

Thomas More Catholic Secondary School

URN: 101821

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the **Most Rev. John Wilson**, Archbishop of Southwark

25–26 January 2024

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

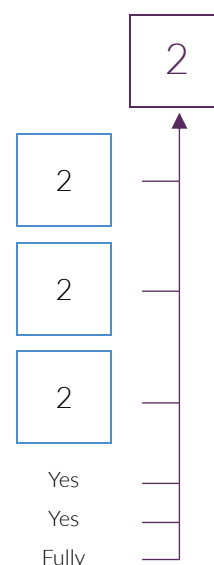
Collective worship (p.7)

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

- Students enjoy coming to Thomas More Catholic School, they feel safe and valued.
- The introduction and implementation of virtues is having a positive impact on pupil behaviour and learning.
- Chaplaincy provision is excellent, providing suitable and appropriate valued and well used resources for prayer and liturgy throughout the school.
- Outcomes in religious education at GCSE are improving due to good quality teaching.
- Pastoral care is a strength.

What the school needs to improve

- Governors should be proactive in regularly monitoring and evaluating the Catholic Life and Mission of the school.
- Embed Catholic social teaching so that a theological understanding underpins faith in action.
- Develop opportunities for students to plan, lead and evaluate prayer and liturgy.

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

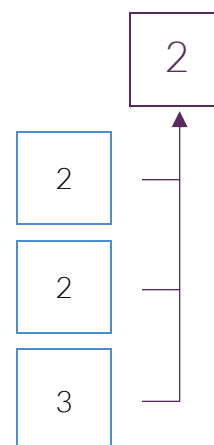
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



Students understand the mission and identity of the school. The school's distinctive Catholic identity is evident on entry to the school with a large cross situated in the driveway; around the school there is much evidence and many displays relating to the school's Catholic character. There is active participation in many charitable events such as raising money for Cancer Research UK, the homeless and to support a school in Ghana. Students can articulate aspects of the theology underpinning their actions, for example one pupil stated, 'if you do good works, good works will come to you'. Linking action to Catholic social teaching would deepen understanding of why the school engages in such activities. Students are happy, confident, and secure, they feel safe at school. The school's focus on virtues linked to the house saints is having a positive impact on behaviour for learning. Respect for students of other faiths or none is evident, for example when praying the prayer begins with 'if you wish to make the sign of the cross, please do so'. In lessons and throughout the school, behaviour is good, students move around the building in a calm and purposeful manner.

The Catholic ethos permeates all areas of school life. The school mission statement 'To Care, To Learn, To Achieve' is known and lived throughout the school, it has a visible impact on the life of the school. For example, interviews with staff or students, exercise books, computer home screens, which also display the virtue of the week, policies and documents all declare the mission statement. Putting faith into action is seen through charitable events and through the work of the enthusiastic Faith in Action team comprised of students from many different faiths and across the year groups. New students are welcomed and paired with a buddy to help them settle in. Students are very positive regarding their experience of school, speaking of how they felt 'happy and respected'. The provision for relationship, sex and health education meet both statutory and diocesan requirements and are faithful to the teaching of the Church, presenting a holistic vision of the human person made in the image and likeness of God.

School leaders can articulate the Church's mission in education and are thorough in exercising their duty as guardians of the school. Whilst governors are fully supportive of and challenging to the head and senior leadership team, the development of the Catholic life and mission of the school is not a priority. Governors' contribution to the school's evaluation document is limited. The relationship with the local parish is sound; the school chaplain is an active member of the parish. In turn the parish promotes school activities and spiritual events such as the outdoor Mass commemorating the school feast day or reconciliation during Breathe Week. The parish priest is happy for the school to include clergy from other parishes to support liturgical activities. The school effectively engages with parents and carers to the benefit of students. One parent stated, 'This is a wonderful school - supportive and charitable - always striving to maintain its Catholic teaching, whilst being suitably inclusive to all'. Leaders and governors are committed to the wellbeing of staff and students; there are regular visits to the school by the chair and others. Any concerns noticed are raised with the head and followed up. Further, the free breakfast club for all, is working well and having a positive impact on staff and students. New staff are informed about the distinctive nature of the school and, supported by the chaplaincy team, feel comfortable leading assemblies and tutor prayers.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

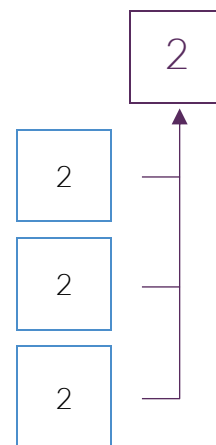
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Students are developing secure knowledge and understanding in religious education. At Key Stage 3, students follow a spiral curriculum, revisiting topics and deepening their knowledge and understanding. The school wide policy of Recall Of Core Knowledge (ROCK) is having a positive impact. This was particularly noted in lessons observed and through work scrutiny. ROCK pieces of work are clearly evidenced; careful and probing questions by teachers elicit good recall and understanding. Students demonstrate they are religiously literate; their understanding of key terms is good. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on heresy students discussed the Arian Heresy and linked it to the concept of excommunication. Behaviour for learning is good; students work well in pairs, groups or independently demonstrating they understand the task and respond to the challenge. Work scrutiny shows students take pride in their work. Dedicated Improvement and Reflection Time (DIRT) has a positive impact on students' learning and engagement. Students speak enthusiastically about their enjoyment of religious education lessons; stating they 'love RE', they like learning about different religions and enjoy debates because 'they open your mind'. Students have a good understanding of how well they are doing and what is needed to improve. Outcomes at GCSE are gradually improving; there is a clear plan in place to sustain and increase outcomes.

Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge; lessons observed showed they have a good understanding of how students learn and use a variety of engaging activities and good quality resources to promote learning. Lessons are well planned with resources, activities and assessments shared across the department and collectively used. Skilful questioning by teachers encourages students to think about the topic, eliciting good responses. The awarding of achievement points for demonstrating school virtues such as courage and resilience has a positive impact on pupil engagement and enjoyment of their lessons. DIRT is taken seriously by the students, clearly demonstrated through the work scrutiny using green pen. Regular assessment informs planning and allows students to make progress over time, though the head of department recognises that SEND

students do not achieve at the same level as their peers and that barriers to learning affects their progress. The use of more differentiated resources is helping to build confidence and improve progress. Consistent use of the whole school and departmental marking policy is shown through the work scrutiny. Teachers' calm and positive approach in lessons, constant praise for responses to questions or participation creates a good environment in which to learn. Teaching was never less than good, with some outstanding features.

The school is in the process of implementing the new *Religious Education Directory*. It is fully embedded in Year 7, using appropriate resources provided by the Diocese. There is in place a clear plan for full implementation in Key Stage 3 by 2026. Current Key Stage 3 schemes of work are challenging, students are coping with this and developing understanding. The spiral nature of the curriculum means a firm foundation is being built for GCSE. With respect to core subjects religious education is on par; homework, marking and reporting policies apply equitably to all core subjects. Regular meetings between the head teacher and head of department demonstrate clear monitoring and evaluation of the department. In turn the head of department conducts regular work scrutiny, learning walks and lesson observations, giving feedback to ensure consistent performance of the department and where necessary, support is in place. Enrichment activities are provided in conjunction with the chaplaincy team. Governors' self-evaluation of religious education is not fully informed by monitoring. It is recognised by the school that this is an area for improvement.

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

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2

2

Students at Thomas More Catholic School respond well to the experiences of prayer and liturgy. During a Year 9 assembly they were very respectful showing reverence when asked to bow their heads to reflect and pray. The same reverence is shown during sixth form, Year 7 and Year 8 tutor time. Students of all faiths, or none, demonstrate respect and reverence, and appreciate the prayer life, pause for reflection and discussion within tutor-based prayer and liturgy. Discussions with students reveals they are passive participants in year group assemblies. Their experience would be enhanced by much greater involvement in planning, leading and evaluating opportunities for prayer and liturgy in the community. Students are comfortable with the style of prayer and liturgy provided for assemblies or tutor time. The resources for these are prepared by the chaplain and include scripture, symbol, silence, meditation, reflection, and appropriate music.

Prayer permeates the rhythm of school life; the day begins and ends with the well-known morning offering and end of day prayer. Over time the provision for prayer and liturgy is very good and includes varied liturgies and opportunities for prayer. For example, there is usually a welcome Mass for Year 7 students, the celebration of the school's feast day with outdoor Mass is described by staff, students, and governors as a 'highlight of the year.' Another equally important highlight is Breathe Week which takes place during Lent in the school hall, during which all students and staff can visit different prayer stations, pause to reflect, write prayers or participate in a variety of creative activities. Students speak positively about this event and look forward to it. In the religious education classrooms there are prayer tables, with candles a Bible and prayer box to which students can contribute. Many classrooms display a cross or crucifix showing the centrality of the Christian faith. The school chapel is open once a week for quiet prayer, praying the rosary or reflecting on laminated scripture passages available to them. A Year 7 student spoke eloquently and enthusiastically about the importance of prayer, how it has an impact on her daily life, and how it is helping her to prepare to receive the next two sacraments of initiation.

The school's policy on collective worship reflects the prayer and liturgical life of the school. Leaders meet to discuss provision and seek opportunities to improve and develop the provision of and programmes for prayer and liturgy. The recently appointed lead for Catholic life and mission meets regularly with the head teacher and lay chaplain to review provision and development. Although not included in the school improvement plan, the lay chaplain intends to continue building upon the emerging retreat programme, develop a student led chaplaincy, build on the role of the adult chaplaincy team, and recommence community outreach. The local parishes support Breathe Week by providing priests to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation or to be a listening ear for non-Catholic students. The school is fortunate to have a keen and enthusiastic lay chaplain, demonstrating faith through action. She is an outstanding role model. Staff, especially non-Catholics feel comfortable leading assemblies or tutor prayer time due to the support provided by the chaplain, her assistant, and the senior leadership team. Governors support the school, for example by attending the outdoor Mass celebrating the school's feast day, carol service and other spiritual events. Governors need to be more proactive in regularly reviewing the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy as part of the school's cycle of self-evaluation and planned improvements.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Thomas More Catholic Secondary School
School unique reference number (URN)	101821
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3065403
Full postal address of the school	Thomas More Catholic Secondary School, Russell Hill Road, Purley, CR8 2XP
School phone number	02086686251
Headteacher	Maryssa Dako
Chair of Governors	Caroline Mushens
School Website	http://www.tmore.org.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	21 st – 22 nd November 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Patricia Horsman

Eileen Watson

Lead inspector

Team inspector

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

