



# St Thomas More Catholic Secondary School

URN: 139362

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster

01–02 May 2025

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

#### 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 general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

1

## Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- The school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of the diocesan Bishop.
- All areas for improvement outlined in the previous diocesan inspection have been addressed in full.

## What the school does well

- All members of the community are confident in their strong articulation of the school's mission, inspired by St Thomas More.
- Students make exceptional progress from their starting points in religious education.
- Students demonstrate sophisticated religious literacy and are confident in their consideration of highly complex religious concepts.
- Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school with a wide range of significant moments and opportunities punctuating the school year.
- Pastoral care is exceptional and firmly rooted in the school's mission.

## What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that Catholic social teaching is systematically mapped across the wider curriculum so that all subjects share in the responsibility to develop students' understanding and response to these principles.
- Further build students' confidence, understanding and skills when planning and leading prayer and liturgy.
- Maximise students' exposure to a wider experience of styles of prayer so that they can incorporate these into their own planning and delivery.

## 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

#### Pupil outcomes

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

#### Provision

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

#### Leadership

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



The Catholic mission of St Thomas More Catholic school is shared and lived by the entire community. Students have a deep understanding of the mission statement and the life of St Thomas More and are inspired to try to live out the values that the school strives to develop. Students are thriving in this school, and are actively and responsibly contributing to local, national and global initiatives. Students can articulate the principles underpinning Catholic social teaching and readily weave this into responses. In a discussion on the conclave, students were independently able to link Catholic social teaching to the qualities desired in the new Pope. Students demonstrate exceptional respect for each other and for staff. They recognise the school's imperative to promote the dignity of each person and are fiercely protective of this. The Catholic life of this school is enriched because students of all faiths embrace the opportunities offered through the chaplaincy. They are highly appreciative of this and recognise the importance of this formation. This results in them being active participants in growing their own faith, as well as contributing to the development of those around them in the community and beyond. A young Catenian group discussed the impact scripture has on individuals and social action. One student stated that they joined the group because 'I felt inspired by the good deeds the group were doing'.

The mission and values modelled by staff result in a strong commitment to educate and support students through a genuinely holistic education. There is a universal understanding of the vision for the school, and staff are clear in the unique roles they play. One member of staff reflected that, 'the Catholic ethos and vision inspires us and brings us together in a community that cherishes and promotes mutual respect and support.' This is an inclusive school where all are made welcome. This begins with an exceptional transition programme that has the induction of

parents and students into the Catholic life and mission of the school at its heart. Pastoral care is firmly rooted in the teachings of Christ. Staff bear witness to this by establishing excellent relationships with students. The pastoral and safeguarding 'Nexus' meetings provide the mechanism for a comprehensive response to identified needs of vulnerable children. This results in highly effective pastoral intervention. The Catholic life of the school permeates all areas, is reflected in the physical environment and is enriched by the provision of a dedicated chapel. The provision for relationships, sex and health education is very good and is strategically planned and delivered.

Leaders and governors ensure that Christ is at the centre of this school. They are passionate advocates for the children in their care, and this is underpinned by their firm commitment to gospel values. Leaders and governors have an exceptional knowledge and understanding of the school and are thorough and accurate in their approach to monitoring and evaluation. Leaders ensure there is a comprehensive programme of induction and ongoing training, enabling staff to contribute to the Catholic life in a meaningful way. Staff feel confident in promoting the school's mission as a result of this support. Partnerships with parents are highly effective and appreciated. One parent stated that their child had been 'exposed to countless positive role models in the school and as a result has developed independence, self-discipline, resilience, patience and determination'. Leaders are committed to their mission to work collaboratively and support those beyond the school, as demonstrated in the strategic support offered to partner primary schools and schools within the Trust. The chaplaincy leader has extremely strong relationships with local clergy and parishes. Leaders are ambitious for the future development of the Catholic curriculum. They appreciate the need to develop opportunities to explore Catholic social teaching and map this across the curriculum.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

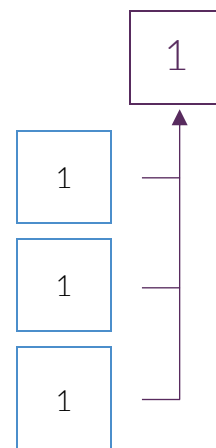
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### Provision

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

#### Leadership

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



Students are developing exceptional knowledge, understanding and skills and make excellent progress from their starting points in religious education. GCSE and A Level results are outstanding and are reflective of students' strong commitment to learning and progress, even attending school on Saturdays to support their revision. There is strong religious literacy, and students were observed in a range of year groups thinking hard and responding to complex theological concepts with confidence and with appropriate religious terminology. This was evident in a Year 9 lesson on the laity where students explored roles within the Church using highly developed language. In a Year 13 lesson on the falsification principle, students were analysing parables through the lens of different scholars. Students responded in a sophisticated and perceptive way, collaborating with purpose and creating meaning together. Student behaviour in lessons is excellent; they are focused and engaged and active participants in both whole class and peer discussion. In a Year 7 lesson, students demonstrated recall of subject specific language, enthusiastically responding to make a link between current learning and prior learning on the Creed. They clearly enjoy their lessons. Exercise books are extremely well-presented, and work is of a consistently high quality. Students are committed to their homework activities and produce excellent extended writing pieces. They routinely self-assess and evaluate their work.

