



St Thomas More Language College

Cadogan Street Chelsea London SW3 2QS

Date of inspection: 15th-16th January 2014

A. Classroom Religious Education

What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?

Overall Grade 1*

The overall effectiveness of the school's classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy is outstanding. A creative and innovative approach to the religious education curriculum ensures a systematic study of God, the life and teaching of Jesus and the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold and the relationship between faith and life. The match to pupils' needs is exceptional and results in pupils' active engagement in their learning and excellent progress being made across the school. All groups make rapid and sustained progress in religious education. Attainment is higher than other core subjects at Key Stage 3 and RE leads the school in GCSE results. Assessment focuses on pupil feedback and enables them to improve their work, encouraging high levels of engagement and interest. The best teaching provides challenge and uses high order questioning to check on and stretch pupils' religious knowledge and understanding and enhance their ability to work independently and creatively.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?

Overall Grade 1*

The overall effectiveness of Catholic life of the school in developing pupil's experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing is outstanding. Religious education is at the core of the curriculum with the time given to classroom religious education above that required by the Bishops' Conference. An excellent budget provides four specialist teachers, a new suite of rooms and a priest Chaplain. A Chapel is used for daily Mass and Sacramental celebrations are offered throughout the liturgical year. Across the school pupils are involved in the planning and preparation of prayer and worshipful celebrations. They support those in need, are pro-active in responding to crises and have an excellent understanding of the theology underpinning their actions. Senior leaders and governors are fully committed to the Church's mission in education and understand their strategic role as leaders of a Diocesan Catholic school. The vision for an authentic Catholic Curriculum encompassing the whole school ensures the Catholic life of the school informs everything the school does and is therefore at the heart of its curriculum.

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent two days in school, visited 14 lessons, attended Mass and one assembly, and carried out nine interviews with the local authority, school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, and scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St Thomas More School, in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

Inspection Team

Mr James Coyle	Lead Inspector
Ms Sharon O'Donovan	Associate Inspector
Mr Stuart Alexander	Associate Inspector

Description of School

The school is a four form entry in the LA of London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in the locality of Sloane Square. The school serves 82 parishes in the Archdiocese of Westminster and Diocese of Southwark. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 99%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 0.5% and from other Faiths is 0.5%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 46%. There are 602 pupils on roll, with 28 pupils with statements of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average. There is a well above the average rate of families claiming free school meals. Two hundred and eighty five pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

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Headteacher:	Dr Trevor Papworth
Chair of Governors:	Ms L McCabe
Date of previous inspection:	27 March 2009

Key for inspection grades:

<i>Grade 1*</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Very Good</i>
<i>Grade 2</i>	<i>Good</i>
<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Requires improvement</i>
<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Causing Concern</i>

A. Classroom Religious Education

How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?

What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?

At the last inspection, the department was asked to ensure that assessment for learning and the use of data are fully embedded and used as a tool for departmental development in religious education. Members were to increase the opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills in all lessons. All the points have been addressed and are now part of the department's ongoing practice.

How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?

Grade 1*

The content of curriculum religious education meets all the requirements of the Curriculum Directory in an exceptional way; it is creative and engaging and meets pupils' learning needs. The programmes of study and schemes of work provide a systematic study of God, the life and teaching of Jesus and the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold and the relationship between faith and life and illustrate where, when and how key aspects of the content is taught and assessed.

There is a wide range of evidence of how topics are revisited throughout the delivery of the curriculum over all key stages to show progression and greater depth of provision.

Challenging and informative resources are creatively used to facilitate excellent links to the key aspects of the Curriculum Directory and ensure the provision of a dynamic curriculum at all key stages.

Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education

Grade 1*

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. They enter the school with attainment levels which are broadly average. When measured against attainment benchmarks at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 all groups make rapid and sustained progress exceeding progress in other core subjects.

Attainment is also better than other core subjects with over 30% gaining Level 7 or above at Key Stage 3 and high scores that lead the school in GCSE results. The use of the well understood National Levels of Attainment levels throughout, allows pupils to engage in setting ambitious and challenging targets for their own learning and improvement.

Through high teacher expectation, robust rigorous marking and feedback against attainment targets, pupils are supported in their own learning and improvement. They are enthusiastic learners and are exceptionally well versed in religious language and understanding, displayed in the Utopia meetings and more recently through the Articulation project. Pupils' religious literacy is a significant strength with pupils applying a wide variety of skills to great effect in their learning.

The quality of teaching

Grade 1*

Overall teaching and learning is outstanding. Much of the teaching across the key stages is outstanding and most is very good. As a result, almost all pupils make rapid and sustained progress over an academic year.

All teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils. Learning objectives are linked to assessed tasks which in turn are explored through key learning questions such as 'do you think near death experiences prove that there is an afterlife?' This encouraged Year 9 pupils in one observed lesson to think about different interpretations of key ideas, scripture, ethics and morality.

Teachers are passionate about their work and use their excellent subject knowledge to plan astutely and set challenging tasks. They use well judged and imaginative teaching strategies that combined with data and sharply focused, skilful, timely support and intervention, match individual needs accurately. Consequently, pupils learn exceptionally well.

Pace, authority and confidence are notable features of teaching and ensure pupils are engaged in learning. Teachers systematically and effectively check pupils' understanding throughout lessons. Marking and constructive feedback is frequent and of a consistently high quality. The use of green penning facilitates a continued focus on pupil feedback and enables pupils to understand how to improve their work, encouraging high levels of engagement and interest.

High order questioning is used to check on and stretch pupils' knowledge and understanding and enhance their ability to work independently and creatively

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 1*

The quality of the leadership and management of religious education is outstanding. There is a dynamic and creative vision for religious education evidenced in the involvement of the Headteacher, Chaplain, senior staff and department in the high quality and accurate self evaluation document. Systems and structures of the leadership of religious education are in place to deliver this excellence. The creative and innovative approach to the religious education curriculum, matched to pupils' needs is exceptional and results in pupils' active engagement in their learning and excellent progress being made across both key stages. Systems are in place to regularly monitor, track and ensure pupil progress in religious literacy. The subject leader focuses relentlessly on improving teaching and learning, resulting in teaching that is generally outstanding and most which is very good.

The subject leader has a passion and vision for religious education which is shared by her department. She models outstanding practice in line with whole school performance management systems. This monitors, improves and supports teaching, encouraging the enthusiasm and strengths of staff challenging their efforts and skills to continuously improve practice and outcomes for pupils. Continual Professional and Personal Creativity at the school takes place through peer observation, and a collegiate approach to training that involves, as well as all staff, both the Head and Chaplain. It provides exceptional staff support both within the department and across the school through the Trio system. Led by the Associate Head, this supports the centrality of religious education in the mission of the Church and its impact in the daily life of the school.

Assessment for learning informs teaching and pupils make excellent progress in religious literacy because pupils' needs are well met. There is an excellent range of resources shared by all staff and new classrooms provide the best possible learning environment for religious education.

The subject leader has an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for development in religious education as evidenced in the SEF.

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

School leaders should now take the following steps to further develop classroom religious education.

- The Head of Department should lead on disseminating outstanding practice across other subjects in the school in order to further develop religious literacy.

B. The Catholic life of the school

How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?

What has improved since the last inspection?

There were no areas for improvement listed at the last inspection.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget **Grade 1***

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum is outstanding. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 10.5% in Key Stages 3 and 4 above that required by the Bishops' Conference. The department is allocated an excellent budget that is, in one case, in excess of that of other core subject areas. It has outstanding staff allocation and accommodation with four specialist teachers a new suite of rooms and an office. There is a priest Chaplain and a designated chaplaincy office. A newly refurbished Chapel sits at the heart of the school and access to the local parish church is available on an as and when basis both offering opportunities for prayer, reflection and celebration of the Eucharist. Governors, Headteacher, Associate head and all members of the senior leadership team offer outstanding support and active guidance in developing and reviewing staff and the place of religious education in the school.

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

Grade 1*

The experience of Catholic worship for the whole school community is outstanding. Inspectors support the school's own evaluation that prayer and worship are central to the life of the school and a key part of every school celebration. Pupils and staff are offered a quality experience that includes a vibrant and dynamic range of worship opportunities. Mass is offered everyday, prayer in tutor time and staff briefing, year assemblies, retreats for all year groups. Pupils speak of the role that the Chaplain has had in bringing about their liturgical formation. They list planning, preparation and their own involvement to ensure the widest possible experiences of the richness of the Catholic tradition of prayer and worship. Provision and opportunity is made for involvement by all faiths that allows for both staff and pupils to come together in prayer and reflection. Pupils' spiritual development is enabled through the excellent opportunities they have for quiet, reflection, sharing and discussion for example the lunchtime Utopia group and through the Articulation and 'Catching the Marvellous' projects. The Eucharist and other Sacramental celebrations such as Reconciliation are offered throughout the liturgical year. These include the new parents Mass of welcome and whole school founder's day Mass celebrated at the local parish church. Student Voice is very well deployed and the school is highly effective in evaluating provision. Action is taken on the resulting suggestions made.

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

Grade 1*

In line with the school's own evaluation Inspectors judge the schools' commitment to action for social justice to be outstanding.

As part of the school's Catholic Curriculum and Language College Specialism, there is a dynamic and creative approach to pupils celebrating their gifts and talents as individuals and as a school which one pupil described as a family. This does not take place in any random way but is systematically planned in such a way that the impact of being part of a Catholic school affects behaviours and decisions made by teachers and pupils alike. For example, the whole school curriculum is directly mapped across to social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects; the library is used to underpin the call to serve with explicit literature by Catholic authors and use of the 'Catching the Marvellous' note books; the Articulation Project focuses on all relationships; there is linkage between worship and the common good manifested in tutor groups and a well embedded House system and assemblies.

Pupils are actively engaged in supporting those in need and pro-active in creative ways of responding to crises locally, nationally and globally. Within the parish, there are opportunities for giving, service and outreach into the community, specifically to those living in the Parish administered Almshouses, the Cardinal Hume Centre, Cafod, MISSIO, Let the Children Live and most recently the Philippines. All recipients come to the school and give feedback about the work they do and the contribution made by the school.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of the theology underpinning their actions through Utopia discussion and publications, 'Catching the Marvellous' initiative and through the Articulation project launched by the Head of English, to better understand how members of the school community wish to be seen and treated by others.

Each Shrove Tuesday the school reaches out with the local primary school to the residents of the Almshouses to share in their stories and provide support where appropriate.

Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf;

Grade 1*

The school is outstanding in enabling authentic partnerships between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese.

Leaders consider partnerships with its Catholic community to be the hallmark of its role as a Diocesan school. It demonstrates this locally with close links to the local Catholic primary schools through the teaching of MFL, the running of a Maths teachers' network, and increasingly through the work of the Chaplain to more and more of its widely dispersed feeder primary schools and the parishes in which they are located. The local parish priest, previously chair of the school's governing body, confirms the strong profile that the school has as a sharing community, locally and across the Diocese. Survey evidence, an electronic newsletter and the Parents' Forum attests to and endorses the work the school is doing on behalf of their children as well as engaging parents and carers in activities such as the Pupil Premium Summer School, new pupils welcome Mass, Christmas Fair and key events such as St Thomas More Day.

The school is an active participant in the services offered through the Diocese Education Service with staff attending Leadership in Catholic School courses, Section 48 inspection training, hosting Deanery Clergy meetings. In addition the Head and Chaplain attend their respective conferences and meetings. Most recently the Chaplain has put himself at the service of the Diocese as mentor to new Chaplains.

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

Grade 1*

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

The visionary Headteacher ably supported by a dynamic Chaplain, Associate Headteacher as well as all members of the leadership team and governors, are fully committed to the Church's mission in education. They have created a Catholic Curriculum in an environment in which pupils and staff experience a richness of opportunities of a Catholic way of living. The school's self-evaluation is a coherent and accurate reflection of rigorous monitoring, analysis and challenge. There are excellent systems in place to support the induction and ongoing development of new staff, including those of other faiths. The annual Performance Management Review ensures that all staff contribute to the Catholic life of the school.

Governors share the school's commitment to the education of its young people and are closely linked to the senior leaders through a pairing system. This linking provides an intimate insight to the work that is done to promote the Catholic life of the school ensuring that resources are deployed and staff are accountable. Governors are extremely well organised with a clear understanding of their strategic role as governors of a Diocesan Catholic school.

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

School leaders should now take the following steps to further develop the Catholic life of the school:

- Continue to build and develop local external links with the parishes pupils come from.