

St Thomas More Voluntary Catholic Academy

URN: 144101

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Middlesbrough

26–27 March 2025

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

1

Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

1

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

1

Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference
- The school is compliant with the additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- The school is fully compliant with regard to its previously identified areas for development, having addressed the targets set from the previous inspection.

What the school does well

- The headteacher has a clear vision for those in his care and he communicates this well to all members of the school community. His nurturing approach has brought stability to the school and has allowed staff to flourish. He is steadfast in his commitment to continuous improvement.
- Governors and leaders have a full understanding of what needs to be done to support the headteacher with his vision. Their expertise and incisiveness have been key in bringing about the change needed to create a calm yet dynamic learning environment, resulting in very good outcomes in religious education.
- Staff and pupils feel happy and safe at St Thomas More. This is because leaders and governors have placed Catholic social teaching values at the forefront of their work.
- The school's strong relationship and frequent interactions with the St Cuthbert's Trust chaplaincy team ensures that all staff and pupils are exposed to high quality prayer experiences and supported in their faith journey.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are exemplary. They are a credit to the school and themselves.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide every pupil with a wide range of creative prayer and liturgy experiences which will enable the majority of pupils to consider their actions and behaviour towards others.
- Ensure that all staff deploy effective questioning during religious education lessons to enable all pupils to embed and extend their learning.
- Leaders should ensure that all staff have the opportunity to access an annual retreat experience, thus enabling them to deepen their spirituality.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



Leaders and staff at St Thomas More are wholly committed to their mission of providing a full and rich Catholic life experience. Pupils fully understand the school's mission statement and know that this underpins their whole school experience. Pupils can clearly articulate the school's charism. All staff, expertly led by senior leaders and supported by the St Cuthbert's Trust chaplaincy team, offer opportunities which enable pupils to respond to the needs of those in the school community and those further afield. The local food bank, Macmillan Cancer Support and the Big Lent Walk for Cafod are just a few of the different ways this happens. The school's chaplaincy offer is highly valued by pupils, who willingly take the lead on many initiatives through their involvement with the junior chaplaincy team, the Cafod council and Mini-Vinnies. Catholic social teaching is an integral part of the school curriculum and this gives a context that is fully understood by all pupils. Pupils articulate the basic principles well and, as a consequence of the example set by staff, they are compelled to act on them. The headteacher and his team are strong role models in servant leadership and this is reflected in the way that staff and pupils behave towards each other.

Staff clearly articulate the school's charism, which is one of lived Gospel values, and all staff work hard to successfully foster a community where equality and diversity are promoted. Staff and pupil chaplaincy are central to the life of the school and all work effectively to create new opportunities to grow spiritually. Pupils benefit greatly from the commitment shown by all staff, who strive to offer a rich, authentic Catholic life experience. Staff are wholeheartedly committed to the school's ethos, consistently going 'above and beyond' to ensure that all members of the school family have a sense of worth and feel loved, particularly the most vulnerable.

Consequently, a deep sense of belonging and inclusivity resonates with everyone in the school community. Pupils speak confidently about celebrating differences, whether in faith or ability. Lesson observations and meetings with staff highlight the outstanding pastoral systems in place; with all staff modelling the behaviours expected from pupils. Displays throughout school are current, relevant to the liturgical season and of a high standard. Pupils play a part in contributing to this and talk about it enthusiastically. They are proud of their work.

The headteacher is held in the highest regard by staff and those in the wider community, with one parent commenting that the school has been 'brought alive under his care'. Engagement with parents and carers is strong and improving. Governors regularly visit school and are fully aware of the school's priorities for improvement. They bring expert support and challenge and their strategic involvement is welcomed. The senior team use this expertise to support them in their continual reviews of the school's provision, thus refining and improving the Catholic life experience for the whole school community. Pupils play an active part in this process. The relationship between governors and school leaders is a strength of the school and a key factor in the rapid improvements that have taken place recently. The headteacher's approach to leadership has allowed staff to develop their skills and grow in confidence in their roles. Wellbeing is cited by staff as a priority for leaders and governors, they speak highly of the support they receive. Of particular note is the head teacher's 'open-door' policy, which has created a culture of openness and support that staff benefit from. Staff comment that this is hugely important in their development.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

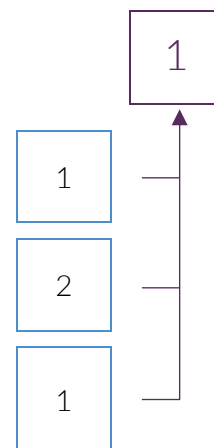
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons and outcomes are strong for the great majority. They demonstrate secure, age-appropriate knowledge and their understanding of religious concepts is effectively developed. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their work and are able to recall stories from scripture, often relating this to real-life experiences. Religious literacy is a strength and this, coupled with outstanding engagement, allows pupils to articulate their understanding and reflect on their work. The quality of work in pupils' books is of a consistently high standard and they talk enthusiastically about this. They are able to recall prior learning and respond well to the challenges offered to them in lessons; although on occasion a greater level of challenge would be more suited to some. They are keen to develop their learning through pertinent questioning. Pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to work independently, with the great majority having a good understanding of the progress they are making and knowing what to do to improve. Staff work hard to foster good relationships with pupils and this is evident in lessons, culminating in a purposeful learning environment. Pupils recognise the importance of learning about other faiths, knowing that this gives a greater understanding of the beliefs of others in their community.

