

# DIOCESE OF MIDDLESBROUGH

Inspection of Religious Education  
Collective Worship  
and  
The Catholic Life of the School



**School:** St Thomas More RC Primary

**Address:** Erith Grove  
Easterside  
Middlesbrough  
TS4 3QH

**URN:** 111704

**Head Teacher:** Mrs Jane Apolloni

**Chair:** Mr Terry Cane

**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> July 2014

**Inspector:** Mrs Liz Huntley

**Date & Grade of Last Inspection:** March 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> 2012  
Satisfactory

**Overall Grade for this Inspection:** Good

## INTRODUCTION

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The report of the inspection is produced for the Bishop of Middlesbrough (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school. The Inspection reviews, evaluates and plans further improvements in the school's witness to the Catholic faith and Curriculum Religious Education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation. The Inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers.

### What Inspection Grades mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding Catholic school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a Catholic school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Requires Improvement	These features, though of adequate quality, require improvement to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate Catholic school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils.

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Thomas More Primary School is located in Easterside which is an estate on the southern side of Middlesbrough. The school is much smaller than an average sized primary school and is within an area of significant deprivation. Most children start school with skills that are well-below those typically expected for their age.

Most pupils are White British. However, there is a small but significant number of pupils from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action is well-below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well-above average. 53% of the children are baptised Catholics as are four of the nine teachers.

School staff and parents are involved in Families and Schools together (FAST) and have achieved the Leading Parent Partnership Award (LPPA). The school employs a Parent Support Advisor. Governors are working to get accreditation for the National Leadership in Governance Award.

**Pupil Catchment:**

Number of pupils on roll: 174 (including 13 place Nursery – am and pm)

Planned Admission Number of Pupils: 175

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 53% (92 pupils)

Percentage of pupils from other Christian Denominations: 18% (32 pupils)

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 0%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 29% (50 pupils)

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 14% (24 pupils)

**Teaching Staff:**

Full-time Teachers: 8 (includes HT)

Part-time Teachers: 1

Percentage of Catholic Teachers: 44%

**Support Staff:**

Full-time Classroom Support Staff: 6

Part-time Classroom Support Staff: 0

Percentage of Catholic Classroom Support Staff: 100%

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 0

**Percentage of learning time given to R.E:**

All classes 10%

**Parishes served by the School: St. Thomas More and St. Joseph's**

# 1. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

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## MAIN FINDINGS

St Thomas More is a good school. It is a welcoming, inclusive community which puts its partnership with parents, who are the first teachers of their children, as a high priority. Its mission 'Live as God calls you' is upheld by staff and pupils. Pupils' behaviour around the school is good.

By the end of Key Stage 2, all pupils have made good progress and standards in Religious Education are mostly above average. Standards in Key Stage 1 are mostly average. Training support from the Diocese has had a positive impact on the quality of children's work and the accuracy of assessments made by teachers. Effective monitoring and evaluation by leaders at all levels ensures full understanding of strengths and weaknesses. The learning environment promotes the Gospel values of Love, Peace, Justice, Honesty and Forgiveness.

The driving force behind the desire to continue to improve is underpinned by the passion and commitment of Governors and staff. The school celebrates the liturgical year providing extra-curricular experiences which are planned to help pupils deepen their experience of God and develop their spiritual awareness.

The provision for the Catholic Life of the school has the highest priority; the learning environment is attractive, well ordered and clearly of a Catholic nature. The school places the unique nature of each child at the heart of its mission.

Leaders, managers and governors are committed to promoting the Catholic Life of the school. Bringing Christ to the children is a high priority. Each child is central to all aspects of school life.

### **What the school needs to do to improve further:**

In order to get more work to the higher standards, senior leaders should prioritise their work to continue to systematically monitor and evaluate Religious Education provision and outcomes to ensure improved achievement.

Develop further the role of the Link Governor for Religious Education by providing regular opportunities for him to work with the subject leader and review progress against school improvement priorities.

Allocate time for the subject leader to share outstanding practice with other members of staff so the pace is always 'snappy' and children become more independent in their learning.

## 2. PUPILS

### How good outcomes are for pupils, taking into account variations between groups.

The school Mission Statement “Live as God calls you” is well known by the pupils. Pupils’ full participation in the Catholic Life of the school is demonstrated by their contribution to the school Mission Team which involves the whole community in fundraising events such as Food Banks, Christmas Hampers, CAFOD Cake Stall and Race 4 Life Cancer Charity. Through the work of the Mission Team, pupils respond to the needs of people beyond the school speaking with confidence and humility about their faith because they believe that helping those in need is ‘following in the footsteps of Jesus’. Pupils understand that religious belief and spiritual values are important for many and enjoyed celebrating the different backgrounds of families in the school during Culture Week. Children are reflective and enquiring saying that their ‘Be Spirited’ week was about being special and getting close to God. They understand the need to forgive, say sorry and try to be friends because they don’t want to hurt people; they want to be like Jesus. The liturgical year celebrations are understood and appreciated for example the children reported, “It is green because we are in ordinary time.”

In the final Key Stage, the standards pupils achieve are mostly above average. Standards in Key Stage 1 are mostly average. Because of the excellent leadership of the subject leader and his energy and skills to drive effective practice throughout the school, all pupils have made at least two levels progress throughout Key Stage 2. The children are attaining high standards in engaging with questions of meaning and purpose. A range of stimulating activities that engage pupils, good questioning techniques and opportunities for pupils to talk through ideas with their partners result in children who are generally enthusiastic, able to apply themselves to work diligently, do well and work at a good pace.

