



# St Thomas of Canterbury

Estcourt Road, London

Date of inspection: 26 February 2014

## A. Classroom Religious Education

**What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?**

**Overall Grade 2**

The school offers a good curriculum which is based on the four areas of the Curriculum Directory. The curriculum actively supports and engages the pupils in their learning. There is evidence of good progress through the levels of attainment, particularly for pupils with additional needs. The levels are tracked by the school and key areas for improvement are being identified. The school has monitored its effectiveness and is developing its planning to equip pupils at the upper end of key stage two to aspire to the higher levels of attainment in religious education, as for other core subject areas. The school regularly participates in deanery and diocesan moderation, to support their judgements about pupil learning and progress. The leadership of the subject is good overall. The staff are supported through the monitoring system and strategies for on-going improvement. The typicality of teaching is good overall, where pupils are well managed in their learning and good differentiation is planned for those with significant needs. There is evidence of some very effective teaching, from the work in the books and recorded through portfolios and records.

## B. The Catholic life of the school

**What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?**

**Overall Grade 1\***

The leadership of the school is visionary, whereby the headteacher and her leadership team are fully committed to the ongoing distinctiveness of this Catholic school. They have developed highly effective strategies and partnerships, both for the triple partnership of home, school and parish and for the ecclesial dimension through their partnership with the local deanery community and the wider diocesan family. Worship and prayer are central to all that is celebrated. The Governing Body is significant in its contribution and pro-active involvement in the day to day life of the school. They ensure they use their expertise to fully guide the on-going improvement priorities. They ensure an excellent range of resources, accommodation and staffing is provided. Religious education is highly valued and the school is committed to its status, and that it fully meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. The pupils across the phases are offered a rich, dynamic and outstanding provision to enable them to live out their Catholic faith, (traditions and teachings) to the full. They are supported in developing their understanding of what it is to be human, to understand the importance of their role from Church teaching, rooted in a deep understanding of social justice. They fully appreciate the importance of acting on behalf of those in need, whilst appreciating their own role in promoting their own "human flourishing."

## Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent a day in school, visited five lessons and a class worship, and carried out eight interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St. Thomas of Canterbury, Fulham, was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

## Inspection Team

Mrs. Tina Cleugh  
Mrs Lisa Barton

Lead Inspector  
Associate Inspector

## Description of School

The school is a one and a half form entry in years five and six and two-form from nursery to year four, in the LA of Hammersmith and Fulham and the locality of Fulham. The school serves the parish of St. Thomas of Canterbury, Fulham. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 87%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 11% and from other Faiths 2%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 59%.

There are 375 pupils on roll, with 4 pupils with statements of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average, (86%). The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is above average, (62%). There is a well above average, rate of families claiming free school meals. 162, (42%) of pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

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Headteacher: Mrs Joanne Flower  
Chair of Governors: Mr. John Price

Date of previous inspection: 13 February 2009

### Key for inspection grades:

<i>Grade 1*</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Very Good</i>
<i>Grade 2</i>	<i>Good</i>
<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Requires improvement</i>
<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Causing Concern</i>

## **A. Classroom Religious Education**

*How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?*

### **What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?**

All action areas have been fully met. The review of the Mission Statement establishes it as being central to all aspects of the school and its improvement agenda. It is visible in all classes and public rooms and pupils know and understand its significance. This includes the way its symbolism is explained and displayed in the Hall. Assessments in Religious Education are now robustly recorded through the school's electronic Sims tracking system, which is in line with the agreed Diocesan attainment levels. Moderation to inform assessments and levels of attainment is carried out termly, in liaison with the deanery and diocesan networks.

### **How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?**

#### **Grade 2**

The school is delivering religious education through the "Come and See" programme. The EYFS team are delivering the IREP units as a trial this year. The diocesan agreed levels of understanding are linked through the four strands of study in the Curriculum Directory. The leader of religious education, in liaison with the senior leadership team, ensures that these links are monitored termly and matched to the appropriate resources. This includes the range of ICT links and the use of bibles across the key stages. Learning is also enhanced with regular visits to the local church, easily accessed from the school playground. There was evidence during the inspection of how the key vocabulary of current topics is displayed in all classes. The school has developed partnership through their deanery with other diocesan schools for moderation. The pupils with additional needs have planned programmes of support and differentiated tasks, often supported by other adults in the learning. Religious education contributes to the Catholic life of the school and influences all aspects of the learning across the school.

