



St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

URN: 150344

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Right Rev. Bosco MacDonald, Bishop of Clifton

01–02 May 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

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

1

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

2

What the school does well

- There is a strong sense of community where all are welcomed and included, and the school goes the extra mile to ensure the diverse needs of their families are met; the dedication and focus of leaders ensures that staff and pupils feel valued and that they belong.
- The importance of learning about other faiths is recognised and valued by the pupils and provision for this is good.
- The focus on Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and the school values has enabled pupils to flourish in their spiritual and moral development.
- Behaviour in religious education lessons is exemplary due to the engagement and enjoyment of the pupils.

- Pupils value the variety of prayer and liturgy opportunities centred around the liturgical year, such as the Mary procession to the beautiful prayer garden.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that the wording of learning objectives and tasks provides opportunities for pupils to achieve greater depth in their learning.
- Ensure that religious education is taught consistently across the school.
- Identify areas where Catholic social teaching can be embedded in the wider curriculum.

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

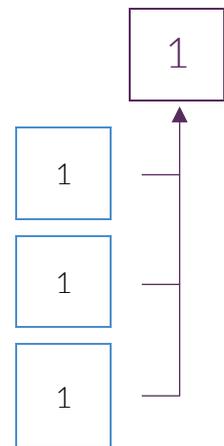
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



Pupils clearly understand the mission of the school and support this through visiting a local care home, 'Random Acts of Kindness' week and contributing to religious artwork across the school. They recognise they are trying to 'create heaven on earth'. They love school and feel happy, safe and secure. Pupils have a clear understanding of the school virtues and this enables them to flourish. They understand that the demands of Catholic social teaching (CST) mean that they have a duty to care for the environment and those in need so that 'we can make the world a better place.' Pupils' learning about other faiths is strong; they understand it is important 'because everyone is special.' The Chaplaincy team are well respected and are proud of 'being role models to inspire'. They see themselves as faith leaders and enjoy leading the weekly virtues assembly and supporting younger pupils in class prayer. Relationships education is another strength with a bespoke programme that has been put together, ensuring it meets the specific needs of pupils and their families. Strong links to CST enable pupils to understand the value of the whole person.

The mission statement is visited regularly by staff and pupils, it is highly visible, known and lived by staff and pupils. Through their care for all their pupils, staff show a clear commitment of support for the Catholic life of the school. There is strong sense of community; a family where all are valued and looked after. Staff, led by the dedicated headteacher and the religious education lead, show exceptional support for those most vulnerable pupils and families and provide an excellent role model. There is an abundance of support for pupils with additional needs including a pastoral worker, who uses ELSA resources, sensory support and a nurture room. Pupils know that all are welcomed into the school and can explain why it is important that all feel they belong. The school environment reflects the school mission and its Catholic identity

is clear with beautiful artwork and displays which include CST, Fratelli Tutti and the school virtues. The prayer garden is beautifully laid out with high quality statues of Jesus, Mary and St Thomas More and a raised bed cross in the centre; a truly peaceful place for pupils to go and reflect.

All leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the importance of Catholic life and mission and ensure that it drives the school. They actively seek to understand the diverse needs of their families so that they can support them appropriately, and make decisions with their best interests at heart. In joining the Little Way Catholic Educational Trust (LWCET) the school has embraced the Bishop's vision. All enjoy and value working closely together with the other schools. Training is regularly led by the head, the religious education lead and the diocese. All new staff access diocesan training. Links with the parish are strong with the sacristan of the parish centre serving as a governor, and supporting the Chaplaincy Team in preparing for Mass and altar server training. All parents are invited in to school regularly for services and events. Support for all staff is exceptional, including a private health care insurance scheme. Leaders, especially the head, highly value the staff and their commitment to the school and their families. Regular staff meetings dedicated to sharing time and space together without a school focus ensures that the team bond is strong. The staff value the support they are given, along with the support they give each other. Leaders are beginning to embed CST across the wider curriculum. Governors' ambition for the school is strong; they understand the importance of challenge and are also highly supportive of the staff, especially the head. There is a range of expertise represented on the governing board which enables them to drive improvements in a supportive manner. The robust monitoring system, which includes governor and pupil voice, ensures that targets are actioned and reviewed regularly.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

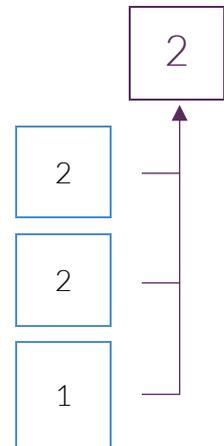
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



The three elements of weekly religious education lessons– a guided reading session on the relevant scripture passages; an oracy lesson where key concepts are explored; and a writing focused lesson – ensure that all pupils are engaged and enjoy their lessons. Lessons include a recap of prior learning using focused questions to ensure pupils’ understanding and making the connection to current learning. Relevant scripture readings are used in all lessons and the reference is then placed on a leaf to add to the scripture tree for future use. Oracy lessons provide invaluable opportunities for pupils to show their creativity, for example, through hot-seating, role play and conscience alleys. Pupils have a clear enjoyment of their religious education lessons; they respond with enthusiasm and are eager to contribute to class discussions. They are able to use age appropriate religious vocabulary as a result of a focus on this from the youngest age. Pupils with additional needs are well-supported through careful and sensitive encouragement and praise from teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils are making progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills as a result of the marking policy where feedback given makes it clear what they have done well. Key questions, and pupil responses to them, enable pupils to extend their learning, however this is not consistent across the school. Pupils’ behaviour in lessons is exemplary. They show respect for adults and each other through careful listening, and support each other in their learning. They concentrate well and can work independently. There are some opportunities for pupils to reflect during lessons which helps to embed their learning. Books are mostly well-presented with evidence of progress, however, learning objectives are not always precise enough for pupils to achieve greater depth in their learning. Data shows that pupils are learning in line or better than other subjects in the school.

