



## **SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT**

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

**URN 101459**

**St Thomas More Catholic Primary School  
Sheldon Road  
Bexleyheath  
DA7 4PQ**

**Inspection date: 20 January 2016**

Chair of Governors: Mr Craig Gardner  
Headteacher: Mrs Colette Doran- Hannon  
Inspectors: Mrs Catherine Green  
Mrs Janette Mann

### **EDUCATION COMMISSION**

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# SECTION 48

# Introduction

## Description of the school

St. Thomas More Primary School is voluntary aided and situated in the Bexley Deanery in the Archdiocese of Southwark. The school was established as a one and a half form primary. Three years ago the school became a two form entry school.

The school serves the parishes of St Thomas More Bostall Park and St John Vianney Bexleyheath. The proportion of baptised Catholic pupils is 70%.

The average weekly time given to Religious Education is 10% in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years of age. The number of pupils currently on role is 415. The attainment of pupils on entry is broadly average. The proportion of pupils eligible for Free School Meals is 6% which is below average. 10% of pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding.

The majority of pupils are from a White British or Irish background however increasingly pupils come from an African or Caribbean background. A small proportion of the pupils come from Chinese or Indian backgrounds and an even smaller proportion come from mixed backgrounds. 30% of pupils speak English as an additional language.

Date of previous inspection:

12<sup>th</sup> January 2011

Overall Grade:

2

### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1  
Grade 2

Outstanding  
Good

Grade 3  
Grade 4

Requires improvement  
Inadequate

St Thomas More is an outstanding faith community.

The Catholic ethos of the school is evident in all aspects of school life. The governors, staff, pupils and parents are overwhelmingly supportive and proud of the achievements of the school. The whole school is committed to achieving the very best for each individual pupil.

The Headteacher supported by the Senior Leadership Team drives the school effectively in order to achieve the very high standards in evidence during the inspection. The rigorous self-evaluation carried out by the school means that there is a clear vision for the future. The leaders of the school are aware of what needs to be accomplished to maintain the high quality of education. This commitment ensures that the school has a very good capacity to sustain the current level of progress and to improve further in the future.

## **What steps need to be taken to improve further?**

Governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to reflect and meditate in order to further deepen the children's response to prayer.
- Build on good practice within the school and to share this practice with other cluster schools.

## **The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school**

Pupils lead and take responsibility for shaping activities with a religious character in the school. Pupils take full advantage of the many opportunities the school provides for their personal support and development. Pupils show curiosity, are imaginative, intuitive and understand what makes them outstanding learners.

There are a range of activities offered which extend the pupils' response to prayer and support them as active participants in faith and worship. The 'Sanctus' group promote Religious Education around the school and lead on the development of many faith based activities. They were involved in the prayer garden demonstrating faith in action. The 'Charities' group encourages other pupils to contribute to a range of different charities.

Pupils are responsive and engaged in the wide range of activities. The vision statement "Do More; Be More" is in evidence throughout the school and is an integral part of everyday worship and action. One parent wrote, "Since my son's time at St Thomas More he has grown so much academically and spiritually; it is a wonderful school."

## **How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education**

Pupils are actively involved in Religious Education and are given the opportunity to sing, use drama and role play. Pupils are also encouraged to use a range of religious artefacts to enhance their learning. They work independently, in pairs or in groups and are confident about asking questions to secure their learning. During the inspection pupils made outstanding progress in the observed lessons. Furthermore, there was evidence of significant progress over time in the books sampled.

School wide learning initiatives, including introduction of the 'Growth Mindset' impacts on all aspects of the pupils' experience in school and scaffolds the responses that pupils make in class. Pupils are helped to become autonomous and independent learners in order to deepen learning at all levels. A pupil commented during an observed lesson in Year 6, "Religious Education is fun".

Each class has a shared prayer book which is used to strengthen home school links and expand pupils' responses to faith. Pupils have a great understanding and respect for each other. Pupils learn about other faiths and enjoy the Religious Education Weeks created to immerse pupils in faith.

A parent observed, "As a non-Catholic parent from another religion, I believe the education my child is getting from her school is a firm basis for her to become a good person that believes in God. An amazing school with an amazing ideology."

## **How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship**

Pupils were reverent, actively engaged and very responsive in the collective worship witnessed. The whole of Key Stage 2 were expected to recreate a dance sequence to think about the difficult challenge of new learning. Pupils were encouraged to understand that learning involves practice, repetition and some degree of disappointment or frustration all of which are important stages in the consolidation of learning.

The assembly leader also encouraged pupils to make links with topical issues, for instance the plight of refugees, to enable pupils to reflect on their own experience and scripture. Pupils were challenged and answered intelligently and with great enthusiasm.

During lessons opportunities to reflect and pray were given, for instance, in the Reception class pupils gathered around the prayer bear and created their own prayers. The pupils were reverent and the prayers were meaningful.

Pupils spoke confidently about leading worship during Mass and talked about selecting appropriate readings and hymns. The liturgical dance group also contributes to the range of celebrations in the school. Pupils willingly give of their own time to engage in these activities and are keen to participate in all the range of events on offer.

