



# St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

URN: 118769

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

26–27 June 2024

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

#### 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

## What the school does well

- Pastoral care is a huge strength where all are valued and there is an explicit and concrete support for the most vulnerable.
- The school is very supportive of parents.
- The communal singing of pupils is a real joy and celebration.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of Catholic social teaching and how this leads to action in the way they live their lives.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are the embodiment of the Catholic life and mission of the school.

## What the school needs to improve

- Devise strategies to help build pupils' confidence in articulating their contribution to the life of the school.
- Share the strong practice in the upper years across the school so that all pupils know how to improve and make greater progress.
- Access professional training to address planned changes in religious education.

## 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**

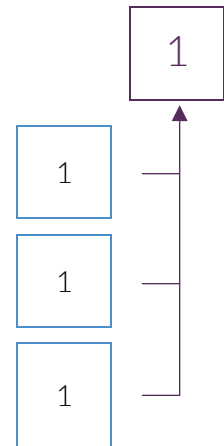
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

**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



All members of the St Thomas More family embrace the school's mission, 'to grow in love, in knowledge and wisdom, in faith, in respect, in dignity and self-worth,' and 'live the Gospel teachings.' Parents stated the 'Catholic life and mission of St Thomas More... are integral to its community.' Pupils are happy; they feel safe and secure and have a clear understanding of what it means to have personal responsibility for our common home. For example pupils spoke about planting seeds, and looking after the bird feeders in the school grounds as ways to improve the school environment. Pupils works 'as a team:' they make suggestions, decide and organise about charities such as 'raising money for the Catholic Children's Society for those around the world less fortunate than us.' Pupils have a deep respect for each other: one moment during a prayer session a pupil took care of another pupil who became upset. They spoke about how they 'celebrate cultures', and act as peacemakers. Teachers, 'deal well with behaviour,' and over 90% of parents agreed pupils behave respectfully, feel safe and that the Catholic life and mission give pupils a, 'strong sense of faith, respect and community.'

The family of St Thomas More has a lived sense of community where Christ is at its heart. There is a tangible sense of love and care which characterise the relationships in the school. Most parents agree the school is a supportive and joyful community, describing staff as 'very nurturing academically and spiritually, treating pupils as their own.' The Church-centred mission statement, deeply rooted in the Word of God, is shown, for example, by scriptural quotes in corridors and open Bibles in classrooms. It is visited regularly to explore ways in which it can be lived out in the school community. An example of the impact of this was shared by a staff member who stated that this lived experience of the Catholic life had moved them to return to Church. A parent spoke of a time of great family turmoil, when the school was 'very supportive and understanding,' which resulted with the pupil receiving her first Holy Communion and attending altar servers' training. The subject leader for relationship, sex and health

education (RSHE) ensures it is carefully planned, meets statutory and diocesan requirements. It is firmly rooted in the teachings of the Church and pupils can articulate what they have learned in lessons.

Strong links with the parish have ensured pupils receive high quality opportunities for spiritual and moral development. The parish deacon stated, 'The school and parish work well together'. Governors describe the school as having a 'child-centred approach to learning' where reflective practice is a real strength. Parents are seen as the first educators of the children. They stated, 'communication with parents is excellent,' and through a parent portal on the school website parents' views are sought about RSHE. Governors describe staff as 'knowing and loving the children at all levels.' They monitor and evaluate through regular visits, listening to views of pupils, providing feedback and challenging questions which leads to further strategic planning. Governors engage with diocesan governance training ensuring they are fully conversant with the expectations of the diocese. The Catholic view of reality is a thread running through all subjects for example in a science lesson a pupil wrote that a person's disability 'did not stop her from being a scientist.' Staff wellbeing is a high priority. Most staff agreed their physical and mental wellbeing are well supported. A member of staff, after an accident, spoke of how senior leaders visited them at home to ensure their welfare.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

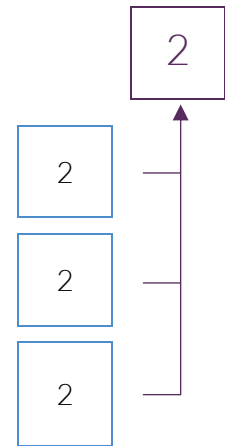
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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



Pupils stated they enjoy their religious education especially ‘the variety of activities.’ They are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills in religious education and data shows that they are making good progress when compared with other core curriculum subjects and this has been sustained over a three-year trend. Pupils can show in their exercise books how well they are doing, how they have progressed and how they can improve, although away from the classroom they lacked confidence in expressing this. There is a strong emphasis on religious literacy in lessons with the use of visible key words and pupils can use key words in their work. For example, when asked about Holy Communion one pupil stated, ‘it is when you take the Body of Christ,’ and were able to state the correct method of receiving communion in the hand. Pupils are very aware of the demands of religious commitment. In response to a question about being disciples a pupil stated, ‘By sharing the teachings of Jesus,’ and another responded quoting *Fratelli Tutti*: ‘We are one global family.’ Pupils produce a good standard of work showing a variety of activities and show a willingness to improve.