### **Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education**

#### **Grade 2**

Tracking through the Sims system shows that most pupils are working within the expected levels of attainment across the key stage. The moderated levels are shared with deanery colleagues termly and in some cases validated by the diocesan advisor. The senior leadership team co-observe with the diocesan advisor to monitor the quality of learning, which includes the scrutiny of work in pupils' books. The school has identified the need to ensure that progress in religious education is as high as that for the other core subjects. They recognise the value of more regular moderation, especially in tracking the progress of the more able pupils. The scrutiny of the work in the books identified progress and appropriate differentiation for pupils. There was evidence of good levels of challenge in many books across the year groups. The work reflected the adherences to the whole school marking policy. The school has identified through its monitoring system and written feedback to staff, the priority to ensure equal volumes of work and effective challenge for more able pupils is required and that it is consistent. Pupils come in lower than national average on entry, and by the end of key stage two are significantly above national averages in the core subjects. The "Learning Zones," situated outside each classroom area, offer secluded learning opportunities for those pupils who need additional support. This was witnessed during the inspection and those pupils were well

supported in their learning in religious education. By the end of key stage two pupils entitled to pupil premium achieve at the equivalent average level as those who are not entitled.

## **The quality of teaching**

### **Grade 2**

The lessons observed during the inspection provided evidence of how the school is linking their planned units from the coverage of the curriculum directory. The good teaching observed included challenging tasks set with planned questioning and opportunities for the pupils to share ideas as 'talking partners'. The good teaching observed included effective deployment of teaching assistants. They supported pupils with additional needs well, including effective questioning of them. This enabled these pupils to demonstrate their growing levels of knowledge and understanding of the lesson objectives. An example of this was the development of "mind mapping" to link their different ways of "thanking God in my life", and how to reflect on "special things in my heart," developing their levels of understanding. The school's monitoring system includes religious education and the feedback, with areas for development follow up, ensures teaching in religious education is as good as for other core subjects. The pupils behave well in class, share ideas and respect each others' views. The subject knowledge and expertise of the teachers is supported by the school's leadership team, with more teachers taking the CCRS training this year. The marking of pupils' work with the "even better if" development points, raised by the teacher, are responded to well by pupils. This is an improving trend, including guidance for those pupils requiring additional support and some evidence of challenge for the more able. The school has identified the need to further develop the skills of teachers to challenge the more able pupils, especially towards the higher levels of attainment by the end of key stage two. The good assessment procedures support the next stages of the learning needs of the pupils. Pupils are provided with feedback, orally and through the marking process. The distribution of the Wednesday Word weekly, supports and enhances the homework given, linked to the topics being explored. The pupils who met the inspectors were articulate in describing the different types of homework in religious education, and how they enjoy completing these tasks. Very effective teaching and learning is evident in the early years and the creative opportunities are enhancing their learning in religious educations. Their 'growing' topic includes the measure of the "chick hatching" during the week of the inspection. Pupils are relating this wonder of creation, with their own growth as members of, 'God's loving family.' The focus in the lesson was where pupils were encouraged to "think in their heads" why and how the Parish family gather for Mass". This was linked through very effective questioning to extend their knowledge as to "what we do at Mass, and why we do it." The effective strategy of encouraging these very young pupils to "think and reflect," encouraging responses from them, indicates their growing levels of understanding. The external learning area includes an opportunity for quiet prayer and reflection. The teaching assistant sat the children at the prayer table explaining the importance of the liturgical colours worn by the priest, reinforcing their knowledge and understanding of why we have different liturgical colours. There was evidence from the observations of lessons across the school and discussions with the leader of religious education, that the non teaching adults who support the learning are well informed and guided by teachers, impacting on effective progress for those pupils with additional needs.

