



DIOCESAN INSPECTION REPORT

St Thomas More Primary School

(Part of Nicholas Postgate C.A.T.) Erith Grove, Easterside, Middlesbrough, TS4 3QH

School Unique Reference Number: **142376**

Inspection dates:	12 – 13 June 2019
Lead inspector:	Anne Parr
Team inspector:	Angela Spencer

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Catholic Life:		Outstanding	1
Collective Worship:		Good	2
Religious Education:		Good	2

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Thomas More Primary School is a good Catholic school because:

- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding: the well-being and the personal and spiritual development of all pupils is at the core of what St Thomas More School strives for: to 'Live as God calls You'.
- It is an extremely welcoming, supportive and nurturing Catholic community. Pupils know that their school's Catholic character brings responsibilities to live out what they learn about being a disciple of Jesus and a member of a Catholic community. The school provides them with the opportunities to do this in daily school life, in links with the parish and in links with the local community and the wider Church.
- Pupils and parents speak extremely highly of the school and appreciate the good Catholic education it provides. They all greatly enjoy being part of the St Thomas More community and appreciate the dedication of the headteacher and the hard work of all staff
- Collective Worship is good. Pupils participate reverently in presiding, praying and singing joyfully. There is an increasing range of opportunities for personal prayer, contemplation and reflection within school life
- Religious Education (RE) is good because the school's training of all staff, particularly less experienced staff, has led to overall good teaching in RE. A large majority of pupils enjoy RE and make good progress from their starting points.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Thomas More School is an average sized primary school with 215 pupils on roll including nursery. Of these, 38% of pupils are baptised Catholics, 24% from other Christian denominations, 2% of other faiths and 36% with no religious affiliation.
- The school serves the twin parishes of St Thomas More and St Joseph's. St Thomas More church is about 15 minutes' walk away.
- The school has 38% of teachers who are Catholic (full-time equivalent). For the past year, there has been no deputy headteacher or single designated Religious Education (RE) leader in school.
- Easterside is in an area of high socio-economic deprivation.
- The vast majority of pupils are from a white British background. 17% of pupils are on the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) register and the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium is above the national average at 46%
- The school has been part of the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust since September 2018.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Improve the Catholic Life of the school by:
 - using links with the Nicholas Postgate Academy to share best practice in developing the Catholic Life of the school to further embed parental involvement
 - making the fullest use of the 'Called to Serve' initiative
 - maintaining the comprehensive pastoral care for the families and pupils of St Thomas More school
- Improve Collective Worship by:
 - embedding the new prayer spaces into school life and making better use of existing spaces, eg the prayer garden, for a variety of prayer
 - ensuring that all teachers develop pupils' skills in planning and organising prayer and liturgy, particularly through the end of topic celebration liturgy
 - providing further training for staff in delivering Collective Worship so that it becomes a prayer experience and less 'lesson-like'
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education by:
 - giving pupils regular feedback to which they can respond in order to improve their work
 - establishing a consistent whole-school approach to the process in 'Come and See'
 - providing succinct learning objectives and success criteria especially in key stage two
 - improving attainment for SEND pupils through more precisely planned support from TA's; for example , by developing their questioning skills

