



St Thomas the Apostle College

URN: 100857

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

10 June 2026 – 11 June 2026

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

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education RE

Collective worship (p.7)

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

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

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

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

2

1

1

1

No

Yes

Fully

Compliance Statement

- The school is not fully compliant with the allocation of curriculum time as required by the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.

What the school does well

- The mission statement, 'Excellence with Care' is central to the life of the school, understood and lived by all members of the community.
- Student behaviour is exemplary, reflecting extremely high expectations from staff and leaders.
- There is an exceptional commitment to Catholic social teaching so that social action is at the heart of everything the school does.
- Excellent teaching in religious education, and the commitment to the most vulnerable, ensures that every student can thrive and experience success.
- Prayer and liturgy are at the heart of the school, reflecting the liturgical year and fostering reverence, belonging and personal growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Implement a timetable that is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference in each year group.
- Implement a curriculum that has a greater fidelity to the content expectations of the Religious Education Directory.
- Provide a more prayerful atmosphere for daily prayer through the provision of sacred spaces in form rooms.

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

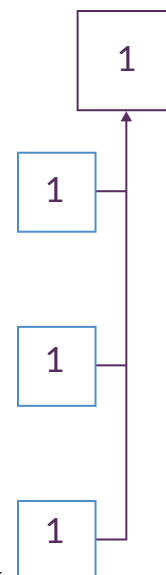
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



The Catholic identity and mission of St Thomas the Apostle College is central to the life of the school and is communicated through every aspect of school life by all members of the community. Students know, understand and are inspired by the school's mission, 'Excellence with Care'. Faith in action is authentically lived, and this is firmly rooted in the school's unique community. Students and staff share a profound understanding of how faith goes far beyond words, and they demonstrate very clearly how this can be shown in action to enhance and improve the school and local community. One member of staff captured the significance of this when they stated that, 'the Catholic ethos is authentic, genuine and lived out daily.' Pastoral care is exceptional. 'Excellence with Care' ensures that everyone is nurtured and cared for, particularly the most vulnerable. This means that students can thrive in an environment that is highly structured but that genuinely strives to develop students holistically so that they can be successful, active participants within society. Alumni are active members of the community and have developed a 'STAC school fund' to support current students to thrive. This demonstrates how valued the education that students receive here is. Parents are highly appreciative of the Catholic education provided by this school, with one parent stating that there is 'meaningful personal development to ensure that students are well equipped to be critical thinkers, active citizens and responsible, respectful young adults.'

There is a real sense of belonging in this school and students of other faiths are welcomed. Students are rightly proud of their school and demonstrate a sharply focused understanding of the benefits of the provision. There are a wide range of rich opportunities for students to benefit from chaplaincy provision. There is a comprehensive programme of fundraising which

is largely centred around Christmas hampers, Lenten Charity Week and the Bridge Walk. Students are acutely aware of their responsibility to care for the vulnerable within the wider community which leads them to act in service and respond with commitment and enthusiasm to charity work. One student stated that, 'God loves a cheerful giver,' while another described a real sense of joy during Lenten Charity Week. Students can consistently articulate how they are valued and cared for and in turn, can articulate their responsibility to care for the local community with compassion. Students willingly take on leadership roles, acting as peer mentors to support younger students, supporting more vulnerable learners with their homework and taking a leading role in chaplaincy provision through the student chaplaincy team. Relationships, sex and health education is well planned and firmly rooted in the Church's teaching.

Leaders are firmly committed to the Catholic life and mission of the school and are well supported by governors. Leaders ensure a shared understanding of Catholic social teaching, particularly through the school's emphasis on faith in action. Leaders embody the principles underpinning a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, living out the imperative to act in service of those in greatest need. This commitment shapes the Catholic curriculum which is firmly rooted in faith in action. Leaders know their school well and are clear what actions need to be taken for the good of the students in their care. Leaders listen carefully to the views of students who actively evaluate provision and share their ideas with leaders on a regular basis. Leaders ensure that staff are confident in their ability to share in the school's mission through strategically planned training and support, especially for staff new to the school. Leaders actively work in partnership with parents, seeking opportunities to involve them in the Catholic life of the school.

Religious education

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

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

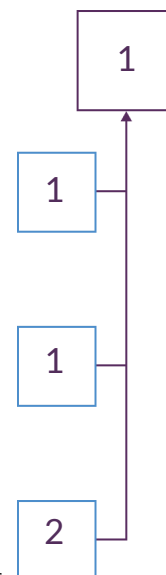
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Students at St Thomas the Apostle College develop their religious knowledge, understanding and skills through well-planned religious education lessons. They confidently use subject-specific vocabulary and apply their reading skills to support their learning, as seen through vocabulary development and guided reading for comprehension. It was also observed through Year 8 students being able to link concepts of purification and purgatory into new vocabulary while learning about Islam. This work underpins a knowledge development approach that is embedded throughout the curriculum; and ensures students are knowing more and remembering more. All lessons have high levels of concentration and behaviour, which maintains a focused and engaged environment. Skills of independence and discussion are effectively built over time, culminating in fluency and love of challenge. This was seen within Year 10 lessons where students engaged thoughtfully with complex philosophical ideas. Students identify that they enjoy their learning in lessons, in every year group where it is studied, and value the opportunity to study religious education in sixth form. This can be seen through the exceptional quality of work and pride taken in presentation of books. This results in consistently good progress for students of all groups and attainment that is consistently exceptional, and above national averages and those of other core subjects at both GCSE and A level.

