

INSPECTION REPORT

St Thomas of Canterbury RC Primary School, Hadfield Street, Higher Broughton, Salford, M7 4XG.

Inspection date Wednesday 17th June 2015

Reporting Inspector Mrs Susan Gedzielewski
 Miss Sue Molloy

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

Type of School Primary
 URN 105970
 Age range of pupils 3-11 years
 Number on roll 428
 Appropriate authority The Governing Body
 Chair of Governors Father David McFarlane
 Headteacher Mr David Deane
 Religious Education Subject Leader Mr Mark Stenton
 Date of previous inspection March 2010

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
The quality of Catholic Leadership	1	
The quality of the Word of God community	1	
The quality of the Welcome community	1	
The quality of Welfare	1	
The quality of Worship	2	
The quality of Witness	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Thomas of Canterbury's is a Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the needs of the parish of St Thomas of Canterbury, Higher Broughton, Salford. The school has grown from a one form entry primary school to a two form entry due to an increasing demand from Catholic families. There are 428 pupils on roll, includes 60 nursery aged pupils, 80% of whom are baptised Catholic. The school is situated one mile from the city centre of Manchester and is in a ward which is within the top 5% of the most deprived in the country. The proportion of pupils from an ethnic minority background is well above national average at 79%. Approximately 66% of children have English as a second language. The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is 159 pupils, which is significantly above national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority. Attainment of children on entry to school is significantly below national average. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and Mathematics by the end of Year 6. Many pupils achieve above expected levels, particularly in relation to progress over time. The proportion of pupils identified as having special needs or disabilities is in line with national averages. The headteacher is supported in his work by three assistant headteachers.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS OUTSTANDING

St Thomas of Canterbury is an outstanding Catholic school offering children a rich faith experience within an extremely caring and joyful learning environment. There is unequivocal and explicit evidence that the dedicated headteacher and his staff go above and beyond to support families and reach out to the local community. The headteacher leads the school with a clear vision and sense of purpose, recognising the dignity and value of every member of the community. The governors make a highly significant contribution to the work and the Catholic life of the school. Teaching and learning was found to be outstanding due to some inspirational teaching, exceptional subject knowledge and consistently high expectations. Religious Education is given a high priority and pupils take their learning very seriously. Monitoring and assessment of the Religious Education curriculum has ensured that there has been significant development since the last inspection. Children are provided with a range of opportunities to develop and enrich their prayer life. The development of the chaplaincy team has enhanced the spiritual life of the school. Parents feel very welcome and valued. They are well informed and feel at ease talking to staff about their child. There is a good relationship with the parish and the parish priest is a regular visitor. Pupils clearly demonstrate witness to justice, compassion, reconciliation, love and forgiveness.

KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- The school's leadership, including that of the governors, is outstanding. The headteacher, staff and governors share a collective vision and demonstrate a deep commitment to the Church's mission.
- System leadership is strong, the staff work as a team and they are willing to share their expertise with others.
- High expectations of all within the school community. Pupils and staff are challenged to always do their best and they live up to the challenge.
- Pupils are inspired by exceptional and creative teaching.
- The quality of the outreach to families is outstanding.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

St Thomas of Canterbury is led by a dedicated and inspirational headteacher with the help of a very competent leadership team. Leadership, including governance, places Religious Education at the centre of the curriculum and ensures that spiritual leadership is outstanding. All staff share a collective vision and demonstrate a deep commitment to providing the very best Catholic education; as the mission statement states, 'reach for the

stars'. The school acts as a National Support School and the headteacher is a National Leader of Education and has a long track record of supporting a wide range of other schools. As a result of this outreach, systems leadership and teamwork is very strong across all phases. Teachers willingly share their expertise and support less experienced colleagues. The governing body are extremely pro-active and committed to continual school improvement and their own effectiveness. Self-evaluation of the school's work at all levels is a coherent and accurate reflection of rigorous monitoring, self-analysis and challenge. The parish priest is fully involved in the religious life of the school and visits regularly going into the classrooms and talking to the children. As the chair of governors, he has been involved in monitoring the work of the school including learning walks and book scrutiny. Religious Education and the spiritual life of the school are prioritized in the School Improvement Plan and Headteacher reports to governors. The newly appointed Religious Education subject leader has ensured that there has been improvements in marking and establishing success criteria for RE lessons in recent times. As an assistant headteacher, he has been able to influence change and has a result standards are rapidly improving. The monitoring of RE lessons has been effectively undertaken by the subject leader. This could now be extended to include the monitoring of prayer and worship activities in school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is fully embedded across all areas of the curriculum.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS OUTSTANDING

