



Inspection carried out Under Canon 804 and 806  
and in accordance with Section 48 of the Education  
Acts 2005 and 2011

DIOCESE OF SALFORD

Name of School St. Thomas of Canterbury R.C. Primary School  
Eastbourne Grove, Heaton, Bolton, BL1 5LH  
Inspection date 28<sup>th</sup> January 2020  
Reporting Inspectors Anne Heard, Donna McNicoll, Deidre Reeves

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Type of school	Primary
URN	105221
Age range of pupils	4-11
Number on roll	419
Appropriate authority	The Governing Board
Chair of Governors	Dominic Holden
Headteacher	Marie Kwiatkowski
Religious Education Subject Leader	Cecilia Tandy
Date of previous inspection	10 <sup>th</sup> March 2015
Grade of previous inspection	Outstanding

Explanation of the Grades - 1 = Outstanding, 2 = Good, 3=Requires Improvement, 4 = Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of St Thomas of Canterbury, Heaton, Bolton	Overall grade	1
The Catholic Life of the school (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)	Grade	1
Religious Education (incorporating Word)	Grade	2
Collective Worship	Grade	1

## CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St. Thomas of Canterbury school is a larger than average primary school. The school serves the parish of St Cuthbert's. There are 419 pupils on roll at the school aged from 4-11 years. There are 50 children eligible for the pupil premium grant (12%) and 46 children eligible for free school meals (11%). 78% of children and 68% of staff are baptised Catholics. 5 members of staff hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. The headteacher was appointed to the school in September 2018 and the deputy headteacher has been in post since 2006. The school is a member of the Bolton Schools Catholic Education Partnership cluster. The headteacher is a Section 48 inspector and is often asked to support work carried out by the Diocese. The school has low mobility but is taking an increasing number of international new arrivals. 52 children are identified as having Special Educational Needs (12%), 10 of which have Educational Health and Care Plans. 8% of children have English as an additional language.

## OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

St. Thomas of Canterbury is an outstanding Catholic primary school. The headteacher is deeply committed to ensuring the pupils, staff and parents experience the true mission of Christ's work and are given the opportunity to develop their own relationship with God. The Catholic life of the school is clearly evident in all aspects of school life, not only in the physical appearance but also in the numerous daily acts of prayer, the respect and support shown to others and witness to the Gospel values. The Religious Education of the pupils is at the core of provision for all pupils. The children are able to articulate their thoughts and knowledge of Christ's teaching and there is further opportunity for this to develop even further by encouraging more independent thinking.

## THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- The hard-working and dedicated headteacher, supported by senior leaders, has a clear vision for the school.
- The children are great ambassadors for the school; they joyfully offer their gifts in the service of others and have an excellent understanding of the theology underpinning their actions.
- The positive teamwork of all staff and the exemplary pastoral care they provide.
- The dedicated support of the parish priest who plays a pivotal role in fostering outstanding relationships between home, school and parish.
- The enthusiastic and committed governing board who offer challenge and support.

## AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- Children should be given further opportunities to ask incisive questions to develop their learning.
- For staff to encourage pupils to become independent learners, by asking high order questions skilfully, thus increasing engagement and maximizing learning for all pupils.

## THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)

The Catholic Life of the school (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)	Overall grade	1
Outcomes - The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the School		1
Provision - The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school		1
Leadership - How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school		1

Pupils play a leading role in the Catholic life of the school through their involvement in various groups e.g. pupil chaplains, Caritas ambassadors and eco-warriors. They clearly understand the mission of the school and their responsibility to respond to Catholic social teaching in order to support and help others. Pupils are kind and respectful to each other. The children's behaviour throughout the inspection day was exemplary. The pupils understand and are proud of their unique personalities and talents, being formed in the image and likeness of God. They respond well to the opportunities the school provides for their personal support and development. As a result of this they are happy, confident and feel safe and secure in school.

The Mission statement is a clear and inspiring expression of the educational mission of the church and is known and loved by all. The quality of relationships across the school is one of its many strengths. Staff, pupils, governors, parents and the community share the same values and beliefs, and this is evident in the shared vision all stakeholders have for the school. There is a very strong culture of welcome, where all are welcomed with warmth and respect. The school celebrates the diversity of other cultures and beliefs, going the extra mile to understand the needs of pupils and their families who attend the school but come from different faith backgrounds. The school's environment gives witness to its mission. The use of scripture-based quotes, religious artefacts and iconography are visible signs of the school's Catholic identity. Care and attention are given to the quality of the learning environment which positively impacts the pupil's spiritual development. Staff provide the highest level of pastoral care for pupils and their families and there is a deep commitment to the most vulnerable. Children are listened to e.g. the children are currently fundraising to provide resources for the young mothers unit for Mother's Day.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are deeply committed to the school's mission in ensuring that Christ is at the heart of the school. They are a source of inspiration for the whole school community. School leaders embrace and support the Bishop's vision for the diocese through their work with the pupil chaplaincy team, Caritas ambassadors and eco-warriors. They are responsive to diocesan initiatives and actively engage children and their families in caring for and sustaining God's world. School leaders take their responsibilities seriously and seek to look outwardly to supporting other schools in the diocese. The headteacher is a Section 48 inspector and supports diocesan initiatives in a variety of ways. Leaders demonstrate an exemplary commitment to the care for our common home and the pursuit of the common good through their promotion of pupil leadership, encouraging children to recognise they have a responsibility to themselves and others to lead their lives following the teachings of Christ. As first educators of their child, leaders actively support parents in meeting the demands of their vocation.

#### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (incorporating Word)**

<b>Religious Education (incorporating Word)</b>	<b>Overall grade</b>	<b>2</b>
Outcomes - How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education		<b>2</b>
Provision - The Quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education		<b>2</b>
Leadership - How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education		<b>1</b>

St. Thomas of Canterbury is a high achieving school where attainment regularly is above national average, and whilst workbooks and lesson observations indicate that the school is good with some outstanding features, inspectors felt that the articulate and able children could achieve even further by developing into more independent learners who are given opportunities to delve deeper and be more inquisitive in their questioning and learning experience. Pupils are religiously literate and use their knowledge and skills to reflect spiritually and to think ethically and theologically.

Children are provided with a wide variety of learning experiences to develop their knowledge and understanding of Christ's teachings. Staff work very hard to ensure that the requirements set down in the Religious Education Curriculum Directory are fully met. Teachers are confident in their subject expertise and provide a variety of teaching methods to engage pupils. They show profound commitment to Religious Education and this is seen as the core purpose of learning at St. Thomas of Canterbury. High quality resources

are used well to engage pupils. In order to develop pupils even further, staff would benefit from developing their questioning techniques to provide deeper discussion and research from pupils. Teachers clearly recognise the impact Religious Education has on the moral and spiritual development of pupils.

The headteacher, who took up post in September 2018, has a clear vision for this Catholic school. Her drive and determination over the past year has seen a considerable change in the physical appearance, resources and attitude towards Religious Education. She is the driving force behind the positive changes taking place. The governors and senior leaders are very aware of the strengths and areas of development for this high achieving school. Staff are provided with training and mentoring support in order to further develop the learning and pedagogy of the children in Religious Education. The school team are clearly committed to this goal and recognise what a special school St. Thomas of Canterbury is. Leaders and governor’s self-evaluation demonstrates a clear cycle of monitoring and challenge. Excellent links are formed with other schools and agencies and the wider community to provide a range of enrichment activities to promote pupil's learning and their engagement with Religious Education.

## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

<b>Collective Worship</b>	<b>Overall grade</b>	<b>1</b>
Outcomes - How well pupils respond to and participate in the school’s Collective Worship		<b>1</b>
Provision - The quality of Collective Worship provided by the School		<b>1</b>
Leadership - How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship		<b>1</b>

Collective worship is an integral part of the daily life of St. Thomas of Canterbury school. Collective worship enables the school community to demonstrate the glory of God in their lives. Pupils play a key role in planning and delivering acts of worship in many forms. The school's mission statement is central to the prayer life of all within the school community. Children are encouraged to develop their relationship with God through both formal and creative opportunities for prayer. The pupil chaplaincy team have a real impact on the development of the prayer life of the school, so that across a range of age groups children take the lead in planning collective worship opportunities. Meditation is used as well as times of peace and reflection. Inspectors were moved by the respect and reverence of the children and staff, witnessed throughout the variety of opportunities for prayer seen on the day of the inspection clearly demonstrating how they have built a strong spiritual relationship with God. The behaviour and attitude of all pupils in both assembly and all collective worship sessions observed was excellent.

The school staff and parish priest are skilled in providing opportunities for pupils to worship according to the needs and stages of faith development. A prayer focus is evident in each classroom. Attractive displays including whole school motivational quotes and poignant Bible verses are on display around the school and are used to stimulate reflection and prayer opportunities. The headteacher and senior leaders have played a pivotal role in developing prayer areas throughout the school. In particular, the beautiful ‘prayer space’ and ‘outdoor prayer garden’ are regularly used by the children to prepare and lead their own prayer services. The prayer stations witnessed on the day were an outstanding example of how children develop their relationship with God.

As a result of the provision of high quality continuing professional development, staff are highly skilled in helping pupils to independently and confidently plan and lead high quality experiences of worship. Leaders, including governors, also ensure that the school has access to quality resources which are regularly updated. The parish priest plays a significant role in the outstanding provision for collective worship. He regularly celebrates Mass with class groups having usually prepared the children beforehand for the celebration. The close relationship between school, parish priest and the parish community has created a strong worshipping community that comes together to celebrate and understand the church's liturgical year, its cycle of feasts and celebration of sacraments, in particular the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion.