

Inspection Report

St. Thomas More RC Primary School, Evesham Rd, Alkington, Middleton, Manchester M24 1PY

Inspection Date 28th June 2017

Reporting Inspectors Mrs Fiona Robinson
 Mr Brendan Hennessy

Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School Roman Catholic Primary

URN 105820

Age range of pupils 3 – 11 Years

Number on roll 336

Appropriate authority The Governing Body

Chair of Governors Mr Mark Gifford

Headteacher Mrs Joanne Butterworth

Religious Education Subject Leader Mrs Weekes

Date of previous inspection April 2012

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	
The quality of Catholic Leadership	2	
The quality of Word	2	
The quality of Welcome	2	
The quality of Welfare	2	
The quality of Worship	3	
The quality of Witness	2	

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Thomas More Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic Primary School serves the parish of St Thomas More in Alkrington, Middleton near Manchester. This is a larger than average primary school with 336 children on roll. 99% of pupils are of the Roman Catholic faith. The school serves an area which comprises mostly private housing and the children are predominately white British, however there are an increasing number of children entering the school with English as an additional language (EAL). Currently in the school 12.5% of children are entitled to pupil premium, 6% of children have special educational needs and 10% of children have English as an additional language (EAL). The school has a nursery and 11 classes. All classes are mixed age except for the Reception class. On entry to the school the attainment of the majority of the pupils is in line with the national average. All teachers (100%) are of the Roman Catholic faith. The newly qualified teachers attend the Diocese newly qualified teachers' (NQT) programme. Two members of staff will embark on the Catholic Leadership programme. The headteacher is a facilitator for the Catholic Middle Leaders' programme.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS GOOD

St Thomas More is a good Catholic primary school. The school community, governing body and parish priest work closely together to offer a Catholic education in a caring and supportive environment. There is a clear focus for the direction of the school and the dedicated headteacher and leadership team supported by the governing body are striving to ensure that they provide the best education for the children in their care. A high priority is given to safeguard and protect all pupils and staff. The behaviour of the children is excellent and they show care and respect for each other. The new mission statement has been developed by all members of the school community and is known by everyone. Teachers are embracing practical and creative approaches to teaching and learning, although this requires further development. Governors, staff and pupils are confident and secure in their witness to Christ, the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. Parental support for the school is very strong. Children are very happy coming to school. Pupils, parents and staff are very proud of their school.

KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- A strong Governing body which has a clear focus for the direction of the school. They support a dedicated head teacher and leadership team.
- The quality of the relationship and partnership between school, parish and home greatly enhances the Catholic life of the school
- The care, guidance and welfare given to all groups within the school by all members of staff.
- The new mission statement is visible and known by all.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS GOOD

St Thomas More is led by a dedicated headteacher, who has a very strong spiritual commitment and recognises and values her important role as a Catholic headteacher. She is supported by a leadership team, RE subject leader and staff who together have worked hard to raise the standards in all aspects of the faith life of the school. The strong governing body has a clear focus for the direction of the school and it is clearly evident that there is a commitment from all governors to ensure they provide the best Catholic education for their children. They have a clear understanding of their role and during a challenging period have appointed new governors to ensure they have the correct skills and expertise to continue taking the school forward. The parish priest is very supportive of the school and there are strong links between the parish and school. The leadership team is fully aware of the strengths of the school and the areas for development and religious education is clearly prioritised in the school development plan. Very detailed accounts on the Catholic life of the school are reported to the governing body each term. Pupil leadership is developing as the children become more confident in their role as pupil chaplains. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well developed across the curriculum.

THE QUALITY OF WORD IS GOOD

The school's mission statement is clearly displayed around the school. The religious education curriculum is delivered through the 'Come and See' programme and 10% of the timetable is given to the teaching of RE. The leadership team have ensured that training has been given to all staff on the delivery of the new scheme and they are becoming more skilled and knowledgeable but recognise that more time is needed to ensure it is embedded fully. Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are good overall. The most effective lessons had differentiated activities; good pace and the children were involved in very creative activities. Staff have just embarked on assessing the levels in RE and the co-ordinator recognises this is an area for further development. Marking and constructive feedback needs to be more consistent across the school so that the children can be helped to improve their work and encouraged to reflect on their learning. Behaviour is very good in lessons and children are eager to learn and are responsive to teachers' questions. The pupils have a good knowledge of the Scriptures and they know how to use bibles to further their knowledge. Scripture is known, understood and made relevant throughout the school. The programme of weekly assemblies for whole school and Key Stages further develops the children's knowledge as these follow the liturgical year. The Wednesday Word is sent home each week and used to support religious education in school. Parents were very clear about the importance of RE and said that their children often came home and talked about the work they are doing in school.

THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS GOOD

St Thomas More School is a warm and welcoming community where enthusiastic and committed staff encourage full participation in every area of school life. The friendly welcome in the true spirit of hospitality, built on an acknowledgement of Christ's presence in others, is extended to visitors by all the children and staff. This welcoming tradition helps the school to reach out and support all in the community, recognizing and respecting diversity at all levels. The school welcomes a wide range of visitors, parents and members of the wider community with love and respectful care. All members of staff demonstrate a caring nature for the children, parents and each other; this gives a sense of belonging and an affirming ethos throughout the school. Respect for the dignity of the individual is evident across the school. Staff set the example for children to follow as role models of the love of Christ. The children are polite and well-mannered with a cheerful outlook in this happy and compassionate school. The school welcomes parents and encourages their contribution to the life of the school. Parents commented that they feel welcomed, valued, and involved in all that their children do. They appreciate the 'open door' policy and feel that they can talk to staff if they have any worries or concerns. Children and staff who are new to the school are quickly made to feel welcome and valued members of the school community. Governors say that they are always welcome in to school and that they make regular formal and informal visits. The school's caring ethos and the development of the children's personal qualities are of paramount importance to the staff and governors. Children, parents, staff and governors quite rightly have a great sense of pride and belonging in this happy, caring Catholic school.

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS GOOD

St Thomas More's is an inclusive school that cares for all members of the school community. The school gives the highest priority to procedures to safeguard and protect; this good practice enables children and staff to feel safe and well cared for. Staff and children demonstrate a high degree of care and respect for each other. Positive relationships are evident across the whole school family based on love and respect. The children are happy, enthusiastic, polite and well behaved. They state that they feel safe and know who to turn to if they are worried and on the rare occasion that bullying has been identified they say that it is always 'sorted out'. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of each child and all in the school community feel well supported. The children are confident in expressing their feelings and can name who to ask for help when worried or concerned. They are encouraged to make the right choices and have a good understanding of the importance of caring for others, especially the more vulnerable in school. Children with additional needs are well supported in school, learning support plans are child centred and the school works closely with external agencies to support individuals who need extra provision. Trained teaching assistants provide great support for the Rainbows Group of children. The children understand that it is important to help others and have compassion for those less fortunate as they support a number of local and international charities. Pupil voice is encouraged; the school council and GIFT chaplaincy team are developing their leadership skills. The school is currently reviewing the Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) policy in line with national guidelines. Links with the parish are very positive and the influence of the parish priest on the lives of the children is a key element in this. The governing body demonstrated a duty of care to all within the school community and is very proactive in carrying out its role.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT

The leadership of the school have taken an active role in the provision and training of staff for prayer, worship and liturgy. Staff are becoming increasingly confident in leading class collective worship however, this area does need further development so that these are times of reflection and meditation. Liturgical celebrations take place throughout the year particularly during Advent and Lent. The school regularly attends the parish church for whole school Masses and class Masses. Children have a good knowledge of the liturgical year and know many traditional prayers. They are particularly proud of their own school prayer. There are very strong links between home, school and parish and particularly with the Sacramental Programme. Parents are very complimentary about how well the programme is organised. Ten parish catechists support the RE co-ordinator in organising the programme and parents say it is extremely well attended. Teaching staff attend the Sacramental Programme Masses at church. The GIFT chaplaincy team are developing in their role and they meet regularly with the RE co-ordinator to work on their plans and activities. Children need further development in this area by leading and being involved with the class collective worships. Families are welcomed into the school to take part in assemblies and liturgies. Prayer areas are established in every classroom.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS GOOD

All pupils and staff are confident in their witness to Christ and the gospel values. The new mission statement is at the heart of the school and is known by everyone. It is clearly and proudly displayed in the entrance to the school and in the prayer area of every classroom. The children can recite the school's mission statement and the school prayer. The respect, love and regard they have for each other is evident throughout the school and the children talk about their teachers who they say 'are kind and look after them'. The children are encouraged to think of others and to support those less fortunate than themselves. This is evident in the fundraising they do for Caritas, St Joseph's Penny, CAFOD, Mary's Meals and the annual Parish Peruvian Mission fair. In recent weeks after the terror attack in Manchester, the children raised money for the We Love Manchester fund and opened a book of condolence demonstrating how they live out the gospel values by the care and respect they show individuals and families in their local community. The children are given opportunities to learn about other faiths and religions. Pupil voice through the GIFT chaplaincy team and school council are clear examples of how the children are encouraged to be pro-active citizens; to make decisions and take responsibility. Further encouragement to help the children become responsible citizens was the Laudato Si video of Pope Francis shown to the children in whole school assembly to remind them of how we have to be stewards of God's world and creation.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- To continue to develop the prayer life of the school so that all staff and children are confident in leading prayer and worship
- To further develop best practice in marking by ensuring improvement comments for children's work impact on learning and are consistently applied across the school
- To ensure that all lessons are good or better across the school
- To further develop assessment in RE

Date: 4th July 2017

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making our visit to St Thomas More School so enjoyable when we came to inspect your school for the Bishop. Thank you for making us feel so welcome. We really enjoyed our time with you. Your school is a good Catholic school.

We really enjoyed watching your lessons. You have very good teachers and teaching assistants who are helping you achieve a good standard in everything you do. We were very impressed by the way you look after each other, your behaviour and the way you help those in need.

The GIFT team are doing an excellent job in helping lead worship in assemblies and school Masses and we know you are very keen to develop further. We would like to ask your teachers to continue working with you on prayer and worship in the future with more opportunities for you to lead class collective worship.

We know you are very proud of your school. Keep looking after each other.

Thank you again for our wonderful welcome.

God bless you all.

Yours sincerely

Mrs F Robinson
Mr B Hennessy

(Section 48 Inspectors)

Summary Report to Parents

On 28th June 2017 the school was inspected in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The full report has been made available to the school and can also be accessed via both the school website and the Education section on the website of the Diocese of Salford.

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