

# St Thomas a Becket Catholic Primary School

URN: 114577

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Arundel & Brighton

02–03 November 2023

## 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

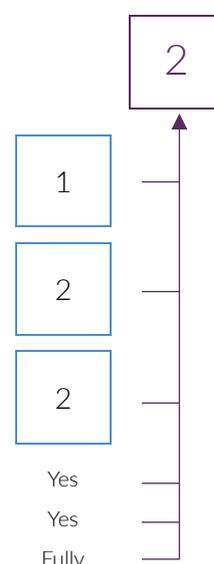
#### Collective worship (p.7)

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

The school is fully compliant with the 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



## What the school does well

St Thomas a Becket Catholic Primary School fulfils its mission statement in a heartfelt and proactive manner.

This fully inclusive community values the input and voice of all its stakeholders.

The chaplaincy and pastoral provision is exceptional and highly valued by pupils, staff and parents/carers.

The leadership team and governors have a clear and ambitious vision of the school as a 'lighthouse' of faith in the parish and wider community.

## What the school needs to improve

Make links between Catholic social teaching and other areas of the curriculum so that pupils recognise that faith in action goes beyond religious education.

Subject leaders for religious education and collective worship must be supported by a range of professional development to ensure that regular monitoring and evaluation has a timely impact on the consistency of pupil outcomes.

Pupils should be supported to develop a process for regular and systematic evaluation of the impact of their prayer and liturgy in order to develop as pupil leaders.

## 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

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

1

All school community members embrace the recently reviewed mission statement, 'We journey and grow in the light of Christ.' Pupils and their families were fully involved in the creation of the statement and this was evident when one pupil described very clearly the reasons why they describe their school as 'Catholic, Coastal and Diverse.' Pupils are proud to play an active role in its daily formation and mission, fully understanding that throughout their time at St Thomas a Becket they are 'growing in the light of Christ.' There is a palpable sense of belonging across the school and this is evident in all relationships between pupils, staff and parents/carers as well as with regular visitors to the school. Pupils highly value their chaplaincy leadership roles and speak confidently about their impact. They understand that their faith brings certain responsibilities and calls them to act; for example, they achieved their Fair Aware Award in 2023. Pupils know how the mission statement affects how they live and how it impacts positively on the lives of others, especially those who are less fortunate, including locally, nationally and internationally.

The word of God is alive at St Thomas a Becket Catholic Primary School, both orally and visibly, through all community relationships. The Beatitudes are well understood and valued; they underpin the behaviour and attitudes of the pupils, with staff providing strong role models. Staff show high levels of care for one another and for pupils, resulting in a fully inclusive environment where all are nurtured. Staff embrace opportunities to support one another. Parents and staff are proud of their strong community and speak highly of leaders who have created a caring school that parents describe as, 'warm, safe, inclusive, comfortable and happy.' Pupils are respectful of other faiths and all members of this diverse school community are welcomed. On a number of occasions parents and grandparents described the school as 'my second family' and

are delighted that the school is providing the same messages as they are promoting at home. Engaging and colourful displays throughout the school, both in communal areas and classrooms, are visible signs of the school's Catholic character to all who visit the school. When asked about relationship, health and sex education, a parent said, 'I have faith in the school that they are doing the right things.' Chaplaincy provision, support and engagement is exceptional and permeates all aspects of the life and mission of the school.

Christ is at the heart of leadership in this school. Leaders and governors have a true sense of identity and vision which they work hard to fulfil. Parents and carers are valued and instrumental in the development of the school, working in harmony with the whole community. There are strong links to the parishes that serve the school. Clergy provide staff and pupils with support and input, strengthening their knowledge and understanding of Catholic life and mission. The committed governing body effectively supports the head teacher and leadership team, working strategically to have a positive impact upon the lives of the pupils. Governors fully support the school in its core mission and they are passionate about their role within the school, working tirelessly to support and challenge leaders. They ensure that all policies reflect the Catholic mission and have prioritised investment of resources in this area. Leaders and governors are proud of this family-orientated school and are grateful to the staff team who work so hard. Leaders are highly committed to the further development of all staff and regularly provide in-house support or coaching as well as attending diocesan training.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

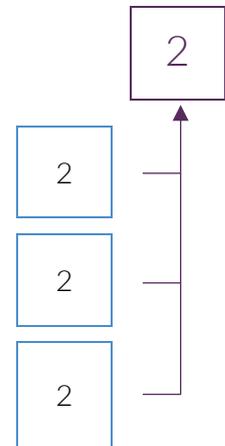
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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 make good progress in religious education, knowing more, remembering more and doing more; pupil outcomes in religious education match or exceed other core curriculum subjects. Pupils demonstrate obvious engagement and enjoyment in their lessons, which often result in well-presented work. A pupil very enthusiastically shared, 'We love RE.' All classes revisit prior learning at the start of their lessons. Pupils have positive attitudes and know the importance of this subject. Behaviour for learning in the vast majority of classes is very good. Pupils are familiar with the use of Bibles and during the inspection pupils were observed studying content from both the Old and the New Testament. Pupils listen attentively to one another and readily contribute, using appropriate religious vocabulary. They are eager to develop their knowledge and know how to build upon the oral responses of their peers. This also means they are able to make clear links with previous knowledge and pupils' books demonstrate this. However, pupils are not yet encouraged to make links between their understanding of faith in action through Catholic social teaching and their other areas of knowledge.

