



# Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Thomas Of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

URN: 104809

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Malcolm McMahon , Archbishop of Liverpool on:

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> February 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	1
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.....	1
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	✓
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

- The Catholic life and mission of the school is a vibrant and engaging offer for all stakeholders; it is lived and celebrated with pride and commitment.
- The outcomes of the pupils in all areas are strong.
- The religious literacy of the pupils, including their use of driver words and their recall of prior knowledge during lessons, is a particular strength.
- The pupils' knowledge and understanding of scripture is evidenced by their application of its teachings to their own lives and by their recall of scripture themes when learning in religious education lessons.
- The commitment of the staff and governors to the Catholic life and mission of the school.

What the school needs to improve:

- Leadership in religious education and collective worship is strong, and could be strengthened further with more evaluative monitoring, searching analysis and self-challenge.
- The engagement of pupils during religious education lessons across the school would be improved by the consistent adoption of active listening and participation strategies by all staff.
- The use of probing questioning that deepens pupils' understanding during religious education lessons would ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged.

## 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



Pupils love their Catholic school. They experience a very strong sense of identity and belonging; they describe being, 'part of a family like brothers and sisters, loving and caring for each other.' They describe a community that rarely sees pupils being left out or the victims of bullying. They explain that falling out does occur but is quickly resolved, and often by the pupils themselves. They value the many opportunities they have to take on leadership roles. There is a large and growing number of volunteers to participate in and contribute to the 'growing in faith together,' GIFT team; the Mini Vinnies; the School Governor team; the Ambassador team and the Buddies. They enthusiastically engage with initiatives such as the Big Lent Walk; the Live Simply Award; Laudato Si and helping out at a local dementia café. The chaplaincy provision is a central and celebrated aspect of the life of the school. As a result, pupils are dedicated to the roles they take on, happily sacrificing their own time to help others and to further the prayer life of the school.

The mission statement has a significant impact on the life of the school and is reviewed biennially. Christ is at the centre of the work of the school and staff are committed to living the mission fully, leading to warm and nurturing relationships at every level. The school goes the extra mile to provide an exceptionally supportive and joyful community for each of its members. Pastoral care for pupils is strong; the head teacher has an open-door policy and pupils regularly visit her office to share news and ideas. She meets parents at the gate every day, advising and listening as required. The care and attention given to the quality of the school environment contributes positively to the formation of the pupils. Prayer spaces and visible signs of the mission statement exist to act as reminders of the core purpose of the school.

Leaders at all levels are fastidious in exercising their duty as guardians of the Catholic life and mission of the school. The school is working hard to develop a flourishing relationship with the parish and has been instrumental in the recent reopening of the church. The parish priest is a regular visitor to school and with the head teacher, plans a comprehensive timetable of opportunities for the pupils to be involved in the seasonal events of the church's year. Because of this, pupils understand the importance of church celebrations and how they mark the significant events in the life of Jesus. Pupils are keen to visit church and to participate in and contribute to liturgies. A number of pupils are altar servers in this and neighbouring parishes. The school environment witnesses to its identity, mission and charism through explicit and effective signs of the school's Catholic character.

Leaders and governors embrace and actively promote the bishop's vision for the diocese. All stakeholders are highly supportive of the mission of the school and are inspirational witnesses to the gospel. In every decision made, they demonstrate their commitment to the pursuit of the common good and to the service of those in need. All pupils are valued without exception; staff provide the highest levels of pastoral care for the pupils and there is an explicit and concrete commitment to the most vulnerable. Uniform is available at no cost to families in need; food vouchers are used at specific times of year when money is tight and home appliances are sourced and distributed where needed. Policies and structures are in place which clearly provide the highest levels of pastoral care for staff. Catholic Social Teaching is given a high profile and the school is working with Cafod for their Live Simply Award and their Laudato Si initiatives. The GROWTH values are incorporated into every subject area in the curriculum and as a result, pupils understand the relevance and importance of the mission of the school in a fast-changing world. The provision for R(S)HE is carefully planned and fully meets diocesan requirements.

## 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

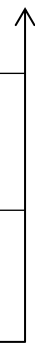
The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

1

### Leadership

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

2



Pupils speak passionately about religious education and are enthused by the content and variety in the teaching methods used. Pupils report that they also enjoy writing in religious education. They are proud of their work in books and say that teachers give them next steps in the marking that helps them to improve. Pupils are religiously literate and engaged young people. Pupils in a lesson made links between scripture passages studied and the concluding rite of the Mass. In another lesson, pupils were discussing the sacrifices being made by people in various images and the qualities that these related to. One pupil drew a comparison to the beatitudes and the ways that Jesus wants us to live. A Year 1 pupil was able to point out the 'extra ordinary minister' when shown an image of a church congregation during a lesson. They are able to speak confidently and fluently about what they have learned in religious education, using key concepts, scripture, appropriate driver words and subject specific vocabulary. As a result, pupils' attainment in religious education is in line with their attainment in other core curriculum subjects.