Staff within the religious education department are highly experienced and dedicated to providing an excellent experience for students. Their subject knowledge is extremely strong, and they are confident in delivering the curriculum in a dynamic and responsive way. They have high expectations of students and demand the very best from them. A real strength of the department is collaborative planning which is then adapted by individual teachers to meet the needs of their classes. Teachers devote appropriate time to unpacking the definitions of key

terminology to enable all students to access the learning. A rich variety of activities are planned to secure engagement. Teachers assess students' progress and understanding through effective questioning and are responsive when misconceptions arise. Feedback is given in the moment and systematically through formal marking in exercise books. This is diagnostic in nature and focused on next steps. Teachers require students to engage with this feedback on a regular basis. They capitalise on opportunities within lessons to develop students' spirituality and understanding. This was evident in a Year 7 lesson on the theme of Pentecost when students were given the opportunity to consider the impact the gifts of the Holy Spirit have on their own lives.

Leaders and governors have ensured that the curriculum for religious education is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Directory*. Religious education has full parity with other core curriculum subjects with regards to professional development, resourcing and staffing. Continuous professional development is ongoing and effective, and monitored by leaders. This results in staff, even non-specialists, feeling confident in delivering the curriculum effectively. The head of department has a clear vision for the department and leadership responsibilities have been distributed more widely across the department to provide capacity for the head of department to fulfil chaplaincy responsibilities. Subject content is planned and introduced sequentially so that progression is evident through the year groups. The level of challenge planned is appropriate and ambitious. There are planned opportunities for learning to be reinforced, as well as building on prior learning towards their next steps. The needs of students of all abilities and groups are met in a highly conscious and strategic way. Leaders in the department provide a wide range of activities for students to enrich their experience. This includes retreats and residential visits to Rome. Leaders are highly reflective and have a very secure understanding of the next phase of their development.

## Collective worship

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

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### 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

1

#### Leadership

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

1

1

Students engage fully in the prayer life of the school. They reflected that the daily prayers help them 'to take a step back and reflect'. They confidently lead prayers at the start of the day and at the start of all lessons, readily volunteering to do this. They have a range of prayers to use that are appropriate for different times in the liturgical year. Students take the lead in several different settings. The chapel is full each day for a 'moment with Jesus', led by students, a weekly bible study group is led by 6<sup>th</sup> form students and there are opportunities for form groups to take significant responsibility for planning assemblies. Students were observed in a Year 9 form group working collaboratively to research and create slides on an assembly on Pope Francis. Student leadership in this part of school life would benefit from more structured liturgical formation and exposure to a wider variety of types of prayer. Students value the importance of prayer and liturgy because it marks every day and the key events during the year. Several students explained how prayer and liturgy at the school inspired them to further action, such as to attending and actively participating in, the national 'Flame' event at Wembley.

Prayer is very much at the heart of the life of this school. The impressive daily pattern of prayer includes the whole school pausing for the Angelus at noon each day. The carefully planned programme of Masses and other celebrations punctuate the school year. The richness of the tradition of St Thomas More, and Catholicism more widely, is evident throughout the school both in terms of the physical environment and in the enrichment opportunities that students are given. Scripture is prominent in the liturgy and celebrations of the Word. The choice of scripture is informed by the liturgical year. Staff exemplify how to approach prayer, and some key staff help pupils to contribute to planning and leading prayer. Staff nurture students' creativity, providing them with opportunities to sing and recite their own poems during assemblies. Students are happy to volunteer their skills to lead prayers and contribute to year group and

whole school liturgies. Staff are skilled at ensuring that the key messages contained within scripture are made relevant to students' lives. Spaces for prayer and liturgy are appropriate and provide a calm and reflective atmosphere to support students during moments of prayer. Parents are highly appreciative of the prominence of prayer and liturgy in the daily life of the school.

The prayer and liturgy policy provides leaders and staff with clear direction on the purpose of prayer and liturgy. The feast of St Thomas More is celebrated each summer term in imaginative ways that engage the entire community. There are several opportunities during the year for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The importance of prayer and liturgy is reflected in the continuous professional development programme for staff which includes opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in planning liturgies and ways of praying with children. Staff feel highly supported with resources and guidance to ensure prayer takes place every day. This is comprehensive because every lesson across the curriculum begins with a prayer. The school benefits from the chaplain's very wide range of experience and knowledge of prayer and liturgy and this has significant impact on both provision and outcomes. The school's commitment to prayer and liturgy is evident through the significant resourcing that is provided. Leaders and governors monitor and evaluate with a high degree of regularity and accuracy.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas More Catholic Secondary School
School unique reference number (URN)	139362
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3094703
Full postal address of the school	St Thomas More Catholic Secondary School, Glendale Avenue, Wood Green, London, N22 5HN
School phone number	002088887122
Headteacher	Alex Rosen
Chair of governors	John Meadows
School Website	<a href="http://www.stthomasmoreschool.org.uk">www.stthomasmoreschool.org.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Cardinal Hume Academies Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	January 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

## The inspection team

Jo-Anne Hoarty	Lead
Martin Fahey	Team
Teresa Michael	Team
Patrick Harrison	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