Teaching in religious education is mainly good with some outstanding elements. Through the expertise of teachers, pupils' knowledge, skills, and understanding in lessons are embedded and revisited. This ensures they not only gain new knowledge but also retain and apply it effectively. Staff demonstrate good subject knowledge, which helps sustain pupils' interest and motivation. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed in the classroom and this ensures that pupils with special educational needs are well supported in their learning. Most teachers have high expectations for their pupils, who are provided with opportunities to present their learning in a

range of creative ways. In the best lessons, teachers use questioning skilfully, with pupils' knowledge and understanding being developed. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to develop questioning and further extend learning. The resources used in religious education are well planned and prepared, being of high quality. This further enriches the learning environment. Feedback is consistently used to good effect and pupils respond well to this. Some teachers use feedback to challenge learning more effectively, but this is not yet consistent across the school. The use of praise is a strength and this motivates pupils to do their best.

Governors and leaders are fully engaged with the mission at St Thomas More and have ensured that religious education is at the core of the curriculum. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths, knowing its areas for development and what needs to be done to improve further. Detailed plans are in place to implement the changes needed for this improvement. Self-evaluation is reflective and incisive, pupil voice and the views of the wider community are considered when refining provision and this improves outcomes, with leaders being effective and rigorous in their approach. They are excellent at communicating their intentions and this strong communication, coupled with a workable approach to monitoring impact, has built staff confidence and ensures that change is managed well. Professional development opportunities are tailored to meet the needs of both the school and individual teachers. This approach fosters a sense of appreciation and value amongst staff. The religious education lead is highly valued for his expertise. He works well with newer teachers to support and develop their skills, ensuring continued improvement of provision.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

1

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

1

1

Pupils and staff fully participate and engage deeply in opportunities to pray at St Thomas More. They are respectful and reverent during these prayer moments. There are a wide variety of prayer encounters including, scripture, traditional prayers, reflection and singing. They willingly lead on and take part in these activities, with singing during whole school gatherings being uplifting and joyful. All pupils have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year and can articulate how this shapes their prayer experience, with one younger pupil commenting, 'We say the Hail Mary and the rosary in May and October because they are the months of Our Lady'. Pupils plan and lead on prayer and liturgy, working with staff as appropriate and doing this more independently as they progress through school. They participate in the evaluation process and are aware that the school acts on their suggestions. However, not all pupils are fully involved in deeper prayer and liturgy experiences but the school has plans in place to address this by widening the range of opportunities offered to pupils. Pupils talk about prayer and liturgy with confidence, understanding how prayer themes are linked to events in school and the wider community. They comfortably articulate this using age-appropriate language and their reflections give a context to their own lives and their actions.

The centrality of prayer and liturgy is paramount for all at St Thomas More. This is evident from the pupils' familiarity with the opportunities for prayer, which punctuate the school day. Staff provide pupils with a variety of ways to pray and provide these opportunities in an age-appropriate manner, with relevant scripture that is in tune with the liturgical calendar and the focus of any gathering. Staff in the school know their pupils well and this gives them the opportunity to nurture and integrate the unique gifts and talents of pupils into prayer and liturgy events. Pupils serve in Mass and use their musical talents well to

enhance the experience, they are enthusiastic participants in this. In addition to classroom prayer spaces, there are a number of prayer spaces throughout school that are well used by pupils, who comment positively on this. Links with local parishes are good and developing. The introduction of 'Stay and Pray' events, aimed at parents and carers at the end of the school day, has resulted in more families coming into school to pray alongside their children, thus strengthening engagement. There is potential to extend the spiritual experiences for all staff and the school is aware of this.

Leaders and governors have ensured that the school's prayer and liturgy programme provides opportunities to tailor provision to suit the needs of individual classes. Their policy on prayer and liturgy is clear and all members of the community respond to it fully, using it as a reference point for their work. Leaders continually strive to improve the provision of prayer and liturgy. Strong practitioners model best practice for those who require guidance, offering a wealth of support and expertise where required. Mass is held regularly in school, with parents, carers and those in the wider community attending in good numbers. Leaders have ensured that holy days of obligation and their patron's day are a priority in the school calendar. The symbiotic relationship between leaders, governors and the St Cuthbert's Trust chaplaincy team encourages all staff to confidently plan and lead on prayer and liturgy whilst creating opportunities for pupils and themselves to evaluate its quality and impact. This enhances the experience for all. Leaders and governors know their school well and collective worship has a high priority with resourcing that is appropriate and effective.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas More Voluntary Catholic Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	144101
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8103511
Full postal address of the school	St Thomas More Voluntary Catholic Academy, St Thomas More Road, Hull, HU4 7NP
School phone number	001482354093
Headteacher	Martin Ward
Chair of local governing body	Marian Hall
School Website	www.stmhull.org
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	23 rd May 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Mark Taylor
Stephen Lawson

Lead
Team

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement