



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection Report

ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Part of the Holy Cross Catholic Multi Academy Company
Knoll Drive, Stivichall, Coventry, CV3 5DE

Inspection dates: 8-9 November 2021
Lead Inspector: Krystyna Bickley

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS: **Good**

Catholic Life: Good

Religious Education: Good

Collective Worship: Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection: *Good*

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

This is a Good Catholic school because:

- Strong, dedicated senior leadership and governance has enabled the school to re-establish its Catholic identity and achieve good standards in most areas of Catholic Life and Religious Education.
- Regular monitoring, evaluation and continual review indicates the school knows its own strengths and areas for development. This has enabled it to lay firm foundations for the future and plan its next steps.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary during Religious Education lessons. Staff are motivated to make lessons interesting, so pupils enjoy their learning.
- In this very inclusive school, all staff demonstrate a high level of commitment to the pastoral and spiritual care of all the pupils and parents. The school provides a safe and loving Catholic environment in which everyone can thrive.
- Pupils are respectful and reverent during Collective Worship which is well planned and delivered to support pupils' participation through discussion and prayer.

It is not yet Outstanding because:

- The pupils are not fully involved in promoting the Catholic Life of the school.
- The work planned and delivered in Religious Education does not always allow the pupils to demonstrate their true capabilities.
- Pupils need to develop their own expertise in planning and delivering Collective Worship.

FULL REPORT

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Empower pupils to take more responsibility for promoting and leading chaplaincy both within school and the wider community.
- Provide a greater emphasis on developing appropriate challenge and pace in Religious Education lessons to enable pupils to demonstrate their learning fully.
- Support pupils to independently plan and deliver prayer and liturgies, so pupils become more autonomous in their understanding of the purpose of prayer.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the Catholic Life of the school	Good
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	Good
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school	Good

CL1 The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school

CL2 The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- The pupils' understanding of the mission statement is mostly good as some pupils can talk about its meaning. Aspects of the mission are currently being re-evaluated by the governors, to fully embed a secure understanding of it amongst the school community.
- Because pupils refer to the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile (CSPP) during their Religious Education lessons and discussions within school assemblies, they have a growing knowledge of it and the values and virtues it promotes.
- The virtues are becoming a real focus of the Catholic Life of the school. Pupils can talk about how the school has changed because of the focus on them. For example, with a recent focus on becoming eloquent and truthful, pupils feel that everyone now talks to each other with a greater sense of respect and a determination to help people who are new in school; they are aware of how the virtues are used in their daily lives.
- Pupils' evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school is a priority for further development across school. The newly formed GIFT team will be well placed to support this moving forward.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are reverent and respectful in their attitudes and behaviours, and they are attentive during lessons. Pupils are highly supportive of each other and engage well with each other and their teachers.
- In classrooms, all prayer focus areas reflect the current liturgical season. As a result, these have contributed to pupils' knowledge of liturgical colours and of the important feasts and celebrations within the Church.

- Pupils' involvement in the leadership of Catholic Life is still developing. Pupils need to be enabled to contribute to the school's evaluation of Catholic Life in a planned and systematic way so that they can lead aspects of planning developments to it.
- Pupils participate in retreats and have recently enjoyed a retreat at Alton Castle focussing on discipleship. Consequently, their spiritual, moral, and ethical development is being further enhanced by unique opportunities to grow in faith beyond the school day.
- The school provides relationship, sex, and health education that is securely rooted in a Christian understanding of the purpose of love. Because of this, pupils speak articulately about the need to demonstrate appropriate behaviours in all aspects of their lives.
- Pupils' involvement with the parish and diocese is developing well and becoming more secure.
- Staff model appropriate behaviours to the pupils at all times and are therefore very good role models for the young people in their care.
- Staff support the sacramental programmes and celebrations in school and endorse the school's commitment to this as witnessed in various acts of prayer during the inspection.
- The Catholic ethos of the school is evident in the displays in and around the school. The mission statement is prominently displayed throughout the school, which contributes to pupils' knowledge of it. There are some inspiring displays focussing on social justice both inside and outside of the school.
- Catholic Social Teaching is evidenced in the letters pupils wrote to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet regarding climate change, COP26 and stewardship. Year 5 pupils were also given the opportunity to write to the Headteacher requesting the instigation of a Climate-Eco Club, which is being acted upon. Furthermore, the school ensures that it demonstrates the Church's commitment to care for our Common Home wherever it can, for example by ingeniously creating a shrine to Our Lady out of a reclaimed bathtub in the prayer garden.
- Pupils' knowledge of other faiths and cultures is very evident. During discussions with inspectors, they were very respectful when talking about those who hold different beliefs and could articulate how their learning of other faiths and religions has served to deepen their own faith.
- The pastoral care and the wellbeing of all pupils is very good. Pupils feel cared for and feel that their school is a happy place to be. This enables pupils to feel safe and valued as a child of God.
- Specific reviews to support the pastoral care for staff since the start of the pandemic, have enabled the staff to feel valued as part of the team very effectively. Staff speak highly of the support they have from each other and from senior leaders. There is a culture of mutual trust which enables staff to support the pupils in their learning and growth as individuals.
- To further raise standards in Catholic Life, teachers need to recognise and develop their responsibility to contribute to pupils' vocational development across the whole curriculum and create planned opportunities for this to become deeply embedded within the culture of the school.

CL3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the School

- The provision for the Catholic Life of the school is a high priority for the school leaders. The commitment demonstrated by leaders to self-improve is clear in the way they approach planning for school development.

- Leaders recognise that pupils' spiritual and moral development is an area for development and have plans in place to address this.
- Leaders' and governors' commitment to supporting the Catholic Life of the school is further demonstrated in the way they implement a planned programme of staff continuous professional development (CPD) which enables staff to fully realise their desire to commit to provide a high standard of Catholic education. There is a strong sense of pastoral support for all members of staff which permeates the school and further drives them in their ambition to secure high standards.
- Leaders are beginning to seek pupils' views on how they should approach the teaching of the CSPP the next time each pair of values is taught. Consequently, leaders ensure that the needs of the community are met in their delivery of Catholic Life and mission.
- Parents speak positively about the school and its relationship with the parish of St Thomas More. Parents feel welcomed to attend whole school events relating to its Catholic Life, including Masses, assemblies, and the sacramental programmes, and they look forward to the school being able to restore its full programme of participation as we emerge from the pandemic.
- Governors make a good contribution to the Catholic Life of the school. They provide both challenge and support, ensuring Catholic Life remains a school improvement priority and that improvement plans are purposeful and planned with measurable impact.
- The school plans future developments for staff's spiritual and moral development by providing more opportunities for staff prayer and reflection.
- The school adheres to diocesan policies and initiatives and seeks to promote the bishop's vision throughout the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of Religious Education	Good
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	Good
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Religious Education	Good

RE1 How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

RE2 The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

- Pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons; they are positive and enthusiastic about what they learn and concentrate well. One child commented, "lessons are fun, and I really love writing and being busy."
- Teachers make good use of the diocesan strategy to plan lessons that engage pupils, which meet their needs. Teachers deploy support from teaching assistants effectively.
- Pupils enjoy Religious Education because of the wide range of learning styles that are catered for. Consequently, they want to achieve as best they can.

- Progress outcomes in Religious Education demonstrate that disadvantaged pupils have been correctly identified by the school as making the least progress. This is currently being addressed by staff, who are focussing on closing the gaps in these pupils' learning. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are usually well supported by additional adults with scaffolded tasks and so usually make good progress. However, more able pupils require greater challenge to achieve even higher standards particularly in Key Stage 1.
- Teaching is good in Religious Education, some of it is outstanding. The teachers' planning generally meets the needs of different groups of pupils, so most pupils are enabled to make progress in lessons and meet the expected age-related standards.
- During a Year 6 lesson observed by an inspector, pupils were engaged in a range of activities that were interesting and relevant to their own lives. Consequently, pupils' knowledge of scripture and the way it was being used within the lesson enabled them to explore fully the call of Jesus presenting a challenge for some people, which demands sacrifice.
- Pupils have a secure knowledge of the sequence of learning they have experienced. As a result, pupils understand the relevance and importance of the lesson content for their learning, and for their own spiritual development.
- In the diocesan assessed units, data over time shows that a high percentage of pupils achieve work at or above diocesan expectations.
- Pupils' learning in books show the units of work covered. Unit markers are used in most books and show that most pupils meet the expected outcomes for the modules of work.
- Teachers make use of 'Time to Reflect and Think' stickers to probe further as to what pupils have learnt about religion and what they can learn from it. Accordingly, these questions help pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding of the learning intentions. In Key Stage 2, the skills of using supportive sources, expressing a point of view, arriving at judgements, and recognising different points of view, are developing. Most pupils are using biblical sources to support their work and are given the opportunity to develop their understanding.
- During pupil interviews, pupils in both key stages commented on the amount of time they sit on the carpet during Religious Education lessons. Key Stage 1 pupils could not articulate what they need to do in order to make progress, whereas Key Stage 2 pupils said they sometimes receive written targets, which their teacher subsequently reviews. There is a need for teachers to review pace in lessons and be more explicit in showing pupils what they need to do to improve, so that progress can be made consistently rapidly throughout the school.
- During lessons most teachers use good questioning techniques to elicit thoughtful and empathetic answers from the pupils. Many pupils demonstrated a high level of independence in the way they approached their classwork. They seamlessly move from teacher led activities to group, paired and individual tasks.
- Expert behaviour management during lessons ensures that low level disruption, although infrequent, is immediately dealt with and thus does not interrupt the pupils' learning.
- Teachers adhere to the school feedback policy; however further guidance is needed so teachers do not mark pupils' Religious Education books using the criteria for marking English and literacy work.
- Pupil's achievements in Religious Education are celebrated, and pupils are very supportive and appreciative of everything the school provides for them.

