



DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

incorporating Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark

URN 118767

St Thomas of Canterbury

Romany Road

Gillingham

Kent ME8 6JH

Inspection date: 10 November 2017

Chair of Governors: Clare Clark

Headteacher: Alma Myatt

Inspectors: Stephen Beck

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EDUCATION COMMISSION

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Key for inspection grades

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

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Chatham Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark and is maintained by Medway Local Authority. The principal parish which the school serves is St Thomas of Canterbury, Rainham, although a significant number of pupils come from the parish of Our Lady of Gillingham. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 65%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in all Key Stages.

The school takes pupils from 3 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 259. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly average. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is below average. 5% of pupils are in receipt of pupil premium. Pupils designated as having Special Educational Needs (SEN) is below average, although many pupils receive additional support. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is below average.

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SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Thomas of Canterbury is a good Catholic school because:

- The Headteacher provides purposeful, caring and committed leadership. She is dedicated to enabling pupils to flourish in a supportive Catholic community where family is at the centre of the home, school, parish partnership.
- A strength of the school is its welcoming family centred atmosphere and inclusive nature, which embraces all members of the school community. Pupils know that the community includes those with different faith beliefs and practices and that all are welcome.
- The school's supportive nature ensures that all pupils are encouraged and enabled to fulfil their potential. As a consequence, pupils make good progress and achieve well, with the majority of pupils at least achieving age related expectations by the end of Key Stage 2.
- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is good. It reflects the Catholic character of the school, has a high profile, is central to the life of the school and plays a key role in meeting the spiritual needs of the pupils.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- Build on the work undertaken in assessment to secure a smooth transition to assessment without levels utilising terminology in line with other core subjects.
- Complete the consultation on the proposed introduction of a new whole school Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) policy using the 'Journey in Love' scheme and then embed it across the school.
- Further develop the strategic role of the Religious Education leader to ensure identified good practice is shared across the school.
- Continue to enhance the prayer life of the school, by completing the planned development of a prayer garden, utilising the whole school's input into the design of this special space, to support ongoing spiritual development across the school.



Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

2

Catholic Life

2

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school. 1

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school 2

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school. 2

Religious Education

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education. 2

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education 2

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education 2

Collective Worship

2

How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship 2

The quality of provision for Collective Worship 2

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship. 2



CATHOLIC LIFE

2

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- Pupils feel safe and happy and enjoy coming to school. They are proud of their school and enjoy taking part in its Catholic Life.
- A strength of the school is its welcoming family atmosphere and inclusive nature, which embraces all members of the school community. Pupils know that the community includes those with different faith beliefs and practices and that all are welcome.
- Pupils were involved in reviewing and shaping the school's mission and ethos and they know that it is central to school life.
- Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and are proud to serve their school in this way. The school's G.I.F.T. (Growing in Faith Together) team meet regularly for prayer and to help organise whole school liturgical and charity events, with consultation and representation from the rest of the school. The School Council also encourage the pupils to take an active role in improving the school. Pupils are conscientious in these roles, knowing that they are contributing to the harmonious running of their school.
- Pupils' achievements and successes are recognised and celebrated. They are kind and considerate to each other. They know it is important to care for others in their school community and beyond and are active in fund raising for a wide variety of charities, often linked to visiting speakers to the school, for example; CAFOD, Friends of Chernobyl Children and Caring Hands.
- Pupils are given opportunities to develop spiritually. Regular opportunities to participate in the school's Christian meditation sessions accustom pupils to the use of silence and reflection as part of their spiritual growth and their communication with God.
- Pupils have begun to be given the opportunity to take a leading role during assemblies and liturgies; this creates a greater sense of ownership and they are able to be the driving force, addressing the issues that have an impact on their lives in modern society. The school should now continue to develop these opportunities further by involving the pupils in the planning.
- Parents are positive about the school. One parent wrote, "My daughter has come a long way since being in nursery. Teachers are amazing and always go the extra mile. Office staff, reception staff, teaching assistants, and dinner ladies also have an impact and do anything they can to meet the needs of pupils and parents."



The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is good.