Teaching and learning was found to be outstanding due to some inspirational teaching, exceptional subject knowledge and consistently high expectations. Religious education is given a high priority and pupils take their learning very seriously. From the very start of their time at St Thomas of Canterbury, there is clear evidence that children enjoy their learning in RE lessons. In the best lessons, Religious language was promoted and children were given plenty of opportunities to discuss and articulate the importance of God's Word. Creative, interactive teaching strategies were employed, including drama, and the teacher was skilled at asking questions that extended the learning. Activities were differentiated, challenging and empowering pupils to think at a deeper level and make connections to their own life experiences. Many of the activities observed during the inspection, encouraged pupils to reflect upon the wider issues of justice, fairness, compassion, love and forgiveness; as 'builders of the Kingdom'. Standards of attainment are high in pupils' exercise books and progress over time is outstanding. The success criteria for learning is differentiated and known by pupils, so they understand what they must do to achieve. Marking is having a positive impact on learning. Learning continues at home through a variety of initiatives and homework tasks. Pupils Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural education was found to be outstanding. In a Key Stage 2 class, for example, an outstanding lesson was observed where pupils looked at the different cultures in our country and what the different cultures are in other countries. Looking at similarities and differences, pupils clearly articulated their observations and that we are all 'children of God'. World religions are taught as part of the Religious Education curriculum and this helps children to understand and respect the beliefs and culture of others. The school prioritises Religious Education on its professional development programme. All new staff receive a copy of 'Christ at the Centre' and 'Teaching in a Catholic School' during their induction.

THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

Jesus Christ is at the heart of this welcoming and happy school. Children smile and there is laughter down the corridors. They demonstrated their understanding in a variety of contexts and they are living examples of the school's Mission Statement; 'Children of God believe in yourself and reach for the stars'. The pupils' sense of ownership and responsibility for what happens in their school and local community is outstanding. Inclusion, responsibility and respect are the clearly evidence. The school actively seeks to engage with and supports all members of the wider community. The outreach to vulnerable families and members of the community is outstanding. Partnerships with other schools are well established through the National Support School and the Pupil Premium Reviewer activities and this work promotes community cohesion. Parents were extremely appreciative of all the things the school does to support families and pupils with special educational needs. They are particularly appreciative of the way the Headteacher supports vulnerable pupils, those in need and those with English as an additional language. They were all in agreement that the headteacher sets very high standards and pupils make exceptional progress at St Thomas of Canterbury's. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in school life. Members of the parish and local community share in the life of the school. The parish and school share responsibility for supporting pupils through the Sacramental Programme. All members

of staff demonstrate a keen sense of community affiliation and the quality of relationships exemplifies respect for all members of the school community.

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

There is unequivocal and explicit evidence that the dedicated headteacher and his staff go above and beyond to support families and reach out to the local community. Structures and procedures ensure that all pupils and staff feel safe and are treated with respect and dignity. Safeguarding procedures are well established. The behaviour of pupils is outstanding in lessons and around school. Pupils demonstrate resilience, perseverance, motivation and a sense of pride in all they do. They are taught about the dignity of work and this is evident in their approach to it. Pupil voice is a priority and the Special Projects Club is influential with regards to many school improvement projects. Senior leaders are proactive in their recognition and celebration of diversity. Pupils receive a comprehensive sex and relationships education programme, which respects the dignity of the person made in the image and likeness of God. The new Caritas programme has further supported the curriculum and is impacting positively on developing emotional intelligence to a high level. Parents were extremely complimentary about the support given to pupils, but reserved particular praise for the support given to pupils with special needs and disabilities. Those children needing extra support with behaviour, welfare and learning are very well supported. The learning mentor is extremely well regarded and active within the community, including giving advice to those facing deportation. Pupils are confident that if they have any problems they can speak to a member of staff and that any problems will be dealt with sympathetically. The quality of transition and induction are such that all children quickly feel part of the school community and loved by those around them. There have been no permanent or temporary exclusions at the school over the last 8 years.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS GOOD