Teaching is good overall with some strong features. Where the teaching was strong there is a deep commitment to and high expectations for religious education and an understanding of its impact upon the moral development of pupils. In these classes teacher questioning leads pupils to greater depth, for example through teacher questioning, a pupil was able to articulate greater understanding of the principle of compassion. In another example a teacher asked pupils to respond to the statement, ‘I am a nobody.’ One pupil said he felt ‘annoyed because someone with potential would not feel good.’ Using the principles of Catholic social teaching teachers give space and time for purposeful reflection, for example one lesson began with a reflection on ‘how we can serve others’ which led to a lesson on being a disciple. Other adults are used effectively to optimise learning for pupils including those with disadvantages and most teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and of how pupils learn. Parents are involved in the learning of the pupils. They stated that they are regularly invited to

participate in religious education lessons, receive regular updates in the school's weekly newsletter and their children's books are available every parent's evenings.

The use of *The Way, the Truth and The Life*, teaching programme ensures the religious education curriculum is sequential and a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory (2012)*. The implementation of the *Religious Education Directory* has not yet been explored. Religious education is comparable to other core subjects in terms of assessment, curriculum time and resourcing. Staff speak highly of the support of the religious education subject leaders in sharing their vision of teaching and learning, and making the decision to move from *Come and See* to *The Way, the Truth and The Life*, one stating that they have grown in confidence in the teaching of scripture during this year. Planning is effective meeting the needs of all pupils. Leaders and governors challenge the data for religious education stating it reflects core standards. They monitor through learning walks and lesson observations and reports from these feed into the governing body. Enrichment activities are used to enhance pupil learning, such as visiting the parish church. Parents value the religious education provided by the school, one parent stating that 'since starting reception, my child, has grown a real love for RE and enjoys sharing what she has done at home.'

## Collective worship

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

### Collective worship key judgement grade

**Pupil outcomes**

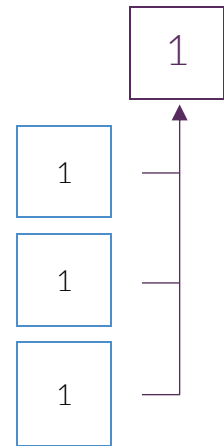
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

**Provision**

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

**Leadership**

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



Pupils' experiences prayer and liturgy engage them deeply, the quality of prayerful silence is reverential and their engagement in communal singing is a real joy and celebration. Pupils speak of the liturgical year showing it is a journey beginning with Advent and relate this to elements of Catholic social teaching using the Cafod animals. Most staff agree that pupils work well with others in preparing and leading engaging experiences of prayer and liturgy. Parents are invited to these, and a significant number respond positively. The deacon stated that 'several pupils from St Thomas More, after their first Holy Communion, become altar servers at the parish church for Sunday Mass.' Pupils reflect upon and pray for those in need 'greater than theirs,' for example a pupil prayed, 'Dear Lord, help those who are struggling or scared.' Another prayed, 'Help us to be more like you.' When asked what prayer was, a pupil responded, 'Prayer makes you feel relaxed, you can talk to him like you talk to a friend.' Parents stated, 'The school fosters a strong sense of faith through daily prayers and regular Masses,' and there is very good use of Pope Francis' five-finger prayer as an aid to reflection.

Prayer is central to the life of the school. There is a rhythm of prayer during the day, with morning prayer, before and after lunch and end of the day. The range of experiences show the breadth and depth of Catholic tradition, some provided by the parish priest such as Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, class liturgies, and whole school Masses. These are available for all members of the school community and those who are not Catholic are helped to feel included by, for example, receiving a blessing at Communion. The parish priest celebrates the Sacrament of Reconciliation in school to which all are welcome. As a result pupils and staff can participate fully in the liturgy. Most parents agree they are invited to be involved in the prayer life of the school. One stated, 'school Masses are lovely.' Spaces for prayer and prayer focusses in most classrooms are well cared-for and reflect the liturgical season. Chosen hymns are appropriate to the theme and scripture is used well to enhance the pupils' experience, for example the *Calming of the Storm (Mark 4:35-41)* reflecting the previous

Sunday's Gospel. Pupils can use liturgical signs such as the three crosses before the Gospel appropriately.

Most staff agreed that the school's policy on prayer and liturgy is useful in supporting pupils in preparing and leading prayer and liturgy. Leaders and governors know and understand the different levels and skills of pupils and build these as they progress through the school. All year groups plan and lead year group liturgies, which are celebrated with parents. In Year 6 for example, pupils led the community through a well-planned experience using the Parable of the Mustard Seed. They lead the singing of appropriate hymns and were very focussed showing respect and reverence for the prayer focus of a crucifix, Bible and candle. The school calendar includes opportunities for Mass at appropriate times in the liturgical year and the patronal feast day. Other experiences such as the carol service are also identified. Governors attend prayer and liturgy regularly and have a clear understanding of the relationship between participation and ministry. A governor who is an altar server in the parish shared his positive experience of sharing this ministry with pupils. Pupils contribute to the evaluation of prayer and liturgy and parents appreciate the school's strong relationship with the parish, 'My child loves seeing his teacher at his first Holy Communion.'



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas More Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	118769
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8873736
Full postal address of the school	St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Bleakwood Road, Chatham, ME5 0NF
School phone number	01634864701
Head teacher	Victoria Ebdon
<b>Chair of Governors</b>	Simon D'Souza
School Website	<a href="http://www.st-thomasmore.medway.sch.uk/">www.st-thomasmore.medway.sch.uk/</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
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	June 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

## The inspection team

Stephen C Horsman  
David Hennessey

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