## **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education**

### **Grade 2**

The leader of religious education provides good guidance and support to all involved in the learning process. She is ably supported by the members of the senior leadership team. This includes the music specialist, who guides the liturgical hymn cycle. The leadership team work hard to ensure that the essential systems and structures are in place and provide staff with support, encouragement and challenge. This is also evident in their commitment to providing quality CPD, including support for 7

teachers to complete the CCRS. This is delivered within their partnership with the West London Teaching Alliance. The whole school self-evaluation includes all staff and governors. Key areas for improvement have been identified, especially providing effective challenge to more able pupils across all year groups. The vision of working hard together includes the opportunities gained from the effective promotion of the school's partnerships across the deanery. This has supported the commitment to developing the distinctiveness of their Catholic school. The leader of religious education ensures the senior leadership team are kept fully informed of local and diocesan recommended initiatives. The leader works in close liaison with the diocesan advisor.

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

- Raise levels of attainment in religious education in line with the high standards in other core subjects
- Increase the tracking system in religious education, to be more regular, in line with that for other core subjects, to monitor the rate of progress more closely
- Set targets in religious education as for other core subjects, in particular for the more able pupils across the school.

## **B. The Catholic life of the school**

*How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?*

### **What has improved since the last inspection?**

The school has met all the areas identified from the last inspection. Pupils have excellent opportunities for personal reflection and meditation. The Prayer garden, dedicated to Our Blessed Lady, provides a secluded area for quiet contemplation, within this very urban area and close proximity of the outside areas of the school, to large housing areas and other public buildings. The school has just introduced the new planning frameworks recommended by the Diocese for child led worship. This will provide clear structure and guidance. The revised diocesan framework is fully implemented including the requirements for the Curriculum Directory.

The school has a planned schedule in place for visiting places of worship of other faiths. This is intrinsically linked into the termly cycle and delivery of religious education.

### **The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget**

#### **Grade I\***

The Governing Body has secured generous allocation to the rich and, colourful and stimulating range of resources. These include beautiful icons, framed pictures and the development of prayer areas, roof gardens and opportunities for pupils to sit, reflect and pray, and are outstanding. The investment by the leadership team, in supporting seven colleagues to complete the CCRS, accreditation, linked with the partnership with the West London Teaching Alliance, is worthy of note. The newly refurbished and extended teaching and learning areas provide a stimulating, colourful and enhanced environment for all pupils and those working with them. The “zoned play areas” have supported the commitment to improving behaviour and playtime for the pupils across key stages one and two. The school’s partnership with the Royal Horticultural Society has provided subsidised funding to create “growing plots” and areas around the school environment. The investment in specialist teachers for music, art, physical education and games and the use of the Catholic Children’s Society Play Therapist, has supported their commitment to excellent provision, whilst utilising their Pupil Premium and Sports Funding to its full advantage.

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

#### **Grade I**

Worship programmes are planned annually. These include the relevant liturgical links, which are delivered weekly. The senior leadership team leading the weekly assemblies ensures that relevant and appropriate links are woven into the weekly Monday and Friday assemblies. Class assemblies cover the relevant themes which are linked to the religious education topics being delivered within their, ‘Come and See’ programme, and where appropriate, the liturgical cycle such as Advent and Lent. This provides pupils with opportunities to reflect on these examples and their influence on them in their everyday lives. There is evidence that the content includes the children having opportunities to participate fully in class assemblies, which are well attended by Parents. The portfolio and records of the rich range of worship held over time, include some outstanding examples. The liturgical cycle is covered including significant Catholic traditions and prayers, for example the Rosary. Feast Day Masses and special celebrations, such as the First Holy Communicant’s participation annually in the St. Peter and Paul Mass, are well supported within the triple partnership of home, school and parish. The close proximity of the Church with the access

from the school grounds, is a wonderful and rich resource, which is being well used by all. Pupils now attend Mass weekly in year groups, Pupils who met the inspectors were able to explain how they fully recognise their place as members of God's family and how "when we pray, we are closer to God, we are not alone, If we have a problem we can turn to God." The music programme includes the development of their school choir and orchestra. The choir is also involved with the Westminster Cathedral school outreach programme.