- St Thomas of Canterbury is a school that is committed to Catholic tradition and ethos; displays, artefacts and the many sacred spaces created throughout the school support this.
- Excellent standards of moral and ethical behaviour are promoted through the school's high expectations, which are rooted in Gospel values. As evidenced by the School Council who described their school as, "A Catholic Primary School where we all follow Jesus and try to be more like Him every day. "
- There is a strong sense of community in all areas of school life, evidenced in the quality of relationships that exist between all stakeholders. This teamwork within the school is a key strength.
- Policies and procedures are in place to ensure the highest levels of support to the pupils and there is an explicit commitment to the most vulnerable and needy. Pastoral support provided within the school enables pupils, staff and parents to access help and advice when required and this has a significant positive impact on pupils and their families.
- As a parent responded on their questionnaire, 'This is a fantastic school and it helps children respect and care for others as well as understanding and developing a relationship with God'.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is good.

- The school's leadership is committed to the Church's mission in education. The senior leaders in school embrace the task and provide inspiration within the school community. The Headteacher provides purposeful, caring and committed leadership and has the pupils' interests at heart. She is dedicated to enabling pupils to flourish in a supportive Catholic community that sees family at the centre of the home, school, parish partnership.
- The school benefits from an enthusiastic and conscientious Religious Education leader. She is well supported by the Headteacher and has a good overview regarding the strengths and areas for development in Religious Education.
- Staff members have liaised with neighbouring Catholic schools for moderation of pupils' work and to share good practice. The Headteacher and Religious Education leader also attend courses run by the Education Commission.



- All leaders and the governing body, have high expectations for the promotion and continuing development of the Catholic Life of the school. Senior leaders share the responsibility for the development of the Catholic ethos effectively.
- There is a clear understanding of the school's mission as staff and pupils share its purpose and actively participate in developing and supporting it. The school's self-evaluation is a reflection of planned monitoring, analysis and self-challenge.
- The school engages very well with parents and carers to the great benefit of all its pupils. Parents have a good understanding of the school's mission and are very supportive of it.
- A stronger link with the governors has been established in relation to Religious Education. Governors make a significant contribution to the Catholic Life of the school and they are passionate about the school's mission and their participatory role in 'living out' the mission. Governors are actively involved in the evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school and provide challenge and support where necessary.

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is good.

- The school's current data, shows that pupils make progress over time in Religious Education. Pupils will benefit further as teachers implement assessing without levels and the school strengthens pupils understanding of how well they have done and what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers plan lessons that allow pupils to express themselves creatively. The increased use of art and music has inspired pupils and is beginning to help them to deepen their understanding of scripture. The school is actively developing wider cross curricula links to support the teaching of Religious Education.
- As pupils progress through Key Stage 2 they develop and apply a range of skills well, including independence, imagination and the ability to interpret sources and symbols. They have opportunities to reflect and evaluate religious ideas and integrate them into their lives.
- Pupils enjoy and understand the value of Religious Education, demonstrating commitment in their learning. Behaviour in lessons is very good with the majority of pupils concentrating well and displaying positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils in Key Stage 2 told inspectors, that they want to improve the standard of their work.
- The school teaches about all the main religions (Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism and Judaism). They hold an annual trip in Year 3 to a Synagogue in Chatham. To empower the children with their learning they have parents, secondary school teachers and members of the parish coming into school to help support the programme and share their experiences.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is good.

- Despite varied starting points on entry to the school, its supportive nature ensures that all pupils are encouraged and enabled to fulfil their potential. In consequence, pupils make good progress and achieve well, with the majority of pupils at least achieving age related expectations by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Teaching is of high quality with many outstanding features. A range of teaching styles, good questioning skills, clear explanations and well-paced lessons ensure that pupils are consistently interested in their learning and most make good progress. Teachers have strong subject knowledge which inspire and promote confidence learning and their lessons are marked by being very well planned and resourced. Support staff are highly effective, in part due to the strong communication between teachers and themselves. As a result targeted groups and less able pupils are supported exceptionally well in their learning.



