



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for **St Thomas of Canterbury Roman Catholic Primary School**

URN: 105970

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Bishop John Arnold of Salford Diocese on:

Date: 22nd 23rd March 2023

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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	Fully	

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- Through the mission statement the school community bears witness to its Catholic life, with Christ at the heart of the school.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They respond well to high expectations and are happy and confident learners.
- Pastoral support for pupils and staff is a key strength of the school.
- Religious education has a high priority in the school. Standards in religious education are excellent.

What the school needs to improve:

Continue to develop collective worship by:

- developing pupils' confidence so that they fully lead acts of worship, choosing their own themes, scriptures and music. This will allow them to create a wide range of significant moments that are relevant and meaningful to themselves.
- ensuring the structure of all collective worship sessions allow for deep thought, prayerful silence and heartfelt response. Question and answer sessions, more akin to religious education lessons, should be avoided.

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:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

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

1

Provision

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

1

Leadership

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

1



The pupils of St Thomas of Canterbury school are confident and happy pupils. They are able to express their understanding of what it means to be unique individuals. They are valued and cared for, and at all times, show respect for themselves and others. Pupils are eager to take on roles and responsibilities and fulfill this through the various activities as part of Thomas' Troops. Eco troops help recycle and organize clean ups around school and the local area. They talk about "care for our common home" and how they are following Pope Francis' message to look after the world. They have installed birds' nests, planted bumble bee nests and worked on improving "God's Garden"; an area of waste land on the school grounds that has become a place for outdoor learning and prayer and worship. The pupils' charity work involves raising money for Salford's, "Loaves and Fishes" homeless charity and throughout the year they contribute to Caritas, Cafod and other organisations. They understand their responsibility for serving those in need. All pupils know they are a child of God and are encouraged by all in the school community to every day "reach for the stars".

The mission statement is known, lived and witnessed throughout St Thomas of Canterbury school community. All stakeholders display great loyalty and support for the school. All staff embrace the Catholic life and mission of the school and are supported in their role by leaders. Staff training has a high priority and training takes place both in school and with some provision from the diocese. Staff state "... everybody in the school has high expectations. We act as role models and aspire to live our life as Jesus wanted us to."

The school environment effectively bears witness to the Catholic mission in education and is a welcoming and attractive space contributing positively to the formation of all pupils. The

school chapel, which is a calm and relaxing environment, is used daily by the prayer leaders, who supported by teachers, plan and deliver lunch time sessions, which are open to all pupils. Staff are exemplary role models, providing love and care for all pupils through extremely positive relationships. They provide pastoral care to all, showing a commitment to supporting the most vulnerable and recognizing Christ's presence in everyone. The school's Acorn unit is a specialist provision for pupils with additional needs, who are welcomed, valued and cared for within the school. The school's relationships, sex and health education(RSHE) programme, is delivered through a personal, social and health education(PSHE) scheme and is supplemented with additional Ten:Ten sessions. This enables pupils to learn, over time, what characterizes happy and healthy relationships.

Leaders and governors are deeply committed to promoting the Church's mission and Catholic Social Teaching. They actively ensure policies and structures are in place to provide the highest levels of pastoral care for staff, pupils and families. Parents are very complimentary about the school, with one remarking "I can't praise the school enough". They feel welcomed and included. Examples were given by parents of the care and support provided by the staff and all felt they could approach the school for help, support and guidance when needed. There is a commitment from leaders to staff care and well-being and all staff feel valued. New staff members have an induction programme, which also includes formation work for non-Catholic teachers. The experienced governors are ambitious for the school. They are actively involved in all aspects of school life. The religious education committee of the governing body meet once a term and are involved in learning walks, discussions about the curriculum, monitoring books and talking to pupils. Support and challenge by the governors is offered to the leaders of the school, ensuring that the Catholic life and mission of the school continues to develop and thrive.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

1

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

1



Pupils develop excellent religious education knowledge, skills and understanding which reflect the requirement of the *Religious Education Directory*. Lessons have full parity with other core curriculum subjects. Observation of lessons showed the knowledge and understanding of pupils through the use of “Flashback 4”, a system which revises with pupils the teaching and learning from the previous year, term and lesson. This system is consistent across the school and in all lessons observed. This system allows pupils to make good progress across the school. There is a focus on vocabulary development which ensures pupils are religiously literate to a high standard by the end of Key Stage 2. In a Year 6 lesson all pupils displayed excellent recount of previous learning. The lesson focused on writing a persuasive letter to make their views known to the local MP on aspects of pollution. It showed pupils taking a leading role in responding to the demands of Catholic social teaching. Presentation of religious education work is excellent and pupils are proud to show their work. Further religious education work, following the liturgical year, is presented in large floor books. Behavior in lessons is outstanding. Assessments take place regularly and data shows that by the end of Year 6, pupils achieve attainment in line with other core subjects.

Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, appropriate to the phase in which they are teaching. They have high expectations of their pupils and this is shared with pupils in lessons. All staff create a positive climate for learning with pupils being encouraged to support and help each other. A variety of ways of presenting religious education and pupils learning was observed over the two days. This included drama, writing, discussion work and art work. All pupils are on task, and behavior for learning across the school is outstanding. Questioning is used skillfully, and questions are planned prior to the lesson, including challenging questions, for the more able. The “big questions” are displayed in every classroom, allowing pupils more opportunities to reflect on the meaning of religious education teaching in their lives. Feedback is positive and encouraging and pupils know

how well they have achieved. Work is marked in line with the school marking policy. New teachers are supported well resulting in good practice. Support staff are used well to support all children and are valued by both staff and pupils.

Leaders and governors have ensured that religious education is comparable to other core subjects in terms of staff development, resourcing, staffing and timetabling. The religious education committee of the governing body meet once a term and oversee and evaluate the work in religious education. Subject leaders are confident in their role and work well together. They have a vision for outstanding teaching in religious education and have expertise in ensuring that teaching and learning across the school is at least good and often outstanding. They effectively support staff in their development, and in particularly teachers new to the profession. The religious education curriculum has been sequentially planned which ensures the subject content is introduced in a demanding way. Caritas work and work on the care of our common home are weaved through the religious education curriculum and are a strength of the school.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

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

2

Leadership

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

2

Class collective worship has become an established part of the school's timetable from Nursery through to Year 6. Pupils respond well to the experiences of prayer and liturgy provided by the school and their class teachers. They understand the different ways of praying and across the school are learning traditional Catholic prayers which pupils pray together at the start of lessons and collective worship sessions. They are confident in reading prayers and scripture which they have prepared well with the support of teachers. The class prayer and liturgy sessions observed during the inspection, were however, mostly teacher generated and designed and gave little opportunity for the pupils to use their own prayers, engage in spontaneous prayer, or sing self-chosen hymns in order for these sessions to be inspirational and uplifting. Further work is required of prayer and liturgy sessions so that they reflect the same high standards provided in religious education lessons. The prayer chaplains are enthusiastic in their role and are committed to providing opportunities for other pupils to develop spiritually through their work at lunchtimes. They spoke of the support they receive from their teachers in helping to work with other pupils. They are developing in their independence in the ideas they have for lunchtime prayer and liturgy, for example, one pupil led a session on the life and prayers of St Joseph having attended Mass on a Sunday and hearing it was his feast day. Further development for these pupils will be having the confidence to impact on all pupils across the school, by preparing and leading sessions for all classes, and the school community.

Collective worship is planned for in the timetable and a daily pattern of prayer is well- established. A policy for prayer and liturgy is in place. Pupils talk of the times during the day when prayers are said. Scripture readings are evident in all prayer and liturgy sessions. Music is used to enhance these

experiences, during the gather times and for moments of quiet reflection. The themes used in all sessions reflected the liturgical season. All staff have received training in the planning and supporting of pupils in leading prayer and liturgy, however further support is needed so that these sessions create an atmosphere conducive to prayer, including the use of silence. Often sessions observed, turned into teaching lessons with question-and-answer elements, losing the prayerful atmosphere. A variety of resources are provided across the school to enhance learning environments for prayer and liturgy, both inside and outside of the classroom. God's garden has recently been developed and is used by the younger classes for both religious education lessons and prayer and liturgy. All classrooms have dedicated prayer areas and a religious education display. Families are invited into school for collective worship sessions.

Leaders, including governors, recognise the importance of prayer and liturgy in the spiritual development of both staff and pupils of the school. Pre -covid, pupils were taken to mass with key feasts of the church celebrated, including Holy Days of Obligation and there is an ambition in school for this to restart as soon as possible. Whole school assemblies are planned following the liturgical year. Leaders have ensured that all staff have been offered regular opportunities to receive In - school training. Pupils took part in prayer and worship across the school, from nursery to Year 6 with services that reflected the age and skills of the pupils and with great reverence. Further monitoring is needed by the leaders of the school to observe class prayer and liturgy sessions from all year groups. The progression document for collective worship, presented during inspection, should be reviewed to ensure best practice and to avoid the question-and-answer approach observed in these sessions. The impact of this work will ensure that prayer and liturgy sessions are imaginative, varied and well planned by pupils. Pupils engaging in spontaneous prayer and evaluating the parts of their worship they enjoy, should be encouraged and promoted consistently across the school.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St. Thomas of Canterbury RC Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	105970
Full postal address of the school	Hadfield Street, Higher Broughton, Salford, M7 4XG
School phone number	0161 921 2060
Name of head teacher or principal	Mr. David Deane
Chair of governing board	Councillor Jim King
School Website	www.st.thomasofcanterbury.com
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	3-11 years
Trustees	N/A
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	2015
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Fiona Robinson

Lead inspector

Helen McGrath

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