During Collective Worship, the large majority of pupils act with reverence and are keen to participate. Gathering music is chosen appropriately to create a calm environment for worship consequently pupils enter a room or gather in class with respect. Children are confident in the way they sing, reflect in silence, join in the traditional prayers and listen with respect to each other’s responses to questions or invitations to reflect. In Year 3, pupils were able to demonstrate a good understanding of setting up a Prayer Table for Collective Worship including religious artefacts and the associated symbolism. Year 6, through their ‘Healing’ topic, were able to select passages from scripture to demonstrate an appreciation of the relevance of Jesus’ teaching. Because of the high priority given to celebrating the Liturgical Year, children have a good understanding of the religious seasons and feasts. Preparation and planning for Collective worship is thorough. Pupils are able to lead class Acts of Worship with older ones being more independent.

• The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school	<b>2</b>
• How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	<b>2</b>
• How well do pupils respond to and participate in the school’s Collective Worship	<b>2</b>

### 3. PROVISION

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#### How effective the provision is for Catholic education

The teaching observed was good or better. Where it was outstanding in Year 6, the learning opportunities were excellent and high expectations led to high quality motivation and rapid progress. However, in some classes the pace was not always 'snappy' and some children were not always on task. Extra support from skilful teaching assistants, planned for a small minority of children who find it difficult to stay on task or work independently is extremely beneficial. Planning is used well to provide a variety of learning experiences and, as a result of good assessment procedures, teachers and other adults plan well to meet pupils' individual needs. The Subject Leader, through rigorous monitoring, ensures that all teachers plan, mark work, assess and give feedback to pupils in accordance with Diocesan guidelines. Teachers and teacher assistants have good subject knowledge which can motivate and challenge pupils. All teaching is underpinned by the school's mission to 'Live as God calls you'. Good and imaginative use is made of resources to maximise learning. Detailed feedback is given orally, throughout the lessons and through comments in children's books. They know they can improve further because of the advice from teachers in the 'next steps'.

The enrichment of the curriculum through an imaginative and well planned 'Be Spirited' week in which the children had quality experiences in engaging with the meaning and purpose of life has led to learning which is stimulating and memorable. This is a direct impact of decisions to capitalise upon expertise within the school and from the Diocesan Religious Education Adviser. Teachers' planning which includes individual or group support enables all children to access the Religious Education curriculum. This curriculum provides good opportunities for spiritual, moral and vocation development.

High quality collective worship is strongly promoted by the subject leader with every class having the resources to ensure the quality. Staff and pupils pray together every day. Formal prayers take place throughout the day. High priority is given to children's participation in the many extra-curricular, voluntary prayer experiences provided by the Chaplaincy Team. Parents attend Acts of Worship in the school and St Thomas More Church showing their strong support for the school. The commitment by all members of the community to involving parents in this caring, loving family environment is overwhelming. Family Fun Days, Cookery Classes and opportunities to participate in lessons have improved home/school links consequently the school has achieved the nationally recognised Leading Parent Partnership Award. The subject leader works with staff to review and improve the provision of quality acts of worship resulting in children having the knowledge, confidence and skills to lead prayer. Culture Week is used to promote the religious diversity amongst the pupils.

The school clearly lives out its mission statement 'Live as God calls you'. The learning environment, including the planned changes to the Prayer Garden, is attractive, well ordered and clearly of a Catholic nature. Pupils are welcoming, friendly, helpful and polite. They behave well and are confident in expressing that they want to follow in the way of Jesus. In lessons, the children live out their Mission Statement in the way they relate to one another and contribute to discussion to deepen their understanding of what God is calling them to do. Because of the 'open door' approach to families and their welcome and inclusion in the school community, parents feel valued as families and are confident that the school places the unique nature of each child at the heart of its mission. The provision for the Catholic Life is clearly a priority.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of provision for the Catholic life of the school</li> </ul>	<b>1</b>

## 4. LEADERS, MANAGERS AND GOVERNORS

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### How effective leaders, managers and governors are in developing the Catholic life of the school

Governors are passionate about the school, its Catholic Life, educational provision and outcomes for the pupils. Pupils' spiritual and moral well being is at the heart of all their decisions. They have confidence in the excellent leadership the Head Teacher provides which enables the school community to be a place where the Catholic Life is lived to the full. Governors demonstrate their commitment to the school through their involvement in school initiatives and presence at important events including liturgical celebrations in school and at the parish church. A governor said, "We want to bring Christ to the life of the children." Governors' monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic Life provides an accurate diagnosis of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors have prioritised the value of partnership with parents and its impact on improved outcomes for children; consequently a Parent Support Advisor has been appointed. As a result of this, the care, support and guidance for the pupils and their families are outstanding.

The work of the Subject Leader in monitoring the quality of Collective Worship is effective. Using guidelines from the Diocesan Adviser, teachers are empowered to teach pupils to plan and lead Collective Worship for their own class or Key Stage. Consequently, pupils enjoy their input to Collective Worship and evaluate the outcomes.

The Head Teacher's Reports fully inform Governors about the attainment in Religious Education and it is tracked over time. Governors' rigorous monitoring of the attainment levels in Religious Education provides good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses. They support the Head Teacher as a critical friend in her determination to drive the school to improve further making important financial decisions to provide better outcomes for children. They know what the school is expected to achieve and they encourage the leaders to do better than this. The Head Teacher and Subject Leader have a good understanding of what the school needs to do to improve Religious Education provision and outcomes. Systems to evaluate and analyse key areas for development are embedded into school practice and as a result of this outcomes are improving. However, the link Governor is not yet working closely enough with the subject leader to review progress against school improvement priorities.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How well leaders, managers and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school, including collective worship, and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils</li></ul>	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How well leaders, managers and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils</li></ul>	2