



Diocese of Westminster

St Thomas More Catholic School

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DFE Number: 309/4703

URN Number: 102/161

Headteacher: Mr M Tissot

Chair of Governors: Cllr P Egan

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 30 April and 1 May 2013

Date of previous inspection: 8 February 2010

Reporting Inspector: Mrs J Goring

Associate Inspector: Mrs J McGurrell

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 two days in school, visited 9 lessons and 2 assemblies, and carried out 8 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, examination of school documents, and attendance at religious services where possible.

The Inspection of St Thomas More School, Wood Green was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by 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.

Description of School

The school is a six form entry in the LA of Haringey and the locality of Wood Green. The school serves the parishes of St Paul's Wood Green and St Monica's, Palmers Green. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 52.4%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 36.4% and from other Faiths, 10.2%.

There are 626 pupils on roll, with 12 pupils with statements of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average. There is a well above average rate of families claiming free school meals.

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1: Outstanding;*
Grade 1: Very Good;
Grade 2: Good;
Grade 3: Requires improvement;
Grade 4: Causing Concern.

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

Overall Grade: [1]

Curriculum religious education is very good in developing students' religious literacy. The provision at each Key Stage reflects the Curriculum Directory and as a result pupils have very good knowledge and an understanding of what it means to be a Christian in today's world. Pupils' achievement is good and they know how to improve; they are able to speak confidently about their faith. Teaching is very good and pupils benefit from imaginative and creative lessons. The Subject Leader has high expectations and supports staff well to meet these and there is a sense of vocation in the way the department goes about its work. Self evaluation is accurate and honest. The department's contribution to supporting the school's mission is outstanding and is visible in all aspects of school life.

What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection and what should the school do to further improve in classroom religious education?

The last inspection issues have been achieved.

To improve religious education further the school should:

- continue to develop good practice in assessment through diagnostic marking so pupils are fully aware of what they have to do to improve
- continue to map the Curriculum Directory clearly in schemes of work and audit the schemes to ensure that all has been covered
- continue to focus on higher achieving pupils to increase the A* and A grades at GCSE
- work towards the reintroduction of A Level in the Sixth Form

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

Grade [1]

Religious education is at the heart of the school and is well supported by the leadership team and valued by members of staff across the school. The curriculum meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory; the four strands are clearly identified in the schemes of work and links to resources and to 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' are very nearly complete, these highlight ways in which the needs of the pupils can be met with imagination and creativity. There is regular monitoring of the curriculum, of teacher planning and of the assessment of pupils' work. All Sixth Form students follow the NOCN award and have access to materials online. The resource base is being updated to reflect curriculum developments and the diversity of the pupils. There are very good links to other faiths which recognise the opportunities for dialogue within school. The department works hard to promote students' understanding of the place of religion in everyday life and to encourage their awareness of common elements with other faiths.

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

Grade [2]

Achievement and standards in religious education are good at all Key Stages. Most learners make good progress given that their attainment on entry is low. Attainment at GCSE rose dramatically in 2012 and the school's information on pupils' current attainment and progress indicates that this will be even higher in the future; tracking of progress is robust and forecast grades have been accurate measures of the final outcomes. The achievement of more able pupils is an area for improvement, especially as the school intends to run a viable A Level group in 2013/14. Pupils are challenged in lessons, work hard and generally understand what they need to do to reach their targets. There are high expectations of the pupils both from the teachers and from the pupils themselves. In the Sixth Form, 83% of the students passed the NOCN award at levels 1, 2 or 3.

The quality of teaching

Grade [1]

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is very good overall and sometimes outstanding. In the best lessons seen during the inspection, students were challenged to think spiritually, ethically and theologically and to become aware of the challenges of being a Christian in everyday life. All lessons were well planned and there was a variety in resources used, including ICT. Specialist teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith and have high expectations of the pupils. There is a focus on challenge and all teaching allowed the pupils to access the curriculum; there is particularly good support for EAL pupils. The emphasis on teaching and learning and sharing ideas across the department is contributing to improvement in pupil achievement. The books sampled showed some evidence of diagnostic marking and the range of assessment techniques is developing; some good examples of peer assessment was seen in lessons and pupils are being encouraged to develop independent study skills. The subject leader will need to ensure that there is a consistent approach to assessment across the department.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade [1]

The Leadership Team have a strong commitment to promoting high quality Religious Education and their support is valued and evident. The Subject Leader shares this vision and is very effective in leading her team to achieve; standards have risen quickly in Religious Education at all Key Stages. Organisation and teamwork are excellent with clear planning and development aimed at continual personal excellence. There is a sense of common purpose with good practice shared from lesson observation and team discussions. Resources are well deployed. The department takes every opportunity for inset so improving the experience of the pupils in their care. Non specialist teachers are well supported. Departmental monitoring is regular but needs to be embedded further so that the improvement in pupils' achievement will continue. The Governor attached to the Religious Education department is both supportive and challenging. Accommodation is bright, cheerful and adequate for purpose.

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 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]

St Thomas More is a very good Catholic school. The Catholic life of the school benefits from strong leadership from the Headteacher, the Senior Leadership Team and the Governing Body, who share a vision for the development of the school and are totally committed to the work of the school. This has resulted in an effective Catholic community which serves pupils, parents and staff well. Effective strategic planning arises from an accurate view of the school's strengths. There is a sense of respect between pupils and with staff, both in the class room and beyond. Good behaviour is encouraged and pupils are given every opportunity to exercise self-discipline. A spirit of co-operation and friendliness is experienced in the school and contributes effectively to the Catholic ethos. The prayer life of the school is well embedded but could be developed further with a wider variety of prayer experiences. Praise and encouragement of the work of pupils and staff are clearly seen. However Religious Education does not receive 10% of formal curriculum time in KS3 and 4 nor 5% in KS5, although there are plans for this to happen in the next academic year.

What has improved since the last inspection and what should the school do to further develop the Catholic life of the school ?

The last inspection issues have been mostly achieved, although the current chaplain can only offer the school limited time.

To develop the Catholic life of the school still further the school should:

- increase the variety of worship and prayer life, particularly in lessons
- develop links with local parishes and feeder primary schools
- develop further the aspects of the Common Good relating to global links and service
- plan to appoint a chaplain who can offer the school more time which would create capacity to develop the Catholic life of the school
- formalise the plan to increase classroom Religious Education to 10% of the curriculum time

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

Grade [1]

Religious Education does not receive 10% of formal curriculum time in KS3 and 4 nor 5% in KS5 but there are drop down days for each which go some way to achieving this. The generous budget for Religious Education matches that of English and Maths. The staffing is very good and accommodation is attractive and fit for purpose. The Governors and the Leadership Team offer outstanding support to the department and Religious Education plays a central role in achieving the mission of the school.

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

Grade [1]

The provision for prayer and worship is very good and are central to the life of the school. There are regular masses for each year group, weekly year assemblies and regular form masses, as well as the marking of feast days and special events. Liturgical celebrations follow the church's calendar. The part time chaplain, priests from the local parishes, and other religious play a great part in enriching the prayer life of the school. The retreat programme is now well established and students speak enthusiastically of their experiences. Pupil contribution is notable in the planning and participation of worship, especially in assemblies. Pupils respond with respect and take the varied opportunities offered to develop their own spirituality. Opportunities for more imaginative prayer and pupil participation in tutor times and lessons are sometimes missed, and this should be an area for development. There is also sensitive provision for those students of other Christian and non-Christian staff and students.

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

Grade [2]

The school's commitment to action for social justice is good. Charity initiatives, Fair Trade Day and the religious education curriculum all make a contribution to students' knowledge and understanding of social justice issues which will develop further with time. The funds raised for charity are impressive, as are the skills the pupils develop to enable them to play a full part in the local community, for instance collecting for hampers at Christmas and eggs at Easter. There are plans currently underway to form links with a school in the Gambia giving pupils another opportunity to put their faith into action. This gives the pupils a sense of service for others at the same time as enriching their own lives. Pupils are given an opportunity for community service within the school community as peer mentors. Students are aware of the moral and social issues within our society and are keen to share their views, listen to others and reflect on the impact of their actions and those of others. The school works hard to ensure there is a common sense of belonging. There is a diverse faith community, and all members treat each other with respect; harmonious relationships exist across and among the ethnic groups within the school.

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 [1]

There is a very strong commitment among senior leaders and the staff to the school's mission as a Catholic school within the Diocese of Westminster. Leaders and managers at all levels along with governors are regularly involved in diocesan events and are happy to invite members of Diocesan clergy into celebrate with the school. Priests from the local parishes are invited into lessons thus developing better interactions with parishes. Innovative projects with the Catholic feeder primary schools are beginning to form strong initial links with parents of future students. Current parents are involved in the life of the school through a range of mechanisms, including Parent Forums and there is a thriving PTA.

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

Grade [1]

The leadership of the school has a clear vision of the Catholic educational mission. Governors understand their strategic role and the challenges facing the school; to this end they have recently joined with another Catholic school in the Diocese to form an academy trust. The Headteacher is inspirational and the whole Leadership Team has high aspirations for the school as a Catholic community, committed to the formation of the whole person. The school has strong pastoral provision, promotes inclusion, shared values and Catholic ethos. Relationships with the parishes and feeder primary schools are developing and innovative projects are planned to raise the profile of the school. Parents are supportive and are welcomed into the school.



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A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade [1]

How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?	Grade [1]
Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education	Grade [2]
The quality of teaching	Grade [1]
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education	Grade [1]

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 place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget	Grade [1]
The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community	Grade [1]
The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice.	Grade [2]
The 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 [1]
The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school.	Grade [1]