Teachers have deep and authentic subject knowledge and can communicate this clearly to students. Teachers maintain exceptionally high expectations, and these are consistently applied within religious education lessons to promote the importance of learning and

participating. Lessons are effectively planned to intentionally support students of all abilities to learn and then further consolidate and extend their knowledge. This was seen across Year 7 lessons on Moses where the same content was delivered with an adapted approach to the material for each group suited to student needs. Questioning is skilfully used by teachers to precisely check on understanding, deepen responses further, and maximise students' opportunities to learn. Precise praise is used to celebrate student effort, and this leads to high levels of motivation. This is built on through regular and deliberate feedback approaches tied to learning objectives. As a result, students understand what is expected of them and how to improve their learning in order to be successful.

The curriculum is designed to develop students' knowledge across all three Key Stages. Content is introduced systematically and provides progression in level of challenge. However, this does not extend into Year 11 or term 2 of Year 13. This needs to be implemented to ensure compliance. In Key Stage 3, the Year 7 and 8 planning by subject leaders fulfils the aims of the *Religious Education Directory* and expresses each of the branches of knowledge. The specific areas of content that are covered are done so with a depth and rigour that matches the demands in other core subjects. However, further time to teach each branch would allow space for greater fidelity to the content expectations of the Directory, and to provide full coverage for Years 7 to 9. This is because some required content is not taught before the end of Year 9, and other areas such as a Dharmic path, are not consistently delivered within the curriculum. Leaders take time to understand the different needs of students and implement lessons that are planned around those needs to promote learning. Specific and effective professional development is used to regularly shape the pedagogical development of teachers, and this secures their expertise as practitioners to be able to deliver a consistently high standard of lessons. Subject leaders share an effective vision for what outstanding teaching and learning should look like in lessons, and use this to drive effective monitoring of practice, and for planning learning that delivers high achievement.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

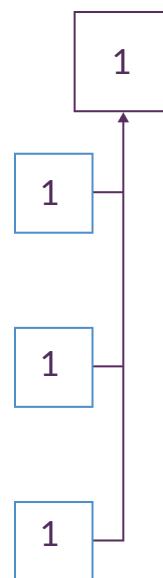
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

Leadership

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



Students participate well in the prayer and liturgy offered, understanding a variety of ways of praying that are part of the Catholic tradition. Form time and lessons begin with a prayer that is often student led, although more consideration could be given to the setting and mood created for this important moment. A prayerful atmosphere is created during assemblies through the use of a focal point with candle and crucifix, with students contributing to this by playing the piano. Students are active members of the student chaplaincy team, taking a leading role in contributing to the planning of opportunities for prayer and liturgy, as well as leading prayer groups, reading and altar serving. Students actively contribute to the Gospel choir and view this as an important expression of prayer. Students can articulate how their prayer life has led them to take positive actions within their own lives and the community through social action. Students enjoy the opportunities for retreat which are offered to each year group on an annual basis. This was evident in the Year 9 retreat observed which focused on the theme of stewardship.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school and are at the heart of everything that is undertaken. The co-ordinator is rightly proud of the development of prayer life in the school, in particular the way in which the chaplaincy team has been able to bring this to the forefront of staff practice. Staff who lead prayer and liturgy are highly skilled, supporting others to use appropriate scripture that exemplifies the weekly theme. This was seen through assemblies linking sport and humility as a genuine reflection of how health is part of God's gift. There is a daily pattern of prayer delivered consistently through the school prayer book. There are opportunities for the experience of daily prayer to be further developed by exploring a

broader variety of approaches, including opportunities for innovation. The importance of prayer and liturgy can be best exemplified by the approach that was taken to moments of sorrow; how the community came together in different forms of prayer and reflection, as well as using the prayer space to express this with the planting of a memorial tree in the prayer garden. The school environment is used to enhance prayer life, with the prayer garden, meaningful statues in reflective areas, stations of the cross, and a dedicated and cherished chapel central to the school. Priests are welcomed into the community and make an important contribution to its sacramental life, and are a source of advice for students of other faiths in an inclusive way. Families are welcomed into the prayer life of the school, and many take up the opportunities to be involved.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that there is a clear strategic approach to the formation of staff so that they are confident and skilled in supporting the spiritual development of students. Whole-staff training on prayer has resulted in a consistent approach to this across the school. The quality of prayer and liturgy has been strengthened through regular training and the modelling of expectations by the chaplaincy team and leaders. Rigorous monitoring takes place through prayer walks and regular reporting to governors, who frequently visit the school to observe prayer and liturgy in action. Leaders have ensured that there is a structured approach to enhancing the spiritual life of all members of the community.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas the Apostle College
School unique reference number (URN)	100857
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	2105402
Full postal address of the school	Hollydale Rd, Peckham, SE15 2EB
School phone number	0207 639 0106
Headteacher or Head of School	Mr Eamon Connolly
Chair of Governors	Mr Joseph Reed
School Website	www.stac.uk.com
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	
Age-range of pupils	11 - 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Date of last denominational inspection	24 September 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The Inspection Team

Jo-Anne Hoarty

Lead

Philip Turnham

Lisa Mcdermott

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