



St Thomas More RC Primary School

Thorndale Road, Belmont, Durham, DH1 2AQ

School Unique Reference Number: **114275**

Inspection dates: 10 – 11 November 2015
Lead inspector: Karen Holmes

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Catholic Life:		Good	2
Collective Worship:		Good	2
Religious Education:		Good	2

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Thomas More RC Primary School is a good Catholic school because:

- Catholic ethos and faith are central to the school with a shared commitment to celebrating the achievement of all. High expectations, dedicated staff, effective teamwork and a strong sense of community underpin all aspects of the school's work.
- Collective Worship is good and is centred on clear themes and messages. Pupils act with reverence and respect.
- The recently appointed executive headteacher is highly motivated and aspirational for all of the pupils and staff. She has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and works tirelessly to improve provision at all levels.
- Religious Education is good. The pupils make good progress and make thoughtful contributions in lessons.

It is not yet outstanding because:

- In Collective Worship there are limited opportunities for pupils to plan and deliver worship independently.
- Some acts of worship lack creativity and pupils should experience acts of worship in a variety of forms and dimensions.
- Monitoring and evaluation procedures are relatively new to school policy and are not firmly embedded.
- There are inconsistencies in the level of challenge for more able pupils.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Thomas More RC Primary School is a much smaller than average primary school serving the parish of Durham Martyrs. It has recently federated with St Joseph's school with one governing body.
- The headteacher is also executive headteacher with a neighbouring school. She divides her time roughly 50/50 between the two schools.
- Four of the five classes are mixed age groups-reception/year one, year one/year two, year three/year four, year four/year five and a single class of year six.
- The population comes from the residential area of Belmont, which is east of Durham City.
- Almost all pupils are white British and the percentage of pupils with a special educational need or disability is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well below average.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Develop the provision of Collective Worship further by:
 - Developing the involvement of pupils in planning and leading Collective Worship throughout the school.
 - Developing creativity and imagination in Collective Worship in all its forms.
- Continue to develop the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - Ensuring that teachers consistently plan differentiated tasks which are sufficiently challenging and engaging, especially for more able pupils.
- Continue to develop the Catholic Life of the school by:
 - Continuing with the recent developments for monitoring the Catholic Life of the school and using these to measure impact.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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

- Pupils benefit from the Catholic Life of the school and make a good contribution to it. They appreciate the community to which they belong and enter willingly into a range of activities, such as the Mini Society of St Vincent de Paul group (Mini Vinnies), which promote and support the school's ethos. The school offers a good range of opportunities to help pupils develop creatively, spiritually and morally.
- Pupils are able to demonstrate a good understanding of right and wrong and are clearly able to explain what makes their school different. They believe that their school is 'Jesus centred' where they 'learn about Jesus and take what they have heard and put it into everyday life'.
- The pupils are globally aware and have a strong commitment to the common good in their own community. They take an active part in events to raise money for a variety of good causes such as 'Project Paddington' where children send a teddy bear to a refugee child and holding a cake sale for Nepal.
- Relationships within the school are very positive and pupils work well together. Behaviour is very good; pupils are polite and considerate of others demonstrating good emotional awareness. Pupils feel safe and cared for within the school.
- Pupils throughout the school demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of key celebrations throughout the liturgical year and understand that religious beliefs and spiritual values are important for many people across religions.

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

- Provision for the Catholic Life of the school is good. The school mission statement reflects the school's values and educational mission of the church to which all stakeholders are firmly committed.
- There is a tangible sense of community at all levels which parents describe as very welcoming and caring. This is evidenced in the quality of relationships between staff, pupils, parents and governors which is a strength of the school. Parents comment that 'Christ is at the heart of the community'.
- Pupils know what is expected of them and were able to talk about justice and reconciliation saying that it is important to follow in Jesus' footsteps 'to forgive and forget'.