Publication Date ... 23rd February 2016

**How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils**

Leaders, governors and managers at St Thomas More are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. They are a source of inspiration for the whole community. The Catholic mission of the school is a priority combined with a focus on the pupil's spiritual and moral development.

In commemoration of their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary the school successfully bid for a National Heritage Grant of £37,000 to create an exhibition dedicated to the history of Catholicism in the Bexley Deanery. The pupils were involved in researching archives and source material towards the exhibition which will be completed in the summer to coincide with the celebration of the school's foundation. This exhibition will then tour the Bexley Deanery. Staff and pupils spoke with enthusiasm about this amazing opportunity to research first hand sources and to understand the development of Catholic Schools in the Deanery.

The school self-evaluation is well developed and there is a commitment to delivering high quality outcomes for all pupils. The Catholic mission of the school threads throughout every activity and is explicit in all the work of the school.

The Parish Priests contribute significantly to the spiritual life of the school and supports the faith journey of the pupils and adults in the school. At all levels, staff are nurtured, encouraged to have high expectations and are ready to take on responsibility posts to promote Catholic education. Six members of staff in recent years have left to take up Senior Leadership posts in other schools. This demonstrates the programme of development on offer to staff which in itself is an outstanding contribution to the future of education.

Support for qualified teachers is exemplary. NQTs report that they feel well supported and are given a tremendous amount of additional help to enable them to be successful. The school also has a well- developed programme of support for students and it is an outstanding Catholic learning community.

**How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils**

Leaders, governors and managers self-evaluation is rigorous. Self-evaluation is used to challenge the school and this ensures outstanding outcomes for pupils at all levels.

The Governors of the school are involved in all aspects of school life and provide support and challenge. There is a commitment to sustaining progress and making sure that every pupil achieves his or her potential.

The work of the school is cohesive, and under the leadership of the inspiring Headteacher has developed as a learning community. This vision is being shared with other schools to support teaching and learning in the wider community. The Headteacher mentors other headteachers sharing the outstanding practice found in St Thomas More.

Pupil questionnaires are used to inform the priorities of the school. The School Council's request for a mini bus resulted in that being a focus for fund raising and now the school have this valuable resource.

The Religious Education Team expertly led by the Religious Education Leader provide an innovative curriculum and the team have started to match Religious Education assessment to new assessment guidelines. Moderation is also carried out with other schools and best practice shared.

Publication Date ... 21st February 2016

**The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education**

The teaching observed during the inspection was outstanding. The provision is aimed at inspiring pupils and making sure that they learn well. Teachers understand pupils and activities are planned so that they meet the needs of all pupils but also challenge learning.

The teachers' subject knowledge is extremely good and this helps pupils to make consistently good progress in lessons and over time. The additional adults in the school are well used in order to make learning of a very high standard.

The teachers an excellent range of strategies and questioning. In a Year 4 class a visualizer was used to display a pupil's work to model good practice. Drama was used effectively to support children. Year 6 pupils were posed a range of challenging questions in order to stimulate their higher level thinking skills.

There is a strong emphasis in the school on linking prior learning to new learning. Collaboration is very important and this was evident in the assembly witnessed and in many instances during lessons. There is a huge emphasis on learning and the focus is on each individual striving to achieve his or her personal goals.

Marking is used effectively to develop pupils' knowledge. Pupils are given time to reflect and then are able to respond at a higher level. Pupils are encouraged to think in depth and progress is expected and encouraged.

Pupils are given time to respond, improve and consolidate learning from the previous lesson.

**The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning**

The Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. The school uses, 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' scheme however this is just the starting point for the curriculum which is well planned and varied. The range of exciting and topical activities planned by the teachers to supplement the scheme creates many opportunities for pupils to enjoy and achieve as learners.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced by the variety and range of learning opportunities on offer. The school is involved in a range of projects to challenge and extend learners. One example of this is taking of a group of high achievers to a Religious Education Day in a local secondary school.

The Interactive White Board was used very effectively in all lessons observed to support learning and music was also used to enhance the pupils' education.

## **The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school**

There are a wealth of different opportunities for Collective Worship provided by the school. The acts of worship witnessed engage all pupils' interests and inspire them to deeper thought. Pupils often lead worship and have the opportunity for public and private prayer. Current affairs are used effectively to help place pupils in the present and scripture is also used to help develop pupils' faith experience. The pupils are able to experience whole class assemblies that are relevant and fun. Pupils may also join in a lunch time prayer group. The older pupils have the opportunity to apply to the Sanctus group which leads liturgy and prayer. The beautiful prayer garden is easily accessible to children throughout the day, providing a peaceful haven to think and pray.

The stunning displays around the school support the pupils' spiritual experience. The learning environment and the emphasis on developing thinking, supports and deepens pupils' understanding of the wonder of creation. There is also an emphasis on displaying the liturgical year to help extend pupils' spirituality.

Publication Date ... 23rd February 2016