Key figures are also celebrated, including the life and example of saints and secular historical figures, such as Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King. The class collective worship, observed during the inspection, provides evidence of pupils being guided and supported to participate in collective worship, for example, where they placed their "shells" in the centre focus for prayer, whilst "thanking Jesus for giving himself for us." There was evidence of their prior knowledge and understanding of how Jesus influences their everyday lives and actions.

The school has identified its next stage of development to include the use of a diocesan recommended model and toolkit, for child led weekly worship at age appropriate levels.

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

#### **Grade I\***

Pupils are supported and guided through their understanding of their place in the world. This is linked through relevant Gospel values. These events also support the termly delivery on equality, friendship, anti-bullying and e-safety responsibilities and issues. The democratically elected school council and religious education monitors are proud of their efforts on behalf of the school community. They carry out a range of roles and responsibilities, Pupils in the school are great ambassadors for their school. They are courteous, respectful and most confident and articulate. They spoke warmly and proudly to the inspectors of how their rich, range of clubs, activities and fund-raising projects, "are great fun." When discussing their various roles and responsibilities, they particularly outlined the celebration of "serving the top table", to those pupils being awarded weekly. They fully understand their role in supporting and developing social justice. They recognise how lucky they are and the importance for "people who are less fortunate than themselves, and have no homes, can and should get the same opportunities." This is because, "God taught us when He sent His Son, Jesus." When asked to clarify what they mean, they were well able to explain that, "the Bible tells us how to live, that by helping others, we are pleasing God." The school supports its twin school in Calcutta, where a member of staff visits annually supplying them with uniforms, books and other learning equipment. They support CAFOD, the Royal British Legion, The Passage, supporting the homeless, including the 'soup kitchen' with home grown vegetables from the school "gardens." These vegetables are used to provide the "soup," in partnership with the Parish. Many staff participate in "Race for Life" to raise funds for breast cancer as well as other activities.

### **Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf;**

#### **Grade I\***

The Governing Body and the Senior Leadership Team have developed strong and effective links with the parents and the wider community. This is also evident in the growing parish links. The Governor, who met the inspectors, is also a lead catechist and is most praiseworthy of the significant growth in partnership over recent years. The Parish Priest described how he is, "blown away" by the teaching body in the school and their commitment to the pupils. He explained how he is working with the senior management and leadership team to develop more links with the Parish. This includes the pupils attending the weekly Wednesday Mass. He further outlined how "this

enthuses the parishioners.” He attends the school assemblies on Fridays, and celebrated how the school is supporting a “joyful recognition of faith in the Parish.” This is supporting a growing link with St. Joseph’s, Pastoral Centre, in Hendon, who are linking with the Parish to bring important pastoral and spiritual support to their families, whose children have significant additional needs. Thus, the inclusivity of the school is contributing to building a strong commitment to the faith, within the school and through the parish links, with the good support through their triple partnership of home, school and parish. The parents who met with the inspectors, were unanimous in their appreciation of how the school is “very happy and caring, with friendly and supportive teachers.” They spoke of how the “Wednesday Word” issued weekly, as part of their homework programme, helps their children to understand the Gospel. Those parents, who spoke to the inspectors, praised the “strong and very effective behaviour policy, which supports the children and the very informative weekly newsletter which celebrates the efforts of their children.

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

#### **Grade I\***

The Governing Body is experienced and dedicated to fulfilling its place in the mission of the Church. The senior leadership team, ably led by the Headteacher, ensures they are kept fully up to date and in full compliance with all statutory duties. Leaders across the levels of management in the school provide regular up to date information, including how religious education is developing through its identified priorities. These are evaluated termly with the necessary training and investment. The more recent building developments have provided the school with state of the art provision and accommodation. The external areas of the school have been well developed to ensure the position of the school, situated in the middle of this high urban area, can provide the pupils and their families with a rich learning and natural environment. The school is in the highest deprivation area and those pupils for whom the Pupil Premium applies achieve well above national averages and in line with their other cohorts. The Headteacher has a clear vision and commitment to the ecclesial and educational priorities and dimensions of this school. Her leadership inspires and influences the growth and development of the school over recent years.

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

- Develop child led worship to further develop the opportunities for pupils to plan, lead and deliver regular Acts of Worship