- The learning environment clearly reflects the Catholic identity of the school with a range of displays and focal points which remind pupils of the school's mission.
- The school provides high levels of pastoral care to pupils in which support staff play a vital role both academically and socially. There is a commitment to the most vulnerable in both policy and practice.
- St Thomas More is a calm, cohesive school with a shared vision and a desire to foster even further relationships with its partner school, St Joseph's. The school works hard to meet the pastoral needs of staff and pupils, with retreats and evenings of reflection provided for staff and governors.
- Parents feel that pupils are developed morally and spiritually within the school; they have a clear understanding of the school's mission and are very supportive of the school.
- Relationships and Sex Education is in place using 'Journey in Love' as the basis and is in line with the teachings of the Catholic church. The school's own self-evaluation has identified the need to review and develop this policy.

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

- St Thomas More is a well led school. The executive headteacher and deputy headteacher are completely committed to the mission of the church. Their vision, which allows all pupils to be the best that they can be, is one that is communicated to all. They are outstanding role models, providing very clear direction for improvement. Recent initiatives have moved the school forward rapidly but some are too recent to be embedded or be used to measure impact.
- The headteacher is instrumental in promoting an authentic Catholic ethos in the school and community. The parish priest commented that 'the spirit of the school was enriched' by her appointment.
- The Catholic ethos of the school is a central focus of all school self-evaluation and this has led to well targeted planning, working with key partners within the Durham Martyrs' schools. The leadership of the school has initiated a rigorous system of monitoring and evaluating improvement which is in its early stages.
- The governing body is involved in the daily work of the school; it is experienced and vigorous in both its support and challenge of the school leadership. Their trust and confidence in the competence of the senior leaders of the school is perceptive and wisely placed. They are fully committed to promoting the religious and spiritual life and, with the headteacher, they have a clear vision and high aspirations for future development.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

2

- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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

- All pupils at St Thomas More respond respectfully when participating in Collective Worship in small and larger gatherings. Pupils act with reverence: they sing joyfully, reflect in silence and join in community prayers appropriately and with confidence. They are encouraged to create an atmosphere conducive to prayer, described by one pupil as, 'our time with Jesus'.
- Dependent upon their age, pupils take on responsibility to plan and prepare Collective Worship, supported by the class teacher. This is done with confidence, enthusiasm and a degree of independence.
- Pupils have a good understanding of religious seasons and feasts and the implication this has for Collective Worship. In reception class pupils contributed a poppy wreath created from their class liturgy to the whole school liturgy on Remembrance Day.
- Adults provide good role models for the pupils and contribute significantly to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. Teachers and pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the purpose of worship, however, it can sometimes feel routine, rather than moving or inspiring.
- Interest in, and respect for, other faiths was clearly articulated by pupils who enjoy visits to the synagogue and visitors who teach them about other faiths.
- Pupils participate actively, and with enthusiasm, in the school's sacramental preparation programme following diocesan guidelines.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is good.

- Daily acts of Collective Worship as a school, key stage, or class show the centrality of prayer to the school community. There are also key opportunities for staff and pupils to pray together in a variety of forms.
- There is a clear policy and planning document for Collective Worship which is centred on clear themes and messages. These are consistent with the season and Catholic character of the school.
- Pupils, staff, parents and governors speak positively about the opportunities to participate in Collective Worship. One parent commented that 'it makes me feel a part of the school community and provides a focus point for our family'.

- Staff are currently developing skills to help pupils plan and deliver Collective Worship independently, encouraging them to be creative and inspirational, but this is not yet embedded in practice.
- Attendance by other adults associated with the school is encouraged and the response is mostly good. The weekly visit to the parish church of St Joseph's is very popular with pupils and parishioners.