Teachers are committed to religious education and value how this subject forms the moral and spiritual development of their pupils. There is a shared and clear structure to lesson delivery, with emphasis placed on enhancing pupils' religious literacy and strengthening their knowledge and understanding. In the best lessons seen, staff created an atmosphere which clearly made this subject distinct from all other subjects, allowing space for reflection and promoting respect and reverence. Effective planned review of previous learning is evident, which encourages pupils to see and form links. Teachers further help pupils to deepen their knowledge by asking thought-provoking questions; this adds to the lesson pace and pupils readily build upon the responses of their peers. In this diverse and inclusive school, pupils with special educational needs or disabilities and those in vulnerable situations are supported sensitively and effectively in order

to achieve in their learning. Pictures and symbols are used consistently to support all pupils very effectively throughout the school. Adults are well deployed to facilitate learning outcomes. Pupils are aware of the support and guidance they receive from adults, 'The teachers encourage us, even when we think we cannot, they help us so that we can.' The presence of an infectious enthusiasm for the subject motivates pupils even when the content is challenging. For children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, a sense of awe and wonder is generated through the provision of a range of stimulating and creative tasks. A parent said, 'My daughter says she loves RE.'

The head teacher, deputy head teacher and subject leaders have a clear vision for the leadership of religious education. The school works in line with diocesan expectations and guidance. Pupils in Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 6 are following the new *Religious Education Directory* with the remaining year groups working from the *Come and See* programme. Leaders value the voice of pupils, responding readily to their request for more art-based and creative learning activities. Leaders are committed to the professional development of the two recently appointed subject leaders and are walking alongside them as their leadership role grows; diocesan networks for subject leaders and wider training opportunities could be useful to support confidence and implementation as their leadership journey continues. At St Thomas a Becket, the school is ably supported by their knowledgeable link governor for religious education and by a proactive governing body which values religious education. This is evident in the school's purchasing of high quality resources, which inspire the pupils and enhance their learning experiences. The leadership team's self-evaluation is reflective, accurate and forward-thinking.

## 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

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

2



Prayer and liturgy is embraced by pupils and they are able to pray in a range of ways, in keeping with the Catholic tradition. Pupils pray in a respectful and reverent manner in whole-school liturgies, class-based prayer times and at the spiritual stations. The parish priest and school chaplain both spoke about the pupil responses: ‘What the children say in Friday assemblies is profound,’ and ‘I am sometimes amazed at the questions the pupils ask.’ The pupils of St Thomas a Becket show an awareness of the Church’s liturgical year and enjoy a number of special celebrations including the celebration of Mass, for example on the feast of All Saints. Pupils work together with the support of their chaplain and spirituality leader to undertake leadership responsibilities including a variety of ministries. Pupils spoke positively about their role as liturgy leaders and said they were both excited and confident in their work. They know their role in setting up the display for prayer and one child, when talking about the liturgy boxes, told the inspector that there are, ‘so, so many wonderful things, I just love them all!’ In order to develop their role further, pupils must now be given opportunities to evaluate their prayer and liturgy experiences in order to develop as leaders.

Prayer and liturgy are precious in the life of the school. The recently composed school prayer and hymn are central to the liturgical life of the school and enhance the prayer and liturgy experiences of all. During collective worship, pupils listened attentively to the word of God and actively took part in praying and singing. The calendar of provision is clearly planned according to the Church’s liturgical seasons and appropriate to the differing ages of the pupils. Well thought-out and designed spaces both indoors and outdoors, facilitate times of planned prayer and liturgy and provide places for spontaneous moments of prayer. Mission is evident at this school. Families regularly pray and celebrate with the school and this has often had an encouraging impact upon their prayer life at home. A parent expressed their positivity about

provision, 'I love this school, I particularly like when my daughter comes home with a 'liturgy bag' to share prayers at home.' The chaplain is valued by all 'He is a welcome visitor and all the children adore him.' Throughout the inspection, it was clear that chaplaincy is an integral part of this school and is having a marked impact upon the development of pupils, staff and the wider community of this school.

Leaders and governors are passionate about prayer and liturgy and their policies and resourcing truly reflect this. Leaders are proactive, always looking to improve and develop provision. Parents feel that communication is very good; they say school leaders are approachable and listen sensitively to feedback. They also feel that leaders have created a school that is '... a spiritual place to be.' The chaplain and parish priests are instrumental in supporting leaders and give of their time willingly. This supports not only pupils and their families but also provides valuable spiritual formation for staff. The school has recognised the importance of grandparents; one parent stated, 'The school is very good at acknowledging the role grandparents play in our children's lives ... pupils invite their grandparents to Mass where they are specifically thanked for supporting our children's moral and spiritual development.' The Sacrament of Reconciliation and the celebration of the Eucharist occur at key times within the liturgical year and are welcomed by the school community. A parent told inspectors, 'As a family we feel fully involved in the prayer life of the school.'

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas a Becket Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	114577
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8453362
Full postal address of the school	St Thomas a Becket Catholic Primary School, 3 Tutts Barn Lane, Eastbourne, BN22 8XT
School phone number	01323737221
Headteacher	Paul Beverton
Chair of Governors	Elizabeth Oram and Jemma Harvey (Co-Chairs of Governors)
School Website	<a href="http://www.stthomasbecketcatholicsschool.co.uk">www.stthomasbecketcatholicsschool.co.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	01/12/2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

## The inspection team

Fiona McGonigle	Lead
Ursula Hargrave	Team
James Kilmartin	Team

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## 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