Teachers show expertise in religious education and have high expectations which are communicated effectively to pupils. Teachers use questioning during lessons to support the children to retrieve prior knowledge and to identify where they are in their understanding. The use of marking and feedback provides pupils with relevant and specific feedback, ensuring that all pupils understand how to improve. One pupil commented, 'it helps us to give better answers.' Teachers have profound understanding of the impact of religious education on the moral and spiritual development of pupils. In one lesson observed, the teacher was using the parts of the Mass to explain to the pupils that we need to say sorry for things we have done wrong and then once we have said sorry, we rejoice together. The lesson then went on to

explore the eucharistic prayer and how we thank God for the greatest gifts of all, the gift of Jesus and his death and resurrection and the gift of forgiveness. Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to present their learning using a variety of forms of expression to meet the differing needs and likes of pupils. Pupils feel proud of their books and are very keen to share their work, pointing out their favourite pieces and explaining why they are especially pleased with certain pieces. Other adults are used to optimise learning for pupils with special educational needs.

Leaders and governors ensure that the curriculum for religious education is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Directory*. Religious education has full parity with other core subjects. Professional development opportunities are available for teachers to develop their subject knowledge. The subject leader for religious education has a clear vision for teaching and learning and reports a consistently high-quality approach by staff in religious education across school. Teaching and learning is prioritised at staff meetings, during which time all teaching staff explore best practice in religious education teaching and how to achieve this. In some lessons observed, teacher talk dominated the sessions and pupils struggled to stay focused. The engagement of pupils would be improved by the consistent adoption of active listening and participation strategies by all staff. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is planned sequentially to ensure progression and to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Questioning is effectively used for the retrieval of prior knowledge; the use of more probing questioning would serve to give more pupils the opportunity to develop their ideas and deepen their understanding. Self-evaluation recognises the strengths in religious education teaching. More searching analysis and self-challenge would result in more strategic actions to achieve consistently outstanding teaching and learning across school.

## Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

### 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 .....

2



The experience of prayer and liturgy provided by the school engages pupils deeply and leads them to full, active and conscious participation in all aspects of worship. Pupils have a detailed understanding of the wide variety of ways of praying. They work collaboratively with other pupils and staff to prepare liturgies and acts of worship, for their class, the whole school and for use in church. Pupils undertake ministries with confidence, understanding and developing skill. A small group of pupils were the founders of the Gift team after an initial spark of an idea and a conversation with the headteacher. They have inspired others and now a large number of pupils have joined the group and are instrumental in planning and leading liturgies in school. Pupils make connections between scripture and their own lives. They are able to speak articulately about such links with clarity and with joy.

The centrality of prayer and liturgy to the life of the school is clear across a range of evidence sources. Prayer and liturgy offer participants a variety of engaging and creative experiences including recent visits to the church for Mass and other seasonal celebrations. For collective worship, leaders have provided the pupils with a set of resources for each of the parts of collective worship: gather, listen, respond and go forth, so that they are able to plan and lead worship sessions with growing independence and skill. Pupils select scripture and artefacts appropriate for the theme, leading to a growing familiarity with a range of scripture passages. Music and singing are integral to the prayer and liturgy sessions and the use of signing the words helps to engage the pupils further. Prayer spaces in classrooms and in shared areas around school are creative and prompt pupils to pray spontaneously. A dedicated collective worship room is cherished and regularly used by staff and pupils. Families are invited to engage in the prayer life of the school by attending collective worship sessions and assemblies;

prayer bags are also sent home for family prayer. The parish is developing since the church reopened and the strong links between the school and the parish are fundamental to this growing faith community.

Leaders have a comprehensive strategy for building the skills of participation in collective worship for pupils as they move through the school. Opportunities for the school family to pray together are utilised to good effect and pupils are able to listen and reflect with growing reverence and joy as they move up through the school. All holy days and other significant days in the calendar of the church are prioritised in school and marked accordingly. The Ash Wednesday Mass was a highlight for the pupils recently and they talked enthusiastically about their visit to church for Mass and ashes. Staff understand the centrality of prayer and liturgy to the life of the school. Links with the school chaplain enhance the work of the school in that regard. Provision for prayer and liturgy is prioritised when allocating school budget and resources so that high quality experiences for the pupils lead to a sense of awe and wonder. Observations of collective worship are of high quality; where they are less strong, more evaluative monitoring, searching analysis and self-challenge would enable leaders to identify development needs and work with colleagues to secure consistently outstanding outcomes.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	104809
Full postal address of the school	Rainford Rd, Denton's Green, St Helens, Merseyside, WA10 6BX.
School phone number	01744 621380
Name of head teacher or principal	Mrs L Rawlinson
Chair of governing board	Mrs D Catterall
School Website	st-thomasofcanterbury.st-helens.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Not Applicable
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Liverpool
Gender of pupils	mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	10 <sup>th</sup> February 2015
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

## The inspection team

Fiona Brownsey	Lead inspector
Cathie Williams	Team inspector
Name of inspector	Lead/team
Name of inspector	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