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

- Leaders have a clear vision that Collective Worship is a priority for continued professional development. Staff have benefitted from recent training and are quick to embrace and deliver new initiatives, eager to move forward together.
- The headteacher is highly focused and is committed to promoting greater pupil independence in the planning and leading of Collective Worship. In a short time, pupils have made rapid progress and are assuming greater responsibility with enthusiasm and commitment. This model of good practice is having a very positive impact on all staff and pupils.
- Collective Worship is reviewed as part of the ongoing self-evaluation process. The school has an excellent understanding of its current position and there is a clear commitment to develop provision in this area.
- Leaders are keen to discuss the views of parents and pupils and respond to this in a systematic way. Parents talk appreciatively of the opportunities now available to the pupils believing that, 'They find out about the Gospel values through singing, prayer, contemplation and sharing'.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have excellent sacramental preparation, working closely with the parish priest and catechists.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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

- The quality of learning and progress in Religious Education is good. Most pupils say that they enjoy their learning in Religious Education. They display positive attitudes, applying themselves to independent tasks and take pride in their work. Behaviour in lessons is good with pupils keen to contribute ideas, ask relevant questions and be active learners.
- Overall outcomes for pupils in Religious Education are good. Pupils enter school with knowledge and skills that are typically expected for their age. They make good progress through key stages one and two with attainment broadly in line, or above, diocesan averages. Individual work books indicate that pupils have access to a wide range of activities. Work in books is detailed and generally well presented.
- Pupils make good progress across a range of skills and are developing well in their knowledge and understanding. They are religiously literate and many are very articulate and thoughtful in their responses. They accurately apply their knowledge and relate learning to their own lives. This was evidenced in one lesson where pupils were relating the Sermon on the Mount to ways of volunteering and helping others.
- Inspection findings and evidence presented by the school shows no notable differences between groups of learners. Pupils identified as having a special educational need make good progress because of differentiated work and targeted support.

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

- The majority of teaching is at least good with some outstanding. This was evident both in the lessons observed during inspection and in the scrutiny of pupils' books. Teachers have high expectations and demonstrate good subject knowledge.
- Almost all teaching ensures that pupils are engaged and interested in their learning. Planning is thoughtful and imaginative, producing learning experiences for the pupils which are varied and stimulating. In one lesson pupils were required to produce a lego storyboard of the parable of the Good Samaritan.
- Teachers differentiate well and use assessment to inform the planning of future learning. Good use is made of the support given by other adults who are involved in the planning of Religious Education.
- At its best, marking and feedback refer to key Religious Education skills and allow pupils to respond to advice given in order to help them take the next steps in their learning.

However, this good practice is not being consistently used to challenge more able pupils.

- The 'Come and See' programme has recently been introduced to the school and staff are using it effectively but training will ensure the programme and resources become fully embedded into the school's Religious Education curriculum provision.

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

- St Thomas More is a well led school. The school is on a journey of self-evaluation and improvement. The vision of the recently appointed executive headteacher is clearly communicated to the rest of the school and is embraced both by pupils and staff alike. The Catholic ethos of the school is the central focus of all school self-evaluation and this has led to well targeted planning for improvement.
- The commitment and leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher have had a significant impact on raising standards. Consequently, teaching and learning is rapidly improving.
- Key areas for improvement have been identified and actions taken to address these. However, because of the short time frame, the impact of some of these actions is not yet apparent.
- The school works closely with the parish catechists to ensure that sacramental preparation is in accordance with diocesan policy.
- Provision for Religious Education is equitable with other core subjects in terms of staffing, curriculum resourcing, capitation and curriculum time. It meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- The governing body fulfils its role well with regard to Religious Education offering support, but is also confident in their ability to challenge. They ensure that all statutory and canonical responsibilities are met.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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.

2

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

2

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

2

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:**2**

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.

2

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

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

2

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**2**

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

2

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

2

How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

2

SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	St Thomas More RC Primary School
Unique reference number	114275
Local authority	Durham
This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Séamus Cunningham the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle Diocese under canon 806 of Canon Law. For voluntary aided schools it also fulfils the responsibility the Governing Body has to inspect the school under s48 of the Education Act 2005.	
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Choose School Leadership Type	Mrs Angela Boyle
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