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

1

- 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.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- At St Thomas More School, the school’s mission statement has meaning for the pupils so they understand that they must be the best that they can be. They know that their actions and behaviour towards others, especially those in need, must be a reflection of living as God calls them. They have a strong sense of belonging to the lively Catholic community of their school.
- Pupils played a full part, together with staff and governors, in the development of the vision statement. This process has given them increased ownership of it. In particular they used its words and meaning to compose the words for the school’s mission song which they sing out with sincerity and passion.
- The outstanding behaviour of almost all pupils is rooted in their involvement in the ethos and values of the school; they have a strong sense of personal worth and learn the importance of their relationship with God and each other at an age-appropriate level. They know about the importance of forgiving and being forgiven and can readily relate that to their own lives. They also enjoy celebrating each other in celebration assemblies which recognise when pupils have demonstrated the ‘Golden Rules’ relating to Gospel values.
- Pupils are able to take on a range of responsibilities; for example, as Mini-Vinnies, Mission Team members, playground Buddies, Eco-warriors and House Captains. This enables them to develop a sense of responsibility for those around them. They take their roles and responsibilities in school very seriously because ‘teachers have taught us the right path’ and ‘we are a Catholic school’.
- Pupils from the Mission Team have been enabled by the headteacher to play their part in contributing their ideas for the Catholic Life of the school and evaluating their success through regular meetings with her.
- Pupils look after each other and look after the local, national and global community through a range of charity work and activities so that they develop a moral awareness. This is supported through the Academy Trust’s ‘Called to Serve’ initiative. For example, the Mission Team were recently commended for their work for the John Paul Centre for the homeless and the Eco Warriors for planting and improving a garden at the Cancer Rehabilitation Centre at the James Cook University Hospital.
- Many pupils respond very well to the outstanding pastoral care in school. Parents spoke extremely highly of this care; it was also reflected in the many grateful responses in the parental questionnaire: the school ‘can’t do enough’ and it was ‘like a miracle’, speaking of the school’s effect on a particular family.
- Pupils benefit from the Personal Social Health Economic education (PSHE) embedded in the curriculum and from Relationships and Sex education (RSE) through ‘Journey in Love’. Their

knowledge and understanding is developed appropriately according to their age and in a Catholic context.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The school's mission statement 'Live as God Calls You' is an effective expression of the wider mission of the Church in education. Leaders have ensured that both the mission and vision statements are central to all provision at the school so that the pupils in their care might 'Do More, Achieve More, Be More' (from the vision statement).
- The mission and vision of the school lead to a strong sense of community and purpose. Parents spoke and commented on the welcome given to those who are new to the school; 'it's like being in a big family', and of the variety of support and encouragement offered to families. For example, the school provides programmes such as 'Families and Schools Together' (FAST) and the Healthy Families programme, 'Live it and Get Active'
- Chaplaincy provision and responsibility is shared across the staff so that the pastoral and spiritual needs of both pupils and staff are met; a strong community has been built which serves the needs of others.
- Relationships between all members of the school are very positive and supportive because the professional, personal and spiritual development of staff has a high priority. Indeed, a teacher spoke of how she has been personally inspired and moved by the Catholic Life of the school and of how it has affected her life.
- Pupils with particular needs are systematically well looked after through a range of pastoral and emotional support, both in-house and external. This is combined with very practical support to families who need it, so that all pupils flourish and feel safe in their Catholic community. The school's pastoral leads are highly valued by families and school leaders alike; they are skilled in building relationships with families and engaging with them whatever their needs or difficulties.
- The Catholic identity of the school is apparent in classroom prayer tables, prayer spaces and displays reflecting the Catholic Life of the school. For example, a display about vocation 'What will God commit you to do?' which contains pupils' reflections in response to Blessed John Henry Newman's words about commitment.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The headteacher leads by example and is very committed to maintaining a Catholic school with the spiritual and moral development of pupils at the heart of all it does; the school's particular context also means that the provision of outstanding pastoral care is a priority.
- Very committed governors have a strong sense of responsibility for the Catholic Life of the school and take an active part in it; they are regular visitors in school. They place consistent emphasis on Catholic Life as an improvement priority and through self-evaluation using Catholic Education Service audit tools, they have identified key priorities. Together with the headteacher, they have planned for improvements and monitored the progress of the plans. They hold the headteacher to account both informally and through formal governor meetings.
- Existing teaching staff and those new to Catholic education are well supported through induction and relevant continued professional development (CPD) concerning the Catholic Life of the school, especially related to Collective Worship.
- The headteacher has made sure that staff spiritual development has been at the heart of CPD and staff have had the support of a spiritual director. In the absence of an RE leader, effective

CPD has been even more essential. Staff are therefore enabled to understand and contribute to the school's mission in education.

