

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

ST THOMAS MORE VOLUNTARY AIDED CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Northampton Road, Kettering, NN15 7JZ

DCSF School No 928/3502

URN: 122050

Head Teacher: Mr A Agnew

Chair of Governors: Mrs H Steadman Powell

Reporting Inspector: Mrs R Jones

Associate Inspector: Mrs K Williams

Date of Inspection: 2nd July 2009

Date Report Issued: 10th July 2009

Date of previous Inspection: 6th July 2006

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and
in partnership with Northamptonshire Local Authority

Description of the School

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School is situated on the western side of Kettering serving the parish of St Edward. The school is a one-form entry school with 217 pupils on roll, 92% of whom are baptised Catholics. 10% of pupils are from ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is broadly in-line with the national average. Attainment on entry is above average. 50% of the teaching staff are Catholic. Good support for the non-catholic staff is provided by the RE Co-ordinator.

Key for Inspection Grades

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Satisfactory; Grade 4: unsatisfactory

Overall Effectiveness of this Catholic School

Grade: 2

St Thomas More is a good school with some outstanding features. The school has a strong Catholic identity and Catholic ethos under the leadership of the headteacher and the deputy headteacher who is also the RE Co-ordinator. The children's attainment overall is high and pupils make good progress year on year. The pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes reflect a clear understanding of right and wrong and of the Gospel values. The school provides a safe and caring environment in which the children are nurtured and enabled to achieve their full potential. Relationships between staff, pupils, parents and governors are good. Staff are hardworking and provide good role models for the pupils. There is a strong family atmosphere which many parents value highly. Governors are informed, fully involved and committed to further development of the school. RE is well managed. The planning process has recently been revised and is thorough and reflective.

Improvements since last inspection

Grade: 2

Assessment has been refined and is being used across the school. Staff have benefited from professional development on levelling and moderating pupils' RE work. The school still has two mission statements. The mission statement devised by the pupils is known by all and is displayed in all the classrooms and around the school. In keeping with the requirements of the previous section 48 inspection there has been a gradual move to replace the old mission statement with the pupils' version. The school is on track to have completed this process by September.

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

Grade: 2

The school's capacity to improve is good. The school RE Action Plan which forms part of the School Improvement Plan highlights areas for development. The RE Co-ordinator provides strong leadership and guidance and will continue to move RE forward and raise standards even further. The leadership team must ensure the quality of RE written work is consistent across the school. Self evaluation accurately reflects the school's strengths.

What the school should do to improve further

Grade: 2

In order to further improve the school should:

- further refine pupil assessment procedure to include tracking pupil attainment in RE
- ensure the governors meet their legal obligation by including a statement in the school prospectus about parental right to withdraw pupils from collective worship
- ensure the consistency of the quality of pupils' written work in RE across the school
- quickly complete the move to the single mission statement

Leadership and Management**Grade: 1**

Leadership of the school is outstanding. The governing body are involved in the life of the school which empowers them to identify school strengths and areas for further development. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors are highly effective and provides clear strategic leadership of the school community. The School Improvement Plan has a specific action plan for the future development of RE. Spiritual and moral development is promoted by all staff together with the chaplaincy team. The School Council plays a significant role in decision making regarding the spending of some funding. This affirms to the pupils that they have a voice and are listened to. Parents are regularly invited to comment on the Catholic Life of the school through questionnaires. Relationships between parents, parishes and the wider community are excellent which greatly enhances all aspects of school life.

The Prayer life of the school**Grade: 1**

Provision for collective worship and prayer is excellent. Assemblies are held in a variety of formats both whole school and class and these follow the liturgical year. No masses have been celebrated in school of late, this is now changing as a new priest, working with the chaplaincy team, plans to establish these in the near future. The school has a very good relationship with the parish. Pupils are regularly involved in Sunday Masses in the local parish. The RE Co-ordinator and chaplaincy team plan and prepare liturgies and sacramental programmes. The RE Co-ordinator is working towards establishing a prayer room for use by the whole school community. Pupils plan and offer daily acts of worship in their classrooms. They have the opportunity to compose their own prayers and enjoy writing in their prayer journals and spiritual reflection books. Annual retreats, both residential and non-residential, are arranged for years 5 and 6 and add another dimension to the spiritual experience of all those involved. The school makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils.

Chaplaincy**Grade: 2**

Chaplaincy provision is good. There is a designated chaplaincy team who meet regularly on both a formal and informal basis to plan and evaluate chaplaincy provision. This team nurtures and supports the spiritual and moral development of pupils, staff and wider community. The school benefits greatly from the active involvement of the parish priests especially of late with the addition of a new priest on to the chaplaincy team. He comes into the school on a weekly basis, visits classes and liaises with staff. An action plan is in place to further develop chaplaincy across the school in the future. The school recognises that all staff have an important role to play in the pastoral care of the children.

Community Cohesion**Grade: 2**

Community cohesion is good. Pupils respect each other and behaviour is of a high standard. The school is committed to supporting those in need in the local and wider community through a planned programme of fundraising and use of the school premises. Pupils study other faiths as part of "Here I Am". The school welcomes children from other denominations and values the contribution they make to the life of the school. Representatives from international and local charities visit the school on a regular basis to talk to pupils about their work. Staff from the Thomas Becket Foundation has helped raise the children's awareness and understanding about the needs of disabled people.

Achievement and standards in Religious Education**Grade: 2**

Overall, pupils make good progress throughout the school. Most pupils achieve age appropriate levels with some achieving better. Pupils have a secure understanding of the life of Jesus and teachings of the Catholic Church and are able to apply this to their own lives. The pupils enjoy their religious education lessons. In lessons they are attentive and make positive contributions. Assessment tasks do not always fully track pupils in order to ensure their attainment matches their ability, nor do they provide a record of progress achieved. There are some inconsistencies in the quality of written work across the school.

Teaching and Learning in Religious Education**Grade: 2**

Teaching overall is good with some lessons having outstanding features. The children's enjoyment of their RE was evident in the lessons observed by inspectors. Pupils were able to respond to questions, thoughtfully reflecting a good understanding of concepts taught. Work provided is in-line with children's abilities and ages. Pupils generally achieve well in lessons. A good range of resources are available with good use made of ICT to enhance RE teaching. The programme of pupil retreats continues to strengthen the religious education curriculum and spiritual life of the school. Parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with the religious education provided by the school.

Quality of the Religious Education Curriculum**Grade 1**

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. 10% of curriculum time is used for religious education which follows the "Here I Am" national syllabus, approved by the Diocese. Sacramental preparation is school based with a programme in place to fully prepare the pupils. Planning is good showing evidence that teachers are building on prior attainment and experience. The curriculum supports the personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The chaplaincy team provides another source of information and support for staff who are encouraged to attend training. All classrooms have a focal point for prayer. Displays around the school reflect "Here I Am" topics. Pupils have a voice on the School Council and feel they are listened to. Children were able to talk about their mission statement and explain how they try to live it out at school and in their lives. The pupils are happy and secure in school.

Leadership and Management in Religious Education**Grade: 1**

There is excellent Leadership and Management in RE. The headteacher and RE subject leader give the subject a high priority. New staff are well supported and encouraged to attend training. The RE Co-ordinator monitors planning, workbooks and observes lessons. The subject leader has ensured assessment procedures are in place but this needs further development. She liaises closely with both the chaplaincy team and parish priest who is also the RE Governor. A range of appropriate liturgies are planned. The headteacher and RE Co-ordinator are enthusiastic, committed and provide excellent spiritual leadership to the community.