- Teachers mark work regularly and their comments are positive and support learning. In line with the proposed new assessment arrangements a greater use of subject specific questioning will help move learning forward and further increase attainment. The school recognises that pupils' skills in self-assessment need to be developed further.
- Pupils are given an excellent start in the Early Years. A nursery lesson observed on the topic of Baptism saw pupils just six weeks into the term fully engaged and willing participants in role play. The teacher set high expectations for learning and behaviour which pupils were able to meet. This is giving them a strong foundation for future learning.
- Pupils' learning in a Year 1 class was brought alive by a parent bringing in her baby. The teacher very skilfully used questioning of the parent and family photos to enhance pupils' learning of the Sacrament of Baptism.
- A Year 3 lesson saw pupils challenged in learning with highly effective questioning and strong teacher subject knowledge. All pupils, including those with SEN were catered for. The teacher's own enthusiasm empowered the pupils understanding of the topic 'Signs and Symbols.'
- A Year 6 lesson on vocation was outstanding in the depth of thinking it generated and moral dilemmas pupils considered. The use of music and mindfulness exercises at the beginning and end of the lesson enhanced the pupils learning environment and experiences. The teacher's enthusiasm, rapport with pupils and use of humour linked to the teamwork between the adults in the classroom, created an exceptional learning experience for pupils, who were actively engaged throughout.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is good.

- The Headteacher, school governors and leadership team are ambitious for the school and committed to ensuring that pupils achieve the very best they can. Senior leaders monitor teaching and learning within the school and recognise that Religious Education is a core subject and it is treated as such. Target Tracker is used to track progress over time.
- The school uses the 'Come and See' scheme which meets the requirements of the Bishop's Conference. School leaders ensure that all staff receive high quality CPD on how best to use the scheme and when to source other resources in order to deliver high quality Religious Education lessons which engage and enthuse all pupils.
- Governors are frequent visitors to the school who both support and challenge the school. They are extremely supportive and knowledgeable and discharge their statutory and canonical duties well.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

2

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good.

- Pupils participate reverently in Collective Worship, whatever their personal faith. They join in singing with enthusiasm. They join in prayers readily and confidently, especially the mission statement prayer.
- Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the religious seasons and feasts. In whole school acts of Collective Worship, they share the Sunday gospels, helping them to understand the liturgical year.
- Pupils understand the link between prayer and action, they are imaginative, creative and have exciting ideas on how to live as Jesus wants us to. Ideas generated at School Council meetings are an example of pupils' willingness to take on positions of responsibility. The pupils feel listened to and valued and this helps them to live the Gospel values.
- In the liturgical assembly seen during the inspection, pupils were engaged through joyful singing led by pupil and adult guitarists. Both Reception and older pupils actively took part and led sections with their peers and responded prayerfully.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good.

- Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school. Prayer is woven throughout the school day. The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is good. It reflects the Catholic character of the school, has a high profile and is central to the life of the school which is key in meeting the spiritual needs of the pupils.
- Collective Worship is well planned to reflect the Church's liturgical year, school and diocesan or Church events and the Religious Education curriculum. Worship has a scriptural basis and gives a clear message for pupils to use in their daily lives. Pupils are beginning to get involved in planning and leading worship and enjoy serving their school community in this way.
- Parents and carers are welcomed to school Masses and liturgies. High rates of attendance indicate the value they place on being included in the school's Collective Worship. This was illustrated by the number of parents attending the assembly observed as part of this inspection.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good.

- Leaders and governors view the school's prayer and liturgical life as at the very heart of its character and seek continuously to develop it throughout the school and parish community.
- Leaders and governors promotion, monitoring and evaluation of the provision for Collective Worship is good. Liturgical and spiritual development is seen as a priority in on-going professional development and staff response to these opportunities is good.
- The leadership team is skilled in planning and delivering quality experiences of Collective Worship. They provide opportunities for pupils to reflect upon the Church's liturgical year, seasons, rites and symbols through the provision of quality worship experiences in an age appropriate context.
- Senior leaders regularly plan and lead Collective Worship within school and are models of good practice for staff and pupils.

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