RE3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

- Governors ensure that the required amount of curriculum time is given to Religious Education and that the school meets all requirements of the Bishop's Conference of England & Wales.
- The Religious Education subject leader ensures that the subject is promoted as a core curriculum subject in school being given parity with other core subjects, in terms of time and resourcing.
- Religious Education is planned and taught using 'Learning and Growing as People of God' and this ensures there is a consistent approach to learning in Religious Education across the school.
- The subject leader attends diocesan meetings and plays a leading role in supporting the local Religious Education cluster meetings where the external moderation of work and discussion of new strategies are featured. Consequently, the pupils at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School receive good quality Religious Education.
- The subject leader provides support and advice to all staff through a planned CPD programme. This is particularly beneficial to new staff who gain confidence in delivering the Religious Education curriculum and in ensuring a consistent diet of Religious Education is experienced by all pupils at the school.
- Evidence collated from monitoring activities demonstrates the impact of CPD relating to expectations for Religious Education books. Learning intentions, marking and feedback, pitch, and progression across the school, including the quality of pupil's presentation are all accurately identified by leaders as areas which they need to continue to focus upon.
- Processes for the regular monitoring and evaluation of the Religious Education curriculum is established and effective. These are reported to staff and governors regularly and result in the implementation of relevant action plans which focus on current areas of development.
- Progress against the identified areas of development is reviewed each term. As a result of this clear process all the recommendations from the school's previous diocesan monitoring visit have been achieved in full.
- Standards in Religious Education are reported to governors in curriculum committee meetings and headteacher reports. Governors are very well informed about all aspects of the Religious Education curriculum and the work being done to further improve standards.
- The link governor for Religious Education and Catholic Life is the parish priest who is a frequent visitor to school. The leaders' and governors' monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education is accurate, and the leaders action plan focusses on areas that need addressing, which ensure they are well placed to continue to improve the school's provision. For example, when pupils returned to school in March 2021, the spiritual development of the pupils in Religious Education was a focus. Prayer booklets were made for each year group to help them to learn the traditional prayers, which are sometimes used in Religious Education lessons, when it is appropriate for them to be so.
- School leaders also recognises that links needed to be established with the parish again because of the pandemic. The school has previously worked closely with a parishioner, who is a local artist, to realise pupils' designs for a handmade set of Stations of the Cross, which are now displayed prominently in the school hall.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The quality of Collective Worship	Good
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	Good
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	Good
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship	Good

CW1 How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship**CW2 The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school**

