

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK  
COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES**



***SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT***

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the  
Archbishop of Southwark and inspection of  
Denominational Education under Section 48  
Of the Education Act 2005  
URN 133774

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School  
Commonside East  
Mitcham  
Surrey CR4 1YG

Chair of Governors  
Headteacher  
Inspectors

Mr K Butt  
Mr D Feasey  
Mrs H Thompson  
Mr S Beck

Inspection date      24<sup>th</sup> May 2012

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK  
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Director of Education: Dr Anne Bamford**

# Introduction

## Description of the school

St Thomas of Canterbury School is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Merton Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Merton LA. The principal parishes which the school serves are St Peter and St Paul, Mitcham, St Michael's, Pollards Hill and Christ the King in Balham. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 62%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 10% in Key Stage 1 and 10% in Key Stage 2.

The school takes pupils from 3 to 11 years. The school has expanded recently to become three form entry with 599 pupils currently on roll. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Around 23% of the pupils receive extra support in class. Pupils come from a large catchment area and the majority are from wards of significant deprivation. Pupils have a wide range of ethnic backgrounds primarily Black African. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is above average at 75%. The number of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is above average. There is a designated Children's Centre on site.

## Key for inspection grades

|         |             |         |              |
|---------|-------------|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 2 | Good        | Grade 4 | Inadequate   |

## **Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school**

This is a good school with several outstanding features. It is a welcoming and safe environment for pupils, staff and parents. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent and reflect Gospel Values. The governing body is well informed and committed to raising achievement. Pastoral care is excellent. The Headteacher is a dedicated leader well supported by the Deputy Head and senior staff. The school has recognised the need for all members of the school community to have ownership and understanding of the mission statement. Marking is having an impact on standards in some classes and this good practice needs to be shared across the school. Provision for prayer and worship would be enhanced by more opportunities for reflection and meditation. Parents are supportive of the school. One wrote; "The school has always had a very welcoming atmosphere. The children are happy and secure in their environment." The issues identified in the previous inspection have been fully addressed. The Catholic ethos is highly visible and pupils work in a calm atmosphere in which respect is shown and everyone is valued. A clear evaluation and understanding of the strengths and areas for further development indicate that the school has the capacity to continue to improve.

### **Grade 2**

#### **What steps need to be taken to improve further?**

Review the Mission Statement with all members of the school community so that all are aware of its central importance in driving the work of the school.

Develop opportunities for reflection and meditation in the curriculum for all pupils.

Develop consistency in the good interactive marking, identified in some classes, across the whole school so that pupils are aware of how they can improve through the provision of opportunities to respond to marking.

# The Catholic life of the school

## Leadership and management

The Headteacher is a strong and effective leader. The Headteacher, senior management team and governors have successfully led the school through a period of expansion. A range of new initiatives have been implemented which have had a positive impact on staff and pupil performance. Team work is strength of the school and the management team promotes high expectations. The mission statement, which is displayed in the school, is not written in a style easily accessible to the school community and now would be an appropriate time to review it with everyone so that it is readily understood by all. The school motto: "To love and to serve" is well understood by pupils. Governors give good support and are conscientious in their role and promote the Catholic identity of the school. The governing body does not currently fully reflect the cultural diversity of the school. The local parish priest ably supports the school. Spiritual and moral development is good. One parent wrote; "I wanted the faith and values we follow in our daily lives to be instilled into her education also, and I definitely feel that St Thomas of Canterbury do this well." Opportunities for training are provided for all staff. Attractive displays in the classrooms and central areas reflect that this is a Catholic community. All teachers have a performance management target related to the Catholic ethos of the school.

## Grade 2

### Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

Prayer and worship underpin the life of the school community. The school day starts with staff prayers and a reflection for the day. Through a varied programme of Masses, both in school and in church, assemblies and other liturgical celebrations, the school fulfils its obligations with regard to collective worship. The programme needs to allow time for pupils to meditate and reflect. Pupils are introduced to formal prayers of the Church and encouraged to write their own and would now benefit from opportunities to engage in spontaneous prayer. The Church's liturgical year is celebrated with special assemblies throughout the year and penitential services for Key Stage 2. Pupils actively participate in Mass, both in school, and in the local parish church. Parents are welcomed to class liturgies and celebrations through out the year. The Deanery Leavers' Mass enables Year 6 pupils to celebrate the end of their time at primary school with other Catholic pupils. In one class "signed" singing added a spiritual dimension to the lesson for all pupils. The sign of the cross is effectively taught in the Early Years improving their understanding of the words and symbolism. Pupils are reverent at prayer times which punctuate the school day. A school Mass to celebrate First Communion brings together the pupils from all the different parish communities very successfully to worship together. In the assembly seen pupils were well focussed and sang well. Some pupils were involved in saying religious phrases in their own language and helped all the pupils repeat them to enrich their experiences. Focal areas for prayer are provided

in all classrooms. The quality of these is varied and some could be more prominent and vibrant. In one class pupils had made a book of their “Jubilee” prayers.