- Membership of the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust has brought new opportunities for school improvement and sharing of good practice. Leaders and managers are making the most of this to monitor and evaluate their own provision; they have observed good practice in other schools and used this to bring about improvements at St Thomas More School. The improvements, such as 'Stay and Pray' are not yet embedded in the life of the school

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

2

- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

2

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2

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship is good.

- Almost all pupils are engaged and respond well during Collective Worship. They join in hymns and community prayers with enjoyment and confidence. Pupils are reverent and reflective during Collective Worship; they share their own thoughts and reflections readily and with sincerity. Parents say their children 'love learning prayers' and talk about them at home.
- Pupils are involved in planning and leading Collective Worship in a variety of traditional and contemporary ways and forms shown in the school's 'Journey in Faith' book whilst younger pupils focus on preparing the 'Gather' part of their Collective Worship. They set up the focal point for Collective Worship in the classroom for their classmates and have learnt how to greet the Word appropriately.
- Pupils appreciate the recently introduced classroom prayer spaces or prayer stations which mean they have time for personal prayer and reflection. They speak about being 'silent, quiet, undisturbed' and how they can 'have a real conversation with God'. These are not yet embedded fully into school life.
- The pupils at St Thomas More clearly benefit both spiritually and morally from Collective Worship within the school. Acts of Collective Worship are closely linked to behaviours and actions in everyday life, for example to 'Statements of Belief' so that pupils consider their own actions and attitudes to those around them.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is good.

- Collective Worship is central to the school's Catholic Life; there are regular and well-established opportunities for the community to pray together.
- Collective Worship has a clear message and is linked to what is happening in school. It reflects relevant themes or liturgical seasons and covers the Church's year and traditional feasts. Leaders ensure that pupils have good experiences of the liturgical life of the Church.
- Less experienced staff have worked hard to develop some of the skills and the confidence to lead Collective Worship; this also enhances provision for pupils in their classrooms. In parts, the content can become lesson-like so that the focus on praying or contemplation gets a little lost.
- Parents and other adults speak positively about the opportunities the school provides for them to be part of prayer and Collective Worship, both the major liturgical and seasonal opportunities and the recently introduced class 'Stay and Pray' sessions.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship is good.

- School leaders, especially the headteacher, understand different forms of liturgy and Worship and know how to provide good quality experiences for the school community.
- Leaders ensure that there is a planned cycle of Collective Worship to reflect the liturgical year using a range of forms and resources to engage all pupils. This includes visiting the parish church at key times of the liturgical year. They effectively promote both formal and informal ways of praying, both traditional and contemporary.
- Leaders regularly monitor the quality of Collective Worship so that they can plan for improvements. In particular, effective CPD for teachers has improved the quality of Collective Worship experiences for pupils. Additionally, leaders and managers planned for the spiritual formation of teachers using a spiritual director as they judged that this underpins teachers' ability to provide Collective Worship for their pupils and to support pupils in planning and leading prayer and liturgies in school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

2

2

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is good.

- Most pupils enjoy their learning in RE; they apply themselves readily to complete the tasks given to them. In a large majority of classes, pupils' current work in books and lessons is good. This is best seen in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and in year four and upper key stage two (KS2).
- Behaviour for learning is good and in a large majority of classes outstanding. There is a calm and orderly atmosphere during lessons. Classroom relationships are good.
- In the best lessons, pupils are immediately interested in their learning because they are involved from the beginning and so the level of enjoyment and enthusiasm is high. For example, in the year five lesson, fast-paced question and answering, paired discussions and use of reflective music created a very purposeful and enjoyable atmosphere. This is not the case in all classes.
- Baseline assessments at the beginning of the Early Years Foundation Stage show low points of entry for a large majority of pupils. They make good progress in RE across key stage one (KS1) with most working at the expected standard by the end of KS1. Progress slows in year three but, by the end of year six, a large majority of pupils do attain the expected standard. In some classes, the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs (SEND) is variable compared with that of other pupils.
- During lessons, pupils of all ages are encouraged to think about how religious belief affects other people's actions and how it affects their own lives and actions too. For example, in exploring 'Friends', year one considered the 'ingredients' necessary for friendship biscuits and what would happen if an ingredient was missing, whilst year four were linking their breaking/building bridges lesson to the sacrament of reconciliation. The teacher used good questioning, accurate religious vocabulary and challenging pace to enable pupils to do this.
- Pupils show knowledge and understanding of beliefs and sources in lessons which is appropriate for their age; they can use their learning to reflect and comment on religious beliefs.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is good.