- Collective Worship is well planned and engaging for all pupils. It is delivered regularly enabling pupils to become more knowledgeable about their faith.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary during all worship, and they actively join in with reverence and respect. Class and key staged-based liturgies are enhanced with pupil's participation in discussions, traditional prayers, and enthusiastic singing.
- Pupils plan their prayers in groups and follow the diocesan recommended planning sheets which are evidenced in the Collective Worship evidence file. As a result, pupils are developing their understanding of what makes for high-quality prayer services. They are increasingly more actively involved, and supportive of each other whilst learning more about scripture and the power of prayer.
- Pupils are encouraged to write their own prayers and share these with each other. An area for further development is the display of pupils' own prayers around the class prayer areas, exploring opportunities for pupils to pray voluntarily, continuing to make use of the lovely prayer areas available around school and in the prayer garden.
- The school has focussed on learning the traditional prayers of the Church. Pupils access their own prayer booklets during daily prayer, and this has strengthened the prayer life of the school, giving pupils opportunities to participate in prayer with confidence.
- The school utilises a range of themes for prayer which incorporate Bible readings, specific scripture references and well-known prayers to enhance the provision of Collective Worship for all pupils. Some pupils talked enthusiastically about their experiences of planning and leading class liturgies using the range of resources provided for them.
- Parents and governors' comment on the enthusiasm surrounding the prayer life of the school and the fact that this is taken into family homes by the pupils.
- In some classes, Collective Worship is overly guided by teachers, so pupils are not developing their skills to plan and lead fully. The school needs to develop pupils' confidence in lead prayer session independently.
- Pupil, staff, and governors' continual evaluation of prayer is contributing effectively to its growing prominence and subsequent improvement.
- The headteacher demonstrates high quality, enthusiastic and thought-provoking delivery of Collective Worship. This was witnessed by inspectors during the weekly whole school assembly. The assembly revisited the previous week's learning on the Beatitudes, the gospel reading from the weekend, which linked the virtues of learned and wise to the gospel message.

- Pupils are beginning to experience class-based prayer in specifically timetabled slots throughout the week. This is becoming embedded into school with themes and processes for planning, delivering, and evaluating the experiences of worship.
- Daily prayer is embedded throughout the school. A pupil noted that "prayer makes me feel happy, helps me concentrate, stay focussed and joyful."
- Pupils enjoy Mass. Their experiences of Mass are positive, and the celebration of Mass is given a high priority in school. Further, parents speak highly about Fr Stephen and his work in the parish and his involvement at school in supporting the Catholic Life of the school, in particular the Sacramental programme and pupils' experiences of living out their faith.
- During the year, pupils receive a wide and varied experience of traditional Catholic forms of worship such as the Rosary, crowning the statue of Mary during May, Stations of the Cross and themed retreats. As a result, they become increasingly aware of the rich tradition of prayer within the Catholic Church whilst they are at school.
- As a result of well-planned prayer and liturgy by staff, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons, and feasts.

CW3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship

- Collective Worship is becoming central to the life of the school and given a high priority in terms of the time allocated, the resources available, and the training of teaching staff to enable them to deliver high quality experiences for all pupils. As a result, all staff have an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts and can help pupils to plan and lead quality Collective Worship.
- Governors are well informed about Collective Worship. They regularly attend worship in school and the parish Church and report back to the full governing body about the quality and provision they have seen. The support of the parish priest and his assistant clergy ensures that Collective Worship is well supported and promoted at all levels.
- Monitoring and evaluation activities ensure that staff receive feedback on the quality of provision afforded within their classrooms. Leaders must now ensure that specific monitoring activities relating to pupil-led prayer further drives school improvement in this area.
- Equally, CPD on pupil-led prayer will be essential in continuing to raise standards and enhance pupils' experiences of prayer.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Unique reference number	147344
Local authority	Coventry
<i>This inspection was carried out under Canon 806 of Canon Law and under Section 48 of the 2005 Education Act.</i>	
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	344
Appropriate authority	The board of directors
Chair	John Teahan
Headteacher	Sarah Collins
Telephone number	02476 849910
Website address	www.stmschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@st-thomasmore.coventry.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2-3 June 2015

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- St Thomas More is a larger than average primary school serving the parish of St Thomas More in Stivichall, Coventry.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 56.0%.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is in line with the national average.
- The percentage of SEND pupils is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with EAL is below the national average.
- Attainment on entry is below average.
- The school became part of the Holy Cross Catholic Multi Academy Company from September 2019. Since the previous inspection there has been three Headteachers in charge of the school and the school is currently managing a decline in the birth rate in the local area.

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors: Krystyna Bickley and Ben McArdle.
- The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality, and leadership of the school's provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- The inspectors observed teaching across 7 Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Some of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship.

- Meetings were held with the Catholic Life/RE link governor (parish priest), the headteacher, the RE subject leader/head parish priest and the Holy Cross MAC Catholic Senior Executive Leader.
- The inspectors attended a virtual assembly for all classes, class-based Collective Worships, and a Key Stage 1 assembly. They undertook lesson observations to look at aspects of learning and teaching in Religious Education, the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the school development plan, the RE action plan, teachers' planning and learning journals.