

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

Estcourt Road, Fulham, London SW6 7HB



Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 13 March 2019

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is good

- The curriculum covers the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory and provides progression over the key stages.
- The senior leadership team has a good understanding of the current standards for religious education in the school and have accurately identified the strengths and points for development. They have a clear plan for continuing to improve the religious education teaching the pupils receive.
- There is a clear structure in place which ensures that the pupils make good progress throughout their time in school.
- Pupils are aware of how they are performing in religious education and what they need to do to improve their work further.
- Pupils participate well in lessons which capture their attention and encourage them to ask questions and deepen their learning.
- Classroom religious education plays an integral part in the Catholic life of the school and opportunities are made to link what is learnt in lessons with what is practised in the wider community.

Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- Not every opportunity is taken to fully extend all pupils in all lessons.
- Recent improvements introduced by the senior leadership team have begun to make a real difference in the quality of work and learning in religious education, but have yet to become fully embedded.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- The leadership of the school has worked tirelessly to present pupils with the richness of opportunities of a Catholic way of living and the pupils in this school are given every opportunity to experience Catholic life in its fullness.
- Religious education has been firmly placed at the centre of the learning in the school and permeates through all other areas. It is afforded the full 10% of curriculum time required by the Bishops' Conference.
- Pupils and staff are given many opportunities to pray in a variety of ways throughout the school day and throughout the liturgical year.
- The school values are known, understood and lived out by the whole community.
- The pupils know the mission statement 'Jesus is at the Heart of Everything we Think, Do and Say' and are able to relate this to how they behave towards each other.
- The school has close links with the parish church whose clergy are prominent members of the school community.
- Parents are recognised as vital partners in developing the faith of their pupils and are welcomed to share their experiences. One parent commented 'There's always a liturgy or Mass going on'.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their skills and talents and these are celebrated by the whole community.
- Pupils are justifiably proud of their school and talk about it enthusiastically.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

The period between this inspection and the last has seen a large turnover in staff and in the leadership team. However, it is clear that systems are in place to track and monitor progress in religious education (RE) and to ensure that the standards reached in this subject match those of the other core subjects (Maths and English). Expectations are clearly shared with staff and pupils. New staff have a handbook to help them understand the requirements of delivering RE in a Catholic school.

The content of classroom religious education is good

The school has recently changed the scheme it follows in order to make sure that it covers the full requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD) and provides progression over the key stages. It is supplemented with other materials to ensure that there is appropriate challenge built in. Consideration has been put into the resources needed and these are readily available to enhance the learning environment. There is a programme of studying Judaism and other faiths through the academic year at age appropriate levels for all pupils.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Pupils make good progress in RE. A programme of assessment is in place which helps to track pupils generally and in different groups. Support is given by the subject leader and other senior leaders to provide more challenging work, especially for older pupils. The subject leader has an effective plan in place to monitor achievement in RE and moderates work with the staff, with the deanery and within the Diocese of Westminster to ensure that judgements are secure. Recent training has made sure that staff are confident in using the Agreed Levels of Attainment as a measure of where the pupils are. Pupils' attainment in RE is generally in line with that of other core subjects and recent tracking suggests that this is improving. Pupils are aware of their targets and how they can improve their work to reach higher levels. These targets, along with the 'stepping stones', are in the pupils' books and they use them to self-assess their work, alongside their teachers. The pupils show a good level of religious literacy which is clearly being developed through the teaching they receive. In one lesson pupils could all give references to the number 40 in the Bible to explain why Lent had 40 days, and could tell the full story of Jonah to explain public repentance.

The quality of teaching is good

Teachers are confident in delivering the newly adopted scheme of work and have been well supported by the senior team in doing this. The subject leader has supported many new staff in their planning and there is consistency across the key stages in delivery and in the high expectations of all pupils. As a consequence, lessons are well planned with a variety of activities designed to keep the pupils engaged and interested. In the best lessons seen, questioning was used effectively to draw out and deepen the pupils' understanding, building on what they have already learned. Links are made between what is learnt in RE lessons with what the pupils experience in their prayer life. Some lessons included time for personal reflection on the promises made at the start of Lent, while others used the pupils' experience of receiving the Ashes to develop an understanding of the history of the practice. Many of the lessons used Bibles and even some of the younger pupils were able to find their way around the Bibles quickly and efficiently. Marking is beginning to help pupils move on in their learning, with verbal feedback being used well to give immediate support to improve. RE books are well presented and the pupils are encouraged to take pride in the work they do in them. Homework is given as part of RE and parents are supportive of this. This might be based on the 'Wednesday Word' or linked to the topic in class.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education is outstanding

The executive head, the head of school and subject leader for RE provide a clear vision for the teaching of RE in the school which is understood by all staff. They are rigorous in holding all staff to account in order to make sure that RE is at the heart of all learning in the school. They have devised a programme of monitoring and support which has encouraged all staff to help the pupils make good progress and attain well in RE. They have high expectations of all staff but also model excellent practice and give practical support to new and established staff. The subject leader spends only one day a week in the school, but has made a clear impact in that time. Her action plan clearly sets out her priorities and she spends her time supporting staff in planning, monitoring her subject, delivering training for the whole staff and individuals and working with the rest of the senior team to keep learning in RE central to the life of the school. They ensure that all staff have the tools they need to deliver a high quality RE curriculum to the pupils. Self-assessment by the senior team has accurately identified what needs to be done to further improve the teaching of RE in the school whilst celebrating what is going well already. Evidence from the pupils' work, their attainment and the monitoring of lessons in the classroom show that these steps are already having a positive effect.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- Ensure that the good practice seen in the better lessons is replicated throughout the school, leading to a consistency across the key stages, maximising the progress for all pupils.
- Continue to monitor and support staff in the new expectations for delivery of classroom RE to continue to embed the improvement which are already evident.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

Pupils now regularly plan and lead acts of worship in their classes. Several of these were seen during the inspection and while they showed a common planning format, each one reflected the individuality of the pupils leading it and those taking part in it. RE leaders in each year group take responsibility for child led worship and are articulate in what their role requires from them.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

The executive head, head of school and RE subject leader are ably supported by the governing body in promoting the Catholic life of the school. RE is given its full 10% of teaching time as required by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. It is also supported with a healthy budget which has been used to enhance the prayer environment of the classes, ensuring consistency and quality in the prayer foci, as well as to make sure that teaching resources are of a high quality. Staff are given appropriate support in the delivery of RE, with a detailed RE handbook and new staff handbook as well as the support of the senior team and parish priests. Staff are given the opportunity to develop their own understanding by studying for the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS). They all have a performance management target tied into the teaching of RE in the school. The senior leadership team take time to greet parents each morning to welcome them into the community and are often joined by the parish clergy.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

is outstanding

The school takes every opportunity to offer its pupils a variety of opportunities for prayer and liturgy. As well as class and whole school liturgies, they make full use of the church of St Thomas of Canterbury, which they are able to access through their own private gate. Pupils said that they appreciated being in the church, even if they only go to spend quiet time in reflection and lighting candles. The school has fully embraced 'Adoremus', the Year of the Eucharist. Displays mark the year and on the day of the inspection, the Year 6 pupils took part in a pilgrimage to Westminster Cathedral culminating in Benediction and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The parish clergy attend weekly assemblies at the school as well as celebrating occasion such as Ash Wednesday with the pupils. They welcome pupils into the parish Masses during the week. Staff make prayer a part of school life, sharing prayers before school themselves as well as participating in the class acts of worship led by the pupils. A discreet monitoring system ensure that acts of worship and liturgies are of a high standard without trying to quantify the pupils' relationships with God.

The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice –

is good

The mission statement, 'Jesus is at the Heart of Everything we Think, Do and Say', is prominent around the school and the pupils are all able to quote it. One child said that she used it to help decide how to behave in difficult circumstances. The pupils support many different national charities such as the Catholic Children's Society and Cafod and can talk about the work these charities carry out. Some of the Year 6 pupils help out with the daily Soup Kitchen held at St Thomas's church. The pupils could explain that this is done in order to follow in Jesus' footsteps. The pupils show great respect for each other in the way they behave in lessons, around the school and out on the playground. They speak with great pride about their school and appreciate the opportunities they are given to represent it, such as singing at Westminster Cathedral in the choir and to serve it, such

as being RE leaders. They feel valued for what they can contribute to the school which is celebrated in assemblies and in the weekly newsletter

The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

is outstanding

Partnership is at the heart of the school. It has a very close relationship with the parish church and the parish clergy are visible in and around the school to parents and pupils, in lesson, at assemblies or just at the school gate. Parents commented that they appreciate this strong mutual support between school and church, especially while the pupils are preparing for their First Holy Communion. The parent survey shows that parents are strongly in support of the school and the opportunities it gives pupils to develop their understanding of Catholic life, and parents spoken to during the inspection were also very positive. With the executive head working across two schools in different London boroughs, full advantage is taken to work with RE subject leaders and teachers from many different Catholic schools. There are opportunities to work together to improve outcomes for the pupils in classroom RE, but also in developing their prayer lives, with events such as the Adoration in Westminster Cathedral. The school makes use of the training provided by the diocese to support staff and is committed to working with the Diocese of Westminster to improve outcomes for pupils.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school

is outstanding

The leadership team, supported by the governing body and the parish clergy has worked hard to provide experiences of the richness of Catholic Life for the whole community. Through a difficult time of change in the school, they have kept Christ at the centre of the decisions being made and never lost sight of what it means to be a Catholic community. All are welcomed into the community and there is an induction programme for new staff makes sure that they are soon made to feel part of the school. Governors play an active role in the school, visiting for assemblies and Masses and attending parents' meetings and feel that they are kept well informed through termly meetings between the RE governor and the RE subject leader.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- Develop pupils' understanding of the Common Good and their participation in it through their articulation of the theology underpinning it.
- Further develop parent partnerships.

Information about this school

- The school is a 1-2 form entry Catholic Primary school in the locality of Hammersmith and Fulham.
- The school serves the parishes of St Thomas of Canterbury, Fulham and St Augustine, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Holy Cross and Holy Trinity, Fulham.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 71%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 22%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 63%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 4.
- There are 14% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 3 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average.
- There is an above average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 58 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (22%).

Department for Education Number	100357
Unique Reference Number	205 3648
Local Authority	Hammersmith and Fulham

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	4 -11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	258
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martin O'Byrne
Headteacher	Mrs Karen Wyatt
Head of School	Miss Jo Breslin
Telephone number	020 7385 8165
Website	www.stthomasrc.lbhf.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stthomas.lbhf.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 February 2014
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Good
The Catholic life of the school	Outstanding

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 11 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended a number of acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Mrs Catherine McMahon

Lead Inspector

Mrs Patricia O'Donnell

Associate Inspector

Mrs Tracy Peters

Associate Inspector

Information about inspection

The purpose of Diocesan inspection is to report to and advise the Archbishop on the quality of classroom religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The inspection report is also used to inform parents and carers, and the wider Catholic community. Inspection provides an opportunity to support, challenge, evaluate and promote the work of Catholic schools. It also assists schools in the work of self-evaluation and improvement, and enables the Diocese to celebrate with schools their sense of identity and their strengths as Catholic schools.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

This report is published by the Diocese of Westminster and is available at:

<http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

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