



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CATHOLIC PRIMARY

ST HELENS

Inspection Date 10 February 2015

Inspectors Mrs Marie Connolly Mr Anthony Ford

Unique Reference Number 104809

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

Type of School Catholic Primary

Age range of pupils 4-11

Number on roll 205

Chair of Governors Mr Paul Bolton

Headteacher Mrs Kathryn Hall

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Windleshaw
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Date of last inspection 29 September 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Information about this school

- St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary school is an average sized Catholic Primary School situated in Windleshaw, St Helens and serves the parish of the same name. Sixty one percent of the pupils attending school belong to this parish.
- There are 205 children on roll of whom 200 are baptised Catholic, 3 come from other Christian denominations, and there is 1 child from another faith or religious tradition and 1 did not state a religious affiliation.
- There are 10 teachers 7 of whom teach Religious Education. Six have a suitable qualification in Religious Education. Six teachers are baptised Catholic.
- Since the last inspection a new headteacher and Chair of Governors have been appointed. The coordinator who was appointed shortly before the previous inspection has remained in post. The parish priest is not a governor but visits and supports the school when possible.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Overall effectiveness:

St Thomas of Canterbury is an outstanding school in providing Catholic Education.

Inspection Judgements

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

- The extent to which the pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding.
- This school is an excellent example of a vibrant Christian community. It shows real joy in sharing its mission.
- Pupils know and understand the school's Mission Statement 'Growing together in God's Love' and understand the part they play within it from their earliest years. This along with the 'GROW' acrostic aims, the practical objectives underpin every aspect of this truly outstanding school and show how it clearly lives out its mission in innumerable ways on a daily basis.
- After the appointment of the new headteacher all the staff reviewed the Mission Statement. This has resulted in far greater ownership and a development of the logo. The school is regularly involved in its evaluation in a variety of contexts e.g. during assemblies at school council, in prayer group meetings etc. Pupils have a strong sense of belonging to the school community and a self belief that is deeply rooted in faith. They value and respect each other. Most creative displays evidence this. The values contained of love, justice and peace are put into practice in innumerable ways daily. They are displayed all around the school hall. Everyone understands their contribution to living the mission.
- The beautiful new mission logo was designed and created by the children and staff with the support of a past pupil who is a graphic designer. It is displayed artistically in the entrance, the hall, the prayer room and all around the school and serves as a daily reminder to all.
- Pupils are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility in the school and wider community e.g. School Council, prefects, chaplaincy, playground buddies eco council, road safety etc. They are actively involved in developing the Catholic character of the school through the school council meetings, supporting governors and staff, planning and leading Collective Worship and general decision making opportunities. Pupils are enthusiastic about their work and feel they have a voice. They are proud of their school and its achievements and the part they play in this.
- Pupils benefit from participation in away days and residential visits e.g. trips to London, and visits to places of worship for those of other religions which provide opportunities and experiences that promote tolerance and respect and nurtures different aspects of their spirituality and personal development.
- Pupils have a good sense of right and wrong and apply this in their personal relationships. They take an increasing responsibility for themselves and their actions. Many strategies are in place that supports this e.g. activity leaders, peer listeners prefects etc. Pastoral care and personal relationships education has fostered positive attitudes in pupils. Behaviour is truly outstanding.
- Children praise and acknowledge the contribution of others. They show a readiness to embrace and celebrate their lived experiences. Throughout lessons they readily praise each other.
- Pupils embrace opportunities to meet their potential in all aspects of school life. Displays all around the school affirm and reinforces the importance of this.

- The development of the school lunchtime 'prayer group' is outstanding. This has nurtured the children in this group and provided opportunities for them to develop their relationship with God.
- Pupils are involved in service to the local faith and religious communities. They take place in a number of liturgical activities e.g. 2014 Pals Project Remembrance Service and Silent Night Carols. The school plans to develop links with parents and grandparents further by offering opportunities for them to 'stay and pray'. Children attend the Cathedral for the 'Good Shepherd' service and sing at Carol services in church for parents, governors and parishioners. Children raise funds to support many local, national and international charities e.g. CAFOD, Nugent Care, Children in Need, Comic Relief, the local food bank and also fundraising for a seriously ill school pupil and her family.
- They show respect and understanding of other faiths and religions. Visits and visitors support and deepen children's understanding of this.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- Pupils' achievements and enjoyment in Religious Education is outstanding.
- Their attainment in Religious Education is good and continues to improve.
- They make very good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities.
- On entry to school many children have a limited knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith.
- There is no difference in performance between pupils of different gender.
- Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are very good. They are supported well by some differentiation of tasks and excellent additional support staff. Greater differentiation by task especially for the more able will help raise attainment higher.
- Analysis of assessments undertaken provides evidence of pupils generally attaining appropriate level for their age and stage of development in each key stage. This trend is improving as indicated on class tracking. Using this information to differentiate future planning will raise attainment further.
- Pupils are becoming increasingly more religiously literate. Their knowledge, understanding and skills are developing appropriate to their age or capacity. Some beautiful work of a high standard can be seen in workbooks.
- They are developing the skills that enable them to reflect spiritually, think ethically and theologically and are becoming more aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. Work in workbooks and in response to challenging marking provided excellent examples of this.
- The development of pupil's skills is enhanced greatly by the creative practical tasks set in lessons and also some aspects of Collective Worship.
- Pupils' engagement in and enjoyment of their learning is outstanding as shown by their interest, enthusiasm and behaviour.
- Pupils are encouraged to work well independently and collaboratively. Many creative tasks are provided to enable this and are to be seen in workbooks and photographic evidence as well as on the day of inspection.
- Pupils are anxious to learn and improve their knowledge, understanding and skills as they become independent learners.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

- Pupils' response to and participation in Collective Worship is outstanding.
- They show interest, respond well and actively participate in Collective Worship in a variety of settings. The Acts of Worship observed on the day of inspection were spiritually uplifting.

- They act with reverence and are keen to participate in a variety of gatherings – liturgies, assemblies and Collective Worship.
- Pupils' knowledge of prayer and liturgy is increasing.
- They become familiar with a variety of prayer styles. They appreciate and are open to the Word of God in the scriptures. Children are encouraged to deepen their understanding of scripture in class acts of worship by being given time to reflect and respond to the word more personally.
- They sing joyfully, sometimes with actions, reflect in silence and join in community prayers appropriately.
- They are becoming more confident preparing and leading worship from their earliest years.
- The 'chaplaincy group' engages in acts of Worship prepared together at lunchtimes. This indicates how comfortable the children are preparing and participating in Collective Worship.

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education overall is outstanding.
- It is consistently effective in ensuring that pupils are interested and engaged and make outstanding progress.
- Teachers display good subject knowledge and deploy a wide range of teaching styles to motivate and inspire pupils. Those teachers without a suitable qualification in Religious Education are encouraged to undertake the *Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies*.
- Teaching encourages pupils' enjoyment of and enthusiasm of Religious Education e.g. the use of Information Communication Technology, music, DVD and PowerPoint. On the day of inspection engaged pupils with the concepts most creatively.
- Teachers take into account pupils' prior learning and provide some differentiated tasks when planning so that the work consolidates, builds and extends their knowledge and understanding. Wider differentiation by task particularly for the more able will support this further. Excellent differentiation for children with very specific needs was observed on the day of inspection.
- Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work independently and collaboratively. Good use is made of time and resources including other adults and Information and Communication Technology to maximise learning. Excellent use of ICT was observed on the day of inspection.
- Pupils are informed of their progress and how to improve both orally and through excellent marking. They are given opportunities to discuss their work and how to improve. Continuing the development of 'next steps' marking and use of the 'driver words will give refinement and rigour to this.
- A wide variety of strategies are employed that celebrate and affirm pupils' effort and achievement by teachers, peers, the headteacher and link governor.
- The school has excellent assessment strategies which provide accurate and detailed information on the achievement of all the pupils. These show attainment is generally improving. Teachers should continue to develop their use of this information when planning differentiated tasks in future topics.
- Attainment information is shared with governors.
- Teachers are able to identify how well pupils are achieving and tackle underachievement.
- Teachers enable pupils to evaluate their own work during plenary sessions. This has been given greater rigour by using the driver words. Asking teaching assistants to keep record of pupils' responses will support this even further.

The extent to which the Religious Education Curriculum promotes pupils' learning

- The extent to which the Religious Education Curriculum promotes pupil's learning is outstanding.
- The school using the *Come and See* programme recommended by the Archdiocese meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education. Appropriate levels of the programme are being followed in different classes. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child and meets National and Archdiocesan requirements.
- Of the total curriculum time 10% is allocated to Religious Education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales.
- Planning ensures full coverage of the Religious Education programme. Many imaginative and well planned strategies are deployed to enrich pupils' learning.
- The school implements new curriculum developments as appropriate.
- Enrichment activities such as role play, extensive use of art, music, dance and ICT etc all have a positive impact on the curriculum.
- The Religious Education curriculum provides outstanding opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral development and vocation. This was seen being undertaken in an outstanding manner in some classes during the current theme.
- The curriculum is customised to meet the needs of groups and individuals.
- Children have explored the beliefs and values of other faiths and religions. They have made visits and invite people of other religious beliefs into school. This helps to promote tolerance and respect for those who think differently. Work on other religions and cultures is displayed and is most beneficial because it helps children's awareness of their nearest neighbours.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.

- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is outstanding. It truly reflects the Catholic character of the school and takes into account the faith backgrounds among the pupils.
- Collective Worship has an extremely high profile and is central to the life of the school. Many important feasts and seasons are marked through worship throughout the year.
- Collective Worship plays a key part in meeting the spiritual needs of staff and pupils. Opportunities are provided to enable full, active and conscious participation of the whole school community.
- Children are enabled to pray formally and informally using a variety of prayer methods and styles. Their knowledge of different forms of prayer is good and developing. They are becoming more able to reflect silently in response to the Word.
- The school provides opportunities for staff and children to develop the skills in planning, leading and evaluating Collective Worship. This has been an area of ongoing development. The worship experienced by the prayer group will also impact on the provision elsewhere.
- The teachers provide the necessary resources and opportunities to help children to develop the skills necessary to plan, lead and participate in Collective Worship and to evaluate it effectively. The provision of the prayer room has been a lovely resource that children helped plan and create. The ongoing development and use of this and other resources will raise the profile even further.

- Opportunities are provided for parents, carers governors, the local and wider faith community to participate in a variety of celebrations of the *Come and See* programme and the Church's liturgical year. This is greatly appreciated. Parents are to be invited occasionally to 'stay and pray' on a more informal basis.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.

- Leaders, governors and managers are outstanding in promoting monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Catholic life of the school and in the way they plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.
- This is reflected in the school's own Mission Statement. All who form part of the school community including children were involved in the development of this outstanding Mission Statement.
- The Mission is clearly and explicitly lived out daily and the staff and children reflect regularly on the many ways in which they are 'Growing together in God's Love'. In this way the school evaluates its effectiveness.
- The link governor for Religious Education is exemplary in fulfilling her responsibilities. She supports leaders, and the governing body monitor and evaluate the schools performance, celebrate, and plan future improvements. She has effectively helped shape the direction of the school through regular visits, extensive communication, joint initiatives and shared celebrations. Outstanding opportunities are provided for the staff and pupils to play an active part in the Catholic life and Mission of the school e.g. services, times of spiritual development and reflection and fundraising. They know, own and live out their Mission Statement.
- The Self Evaluation Document and development plan provides evidence of the schools monitoring, searching analysis and self challenge.
- Their analysis provides a basis to celebrate the school's strengths and outlines some areas for development. The quality and accuracy of the SED is excellent indicating the schools strengths and vision for its Catholic life.
- The school provides very good induction and in-service training to enable staff to further understand the Church's Mission in Education and play their unique part in it e.g. attendance at Archdiocesan courses and staff meetings.
- The variety of opportunities provided for Collective Worship are a strength of the school. It is effectively monitored and evaluated by leaders, governors and managers. An up to date policy is in place.
- A range of opportunities for spiritual and moral developments are provided for staff and pupils e.g. use of the prayer room and school grounds to promote awe and wonder. There are plans in place to further develop a spiritual garden.
- Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all.
- Prayer, worship and the liturgical life of the school reflects and respects the limited religious diversity within the school.
- There are extremely positive relationships at every level within the school.
- Parents are consulted regularly and involved in a variety of ways in the life of the school e.g. services, assemblies, the 40 Day book. All of these initiatives are greatly appreciated by parents who are fulsome in their praise. The 40 day book in particular is greatly valued. They are also to be invited to 'stay and pray' during Lent.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Religious Education of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.

- Leaders, governors and managers are outstanding in promoting monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Religious Education of the school and in the way they plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.
- Monitoring data is used effectively to evaluate the schools performance and plan for future improvements.
- There is a rigorous programme for the monitoring and evaluation cycle.
- Teaching and learning and Collective Worship are effectively monitored and appropriate feedback and support given as necessary. Good practice is shared and celebrated.
- Continuing professional development opportunities are provided for all.
- Assessment information is collated and tracked by the subject leader and shared with governors and parents. Sharing the data on the schools tracking sheets over the next years with governors will give them even an even clearer picture of the rise in attainment and more to celebrate.
- Formal assessment tasks are undertaken in line with Archdiocesan guidance.
- The subject leader has been in post since the last inspection. She has shown real commitment to and a passion for her role. All staff respond well to her gentle guidance. She has introduced new initiatives when appropriate. The mutual help and support provided by the headteacher and link governor continues to enable the subject leader grow in confidence. She is now in an excellent position to mentor new coordinators in other schools. Excellent documentation guides and directs all staff in the delivery of the subject. This is updated as necessary.
- The Self Evaluation Document together with the Religious Education section of the School Development Plan is excellent in identifying targets, timescales and lines of accountability.
- Curriculum outlines and newsletters are provided for parents who have recently been consulted on various issues relating to Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school.
- Achievement and effort are celebrated in many ways. Children's extensive and creative work is displayed beautifully throughout the school for all to see. Photographic evidence and portfolios help share the excellent work produced by staff and children with parents, governors and the whole school community.

What the school needs to do to improve further?

- To raise attainment further continue to embed recently implemented strategies including:
 - the new format for planning;
 - differentiation following evaluation and assessment;
 - the use of plenary sessions at the end of lessons using driver words;
 - marking with the key focus on driver words and 'next steps'.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education	1
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OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils	
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	
The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education	1
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	1

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders, governors and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School	
How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, Grade 2 good, Grade 3 requires improvement and Grade 4 inadequate