Most teachers have high expectations of their pupils and this is reflected in the high quality of learning in most pupils’ books. Staff are deeply committed to religious education and seek to

ensure that their subject knowledge is good for all units through the support of the religious education lead and the diocese. Questioning is used effectively in lessons to deepen pupils' thinking and pupils respond well to this. Teachers and teaching assistants consistently use praise and encouragement which leads to high motivation levels for all pupils. Scaffolding, adaptive teaching and adult support ensures that all pupils are able to access the learning objectives. Staff recognise that pupils' spiritual and moral development is a vital part of their learning and seek to reinforce this during lessons and prayer and liturgy. Quality resources, including tablets to do research, and a wide range of tasks offered ensures that the needs of all pupils are met.

Leaders and governors ensure parity for religious education in terms of timetabling, budgeting and staffing. The requirements of the *Religious Education Directory* are fully met. The early years foundation stage and Year 3 are working on the new *Religious Education Directory* and Year 1 have valued trialling materials for a term. High quality training is delivered by the religious education lead and also the diocese to ensure that subject knowledge is kept up to date. Leaders have a clear vision for religious education and the rigorous monitoring and evaluation process highlights and targets areas for improvements, which is overseen by the governors. Pupils recognise the importance of their own voice and feel heard. The religious education curriculum is designed to ensure that prior learning is built on in each lesson and recapped over time, to ensure that learning is firmly embedded, as leaders have identified that retention is an issue for some pupils. Support from a foundation governor alongside the parish priest in speaking to the pupils about the format of the mass and the importance of the gospel readings provides enrichment for religious education.

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

1

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

1

1

Pupils are highly reverent and respectful in whole school and class worship. They are eager to contribute in answering questions, joining in prayer and singing. In the class Celebration of the Word there is a clear expectation of behaviour and pupil participation which is well embedded. Pupils engage well, are interested and respectful. They offer useful verbal evaluation to ensure improvements next time. Pupils are able to pray in a variety of different ways using silence, reflection, symbols and traditional prayers. The theme of the liturgical season runs through all worship. Pupils enjoy working with staff and each other on planning class prayer and liturgy which includes scripture readings, psalms, responses and missions and, occasionally, song. They plan inspiring and thought-provoking celebrations, for example, a younger pupil compared Jesus' resurrection with the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly, and older pupils planned an imaginative prayer where pupils were asked to place themselves at the wedding feast at Cana - what would they see, hear, feel? Pupils are set missions that are reflective of the theme, for example, celebration theme: celebrate someone's achievement at home; care for the environment theme: pick up litter. The Chaplaincy team are well supported by the religious education lead to deliver weekly assemblies, and also by the sacristan of the parish. Pupils and staff understand that prayer is central to the routine of school life with prayer being said across the school day and worship celebrated each day either as a whole school or a class, with a range of themes that reflect the liturgical year. There is wide range of prayer and liturgy giving pupils the opportunities to experience traditional and contemporary prayer, for example, the Mary procession, Stations of the Cross, and the Pentecost re-creation with pom-poms and scarves. Scripture is at the heart of all prayer and liturgy with staff supporting pupils to choose readings appropriate to the season. Staff are good role models in participating in prayer and liturgy and feel confident that they are well-trained to support pupils in planning and leading worship. There is a variety of creative forms used in worship including artwork and drama. There are reflective

areas in each class which are used effectively and there is a prayer garden which is used by classes and in whole school celebrations. Families and parishioners are invited in for school Masses and families to class liturgies. Key stage 2 pupils enjoy going to the parish centre for Mass and parishioners always comment on the pupils' good behaviour and their responses throughout the Mass.

There is a policy in place which the Little Way Catholic Educational Trust schools have put together; this has been adapted to reflect school practice. This includes a structured approach to prayer progression, including expectations of pupils planning and leading prayer and liturgy in the school. Pupils attend Mass at the Parish centre on holy days of obligation and their school patron's day. The pupils lead a reconciliation service in school and there are plans in place for individual confession. Teachers feel confident in planning and leading prayer and liturgy due to the training provided by the Little Way Catholic Educational Trust and the religious education lead. Leaders are exemplary role models in delivering high quality prayer and liturgy. They are aware of the needs of their community and this informs their planning. Governors recognise the importance of high-quality resources to support the prayer life of the school and are insistent that the budget reflects this. Governors are fully informed and updated regularly about the prayer life of the school and participate in monitoring and driving improvement. The Chaplaincy Team monitor the reflection areas in each class. The voice of all stakeholders, including pupils, is highly valued in the school. The use of the words 'glow' and 'grow' when monitoring 'create a culture of positive improvement where all have a voice and are heard respectfully thereby making improvements'.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas More Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	150344
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9163359
Full postal address of the school	St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Lewis Road, Cheltenham, GL51 0HZ
School phone number	01242513339
Headteacher	Nicola Tippen
Chair of Governors	Catherine Hipkiss
School Website	www.st-thomasmore.gloucs.sch.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Little Way Catholic Educational Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	May 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Dawn Summers-Breeze
Rebecca Musarurwa

Lead
Team

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