- Most teaching of RE is at least good and ensures that pupils are motivated to achieve and make progress. The majority of teachers use imaginative approaches to enthuse and motivate pupils. Where teaching is not yet consistently good, there has been noticeable improvement since September because of CPD provided by the school.
- For example, after carefully leading pupils through relevant scripture, the year six teacher provided a variety of resources for pupils to use independently in creating a stop-frame animation showing the duty of Christians to care for others. She skilfully re-modelled the task throughout the lesson so that pupils made a variety of links between the range of sources. Pupils

in year one had created 'Pentecost hats' and a dance, viewed on the ipad using the HP Reveal app.

- All teachers work hard to improve their own subject knowledge and understanding of 'Come and See'. For instance, the EYFS 'Special Book' shows an imaginative range of resources and creative activities perfectly matched to the youngest of pupils; there is a gradual move towards independent and individual responses as the pupils made good progress over the year.
- Teachers plan lessons based on broadly accurate assessments of what their pupils can do. Differentiation is mostly through teaching assistant support or outcome. The quality of support is variable.
- The majority of pupils understand in a general way how well they are doing, especially in upper KS2, but pupils are not very sure how to improve their work or exactly what they need to include. This is because neither feedback which pupils can respond to, nor clear learning objectives, are being used consistently in all classes. Planning and lessons observations show that teaching assistants are not always planned for effectively.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is good.

- The RE curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. Coverage in pupils' books reflects the required amount of time dedicated to the teaching of curriculum RE using 'Come and See'.
- The subject is well-resourced and has parity with other core subjects including the time given to staff development and training. This has been particularly necessary in the last twelve months and has been effective in supporting a number of inexperienced teachers and those new to Catholic education.
- There have been some turbulent times in the last twelve months as the school has been without a deputy head teacher or RE co-ordinator. Subject leadership faltered which shows in an absence of a whole-school approach to the teaching of RE in some respects.
- Leaders and managers appointed a team of teachers, including the headteacher, who provided subject leadership in the interim. The school has been well supported by the Academy Trust during this difficult period.
- Leaders have evaluated and monitored the provision for RE and as a priority in the school's particular circumstances, they have planned development and training of staff through mentoring, visits to other schools and in-house CPD. They have achieved overall good RE provision and outcomes for the pupils.
- Additionally, they have promoted the broader Religious Education of pupils through the rich Catholic Life of the school and good engagement with the local community so that pupils can use these experiences in RE lessons.
- Experienced governors challenge the head teacher on all aspects of school improvement including RE; part of this challenge comes from the headteacher's termly report to governors on standards in RE. Governors take a keen interest in developments in the subject.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

HOW EFFECTIVE THE SCHOOL IS IN PROVIDING CATHOLIC EDUCATION:**2****CATHOLIC LIFE:****1**

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

1

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

1

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

1

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:**2**

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.

2

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

2

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

2

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**2**

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

2

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

2

How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

2

SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	St Thomas More Primary School
Unique reference number	142376
Local authority	Middlesbrough
This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt Reverend Terence Drainey the Bishop of Middlesbrough under canon 806 of Canon Law. For voluntary aided schools it also fulfils the responsibility the governing body has to inspect the school under s48 of the Education Act 2005.	
Chair of governors	Mr Terry Cane
Choose School Leadership Type	Mrs Jane Apolloni
Date of previous school inspection	July 2014
Telephone number	01642317350
Email address	stthomasmore@mcschools.org.uk