Children are provided with a range of opportunities to develop and enrich their prayer life including masses, liturgies, class assemblies, meditation, whole school assemblies, classroom prayer and collective worship. Staff are confident at leading prayer and increasingly pupils are given opportunities to lead prayer and worship activities. The whole school act of worship observed during the inspection, which was led by the Reception class, was joyous and uplifting. Drama, singing and multi-media resources were creatively used to engage the audience and to tell the story of creation. Children in KS1 are encouraged to reflect upon their actions and this promotes a strong sense of service for each other. As they move through school, children become increasingly confident at writing their own prayers and praying for the wider community. However, more could be done to develop prayer opportunities in school that enable pupils to listen and talk to God through silent contemplative prayer. A prayer room is provided for children to use at lunchtimes to reflect and meditate on their faith. The pupils have developed a good knowledge of traditional prayers. The school has recently introduced meditation into its weekly and daily acts of worship. The Chaplaincy Team is leading new initiatives to enhance the spiritual life of the school. Strong links with the parish have been maintained; several children are altar servers and sing with the church choir. Throughout the school there is evidence of high quality resources for Religious Education and acts of worship. Prayer tables in classrooms, display materials and artefacts demonstrate creativity, relevance to children and witness to the Word of God.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING

The school nurtures, supports and challenges the pupils to live out and to give witness to the Mission Statement in their everyday experiences. There are many opportunities for pupils and staff to shape the Catholic life of the school; to foster happiness and safety. Pupils clearly demonstrate witness to justice, compassion, reconciliation, love and forgiveness. Catholic values are clearly witnessed through relationships, decision making and actions. Pupils are adept at organising themselves in class, needing only minimal direction from their teacher. They listen carefully to instructions and work productively in pairs and groups. Observations showed that children treated each other with respect, care, patience, concern and with dignity and there is an emphasis on creating a pleasant working environment for everyone in school. A strong sense of belonging to the school community exists and pupils are given leadership responsibilities and their opinions are valued. The school fosters a spirit of awe and wonder through religious education and the broader curriculum. Close links with the parish are enhanced with

the regular visits of the parish priest and the work of the catechists for the sacramental programme; four members of staff are involved in the programme. The leadership team fully recognise their education endeavour as being integral to the redemptive activity of Christ. The school fully supports the work of charities such as CAFOD, CARITAS and The Loaves and Fishes Homeless charity in Pendleton; in addition to the support they offer to the school family. The chaplaincy team are having a positive impact on the spiritual life of the school and they are keen to take on additional responsibilities.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- To continue to develop prayer opportunities within school. In particular, nurture and develop silent prayer, reflection and listening to the “still, small voice within”.
- To further develop the work of the chaplaincy team. Greater opportunities for the chaplains to lead prayer and worship activities; possibly working with the local Catholic high school chaplaincy team.

Department for Formation, Office for Education

Wednesday 17th June 2015

Dear Pupils

Thank you so much for the wonderful welcome you gave me when we came to visit you. We really enjoyed learning about all the wonderful things you do at St Thomas of Canterbury. You and your teachers are working so hard to always do your very best and as a result your school is outstanding.

We were very impressed with your behaviour, respect for each other and the way you are clearly very proud of your school. You make everyone feel welcome. We saw examples of love, faith and hope in all that you do around school. Your school is a very happy, caring and joyful place.

I know the Bishop will be delighted to hear this.

We enjoyed being part of your lessons and were sorry not to see everyone. Your work is of a very high standard and we could clearly see that you have outstanding knowledge of bible stories. Thank you for showing us so much of what you have been doing. We were extremely impressed with the standard of work in your RE books and your work on display.

To help you improve further your teachers are going to continue to develop prayer opportunities within school. In particular, nurture and develop silent prayer, reflection and listening to the “still, small voice within”. They are also going to further develop the work of the chaplaincy team. Greater opportunities for the chaplains to lead prayer and worship activities; possibly working with the Catholic High school chaplaincy team.

To all St Thomas of Canterbury’s pupils we would like to say ‘thank you’ and ‘well done.’ Keep up your very high standards of behaviour, respect and love for one another.

God bless you all.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Susan Gedzielewski and Miss Sue Molloy
(Section 48 Inspectors)

Summary Report to Parents

On 17th June 2015 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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