in full accord with both diocesan and statutory requirements. The school's chaplaincy provision demonstrates the commitment in helping all members to flourish, and a clearer focus upon pupil leadership, would enhance this further.

The school's leaders and governors are fully committed to maintaining the Catholic character of St Thomas'. They provide an inspirational witness to gospel values, and to Catholic social teaching. Governors take an active role in the school's daily life, fulfilling their leadership responsibilities and evaluating provision and progress. This includes seeking and evaluating the views of pupils. School leaders have designed a Catholic curriculum which emanates from the values and learning within religious education. Though this provides an innovative and compelling basis for learning at the school it would benefit from an in-depth evaluation in order to ensure greater clarity and cohesion across the whole school curriculum provision. The school's commitment to the most vulnerable in the community is exemplified, through both its staffing structure and by the provision of home-school transport. A parent, whose older daughter had recently left for secondary school, said, 'The teaching team provided her with a set of moral tools and a resilience that has made her transition easier.' There is a close bond between the school and the local parish, and the school engages with the diocese. School leaders have applied for the second level of the St Oscar Romero Trust Award. Staff members value the care and respect shown by leaders.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

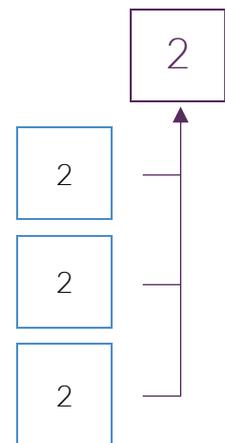
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

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

Leadership

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



Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons at St Thomas'. One pupil remarked, 'I like "RE" because it starts with prayers and I like finding things in the Bible.' Pupils in all year groups build upon their previous learning, a feature particularly evident in the older pupils. They can express their religious understanding in an articulate manner, as teachers assist them in recalling previous knowledge. They respond well to questions that are asked of them and are able to present some deep insights of their own. Pupils take pride in their work, and are encouraged to produce a range of individualised and creative pieces of work. They are actively engaged, enthusiastic, and work well in lessons, showing commitment to improving their learning. However, not all pupils can express clearly how well they are doing or what the next steps in their learning should be. The school's leaders should strengthen day to day assessment so as to help pupils in all year groups to further build this understanding. By the time pupils reach the last years of primary school, they are expected to achieve as well in religious education as they do in other main subjects, leading to outcomes that are strong.

There is a confidence in the teaching of religious education at St Thomas'. Teaching staff demonstrate a clear level of expertise in their subject knowledge and an understanding of how pupils learn, which would be enhanced through opportunities to observe the best practices in the school. They understand the importance of religious education in the Catholic school and are committed to maintaining high expectations for the work of their pupils. The school's scheme of work is effectively utilised, with planning primarily based on it, while giving some consideration to pupils' prior attainment. The school's leaders should continue to strengthen the assessment and associated questioning skills of all teachers in order to ensure greater impact upon pupils' learning. Teachers always celebrate the achievements of the class and communicate this clearly to pupils, who receive praise with great appreciation. During lessons, which are seen as an act of love and reverence, time for reflection is provided by teachers and used well, enabling pupils to think about the impact that

the learning can have on their lives beyond the school. Classrooms are well resourced to enable good quality teaching, and pupils were clearly accustomed to making use of Bibles during their lessons.

The school's leaders and governors have placed religious education at the centre of the curriculum, having full parity with other core subjects. They are committed to the pupils building their knowledge and understanding progressively through the school, and this is particularly evident in both the youngest and the oldest pupils. The curriculum is fully resourced, so that all pupils, including those with additional needs, supported to learn well. There are also many opportunities for enriching pupils' learning. Leaders ensure that it is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*, and preparation work for the new directory has been a feature of the school's work during recent years. The subject leader has an inspiring vision for high quality religious education, and possesses the expertise and knowledge to enable this to be brought to fruition. She should be supported to monitor and evaluate the subject with a more forensic approach. As a result, leaders will be better informed as to where the teaching is strongest, and from there ensure that the most effective models of practice are shared. All staff would then be enabled to receive the necessary professional development to further strengthen outcomes for pupils in all year groups.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

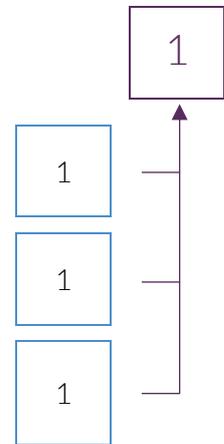
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

Leadership

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



All pupils fully engage, and actively participate, in their experiences of prayer and liturgy at St Thomas'. They share in a range of prayers, both those that are part of the Catholic tradition and also spontaneous and self-directed prayers. All pupils join in with reverence and respect, but also with joy, especially during the range of hymns that they sing. In a liturgy, the youngest pupils were able to sing the chorus, helping them to be part of the communal singing. A decade of the rosary was observed, in which all the pupils confidently used rosary beads to guide their devotion, complete with the traditional Glory Be and the Fatima Prayer. Prayer and liturgy is treated with great care by pupils who value its place and its impact in their lives. The school's leaders indicated that the planned next step for the school is to further develop how pupils plan, lead and evaluate the school's provision for prayer and liturgy. Pupils certainly demonstrate the confidence and articulation in order to be able to carry out this duty. One pupil said, 'We are called to have a trust and faith in God by talking to him every day.'

The prayer life of the school is a central feature, and there is a natural routine of worship at regular points throughout each day. Pupils are given opportunities to pray in a range of ways, and are confident in their use of both traditional prayers and those that they create themselves. Scripture is used widely across the school and is the basis upon which all liturgy is planned. School leaders have recently enhanced the use of the Wednesday Word to further strengthen pupils' scriptural knowledge and preparation for Sunday Mass. The school's leaders have repurposed a room, now dedicated as a space for prayer, which pupils appreciate and make full use of. Regular visits to the local parish church also enhance the pupils' experiences of prayer. The strong partnership between the school and the parish also enables a cohesive understanding of the sacramental programmes for participants. The staff are excellent role models for the pupils and should make full use of this strength to further develop pupil leadership in planning, constructing and evaluating liturgies. The use of a wider range of art forms, cultures and traditions in prayer sessions would also serve to provide pupils with a broader experience.

The school's leaders and governors have created a collective worship policy which is clear and fit for purpose, and have begun planning for the forthcoming *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*. The policy ensures that staff are able to provide pupils with a full experience of a range of prayers. There is an impact of previous professional development, as all staff understand the centrality of prayer at the school. This can be enhanced further by ensuring that chosen prayer forms are always appropriate to the age of the pupils. The school's timetable for worship leads to pupils understanding the significance of particular liturgical seasons such as Advent and Lent, while also recognising the importance of sacraments such as reconciliation. Pupils who are not Catholic are also fully involved in the prayer life of the school, a further indication of the priority that leaders place upon the centrality of prayer and worship across the community. Increasing the involvement of pupils in planning is a priority. The leaders should continue to develop this whilst further refining the cycle for monitoring and evaluating collective worship. The provision is well resourced, leading to high-quality experiences of prayer and liturgy for the pupils at St Thomas's.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	118777
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8863749
Full postal address of the school	St Thomas Catholic Primary School, 99 Military Road, Canterbury, CT1 1NE
School phone number	001227462539
Headteacher	Lisa D'Agostini
Chair of governors	Mrs Gillian Milroy
School Website	www.st-thomas-canterbury.kent.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	2 nd March 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

David Hennessey
Angela Pitcher

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