## **Grade 2**

### **Community Cohesion**

Community cohesion is a strength. This is a welcoming and inclusive school which respects and celebrates differences. Inclusion of all is a central goal and shared vision. The school life includes a variety of celebrations of diversity and recognition of the contribution made by all members of the community. Pupils have an understanding of their responsibility as to each other and to the environment. The global aspect of community is effectively addressed through Black History Month, class saints, International Day and links with schools abroad which are developing very well. The school has links with a school for the blind in Romania and the Director of Olympics in Malawi both of which foster the school’s project of Olympic values matched to Gospel Values. The school supports a wide range of charities linked to the school community including Cabrini, the Passage, HCPT and CAFOD. Funds raised sent pupils from Romania to Lourdes, and CAFOD projects are effectively used to inform pupils of the need to help our neighbour. The school is a highly diverse community and the school needs to continue to build strong links with the three main parishes. Visits to places of worship of other faiths support the teaching of other faiths which, the school recognises, is in need of developing further. Visits to the House of Commons and Junior Citizen events all enhance the curriculum. The school choir performs at community events alongside local choirs in community events and at the Albert Hall. There is an active Parent, Teacher and Friends Association which organises a variety of opportunities for the community to get together. The Headteacher and senior management team work closely with the Merton Catholic network providing staff and pupil links. Many after school clubs are available for pupils. The school has set up a Breakfast Club which is enjoyed by pupils and appreciated by parents and carers. Nurture groups, art therapy sessions and the Phoenix Project all support pupils with difficulties and worries effectively. The school encourages pupils to care for each other and gives them responsibilities enabling them to do this. As a consequence of the variety of opportunities for the pupils to interact with the local and wider community and to become aware of the needs of others St Thomas of Canterbury is a truly inclusive school.

## **Grade 1**

# Religious education

## Achievement and standards in religious education

Attainment on entry is below average. Pupils make good progress as they move up through the school and by the end of Key Stage 2 progress is in line with national expectations. Good use is made of bibles and pupils are able to access specific texts in Key Stage 2. Pupils are gaining knowledge, skills and understanding and they can apply this to their own lives and experiences. Those with special educational needs and English as an Additional Language make good progress due to the effective use of talented teaching assistants. There is no significant difference in progress by ethnicity or gender. Presentation is good. Work in books shows a wide range of activities and differentiation mainly by outcome. In lessons observed more able pupils were given different more challenging activities and the school should consider ensuring this is reflected in their recorded work. The recently established pupil tracking is proving highly effective in establishing the levels for individual pupils and highlighting those in need of targeted support. Examples of effective marking were evidenced and this needs to be disseminated throughout the school. In Key Stage 1 on the topic of friendship and how to restore friendship after a disagreement the teacher marking had written, "What did they do to make friends?" The pupil wrote back, "Hug". Spiritual, moral and cultural development is good. Pupils are able to talk confidently about the Catholic faith and articulate their thoughts well. Classroom displays reflect the Here I Am topics. In lessons observed there is strong evidence of plans building on previous knowledge. Pupils engage very well during lessons and their behaviour is good.

## Grade 2

## Teaching and learning in religious education

Teaching was generally good and had some outstanding elements. The best lessons showed clear learning objectives, pace, challenging questions, differentiation, good interaction between pupils and stimulating activities, which enabled progress, and were enjoyed by all. Key words are effectively used to enhance learning. Classroom organisation and behaviour management are very good. Staff create a good learning environment. In a Key Stage 2 lesson observed pupils were asked if they should give up their seat for an elderly person when told on the bus. Pupils were able to argue both sides of the case very cogently and came to an ethical consensus. Teacher assistant support in making a film using sign language was excellent and really moved on the pupils' thinking. Opportunities for debates on moral issues are provided and pupils fully engage in them. The use of ICT and the story of "Cecil the sheep" held the pupils' attention and they wrote insightful and amusing diary entries from the perspective of the shepherd. Pupils were able to relate the love of the shepherd to God's unconditional love for us. In other lessons observed the story of Zacchaeus was used to explore friendship between pupils and with God. Reception children enjoyed seeing photos of themselves helping each other on the interactive whiteboard and could say

what a friend is and learnt about Jesus' special friends. Role play of Jesus with His friends effectively enhanced learning.

**Grade 2**

### **The religious education curriculum**

The time allocated to religious education is in line with the Bishops' Conference recommendations and is well used. The school follows the "Here I Am" programme. It is taught in whole school topics and collaborative planning takes place at all levels in the school with each teacher adjusting it to reflect the abilities of their class. The school is now investigating changing this to the up dated scheme "Come and See" or "The Way the Truth and the Life" to more closely meet the needs of the pupils. Cross curricular links especially ICT, Literacy, Art and Music are strong. PHSE and SEAL are incorporated into the religious education curriculum effectively. Education in Human Love is taught throughout the school and is set in the context of Church teachings and values. All pupils have equal access to the religious education curriculum and are well behaved with positive attitudes to the subject. A pupil in the school council said;" Teachers make them interesting and we use art and drama". The subject is well resourced. Displays are very good such as the one linking the Gospel Values to the Olympic values, Acts of Kindness and CAFOD, just one world but would be more relevant to if a greater emphasis was placed on pupil input to them and their work given a higher profile.

**Grade 2**

### **Leadership and management of religious education**

The expansion of St Thomas of Canterbury to three form entry has resulted in a more distributive approach to subject leadership. This is currently serving the school well but will need ongoing review to ensure succession planning for this curriculum is fully established. Religious education is well led by the religious education coordinator ably supported by the Headteacher, senior management team and governors. This ensures that the teaching of the Catholic faith remains central to the school's mission and is viewed as a core subject. Assessment is developing very well and the coordinator and assessment coordinator have a clear understanding of the role this can play in raising achievement. The coordinator ensures all assessments and evaluations are carried out enabling pupil progress to be effectively tracked. She is dedicated and knowledgeable. The coordinator files provide a range of evidence and provide considerable support for teachers The Deputy Head has organised high quality inset and contributed greatly to the breadth of activities which enable the school to grow as a faith community. The coordinator leads school inset and attends Diocesan and the local Catholic cluster meetings. The school has hosted Diocesan training on moderation. All staff strongly support the school's Catholic ethos and distinctiveness and succeed in creating a happy and stimulating environment for all.

**Grade 1**