

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School

URN: 110476

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Apostolic Administrator of Northampton

30 April 2026 – 01 April 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

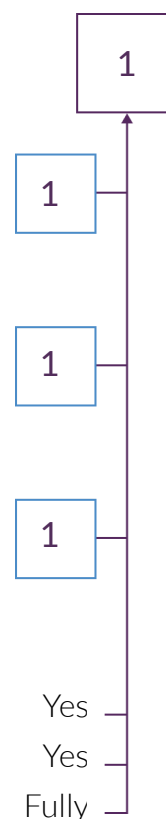
Collective worship (p.7)

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



What the school does well

- Every area of the school is carefully curated to reflect its Catholic identity, with high-quality artwork and bespoke carpentry creating a deeply prayerful and inspiring environment.
- The mission statement is highly visible and firmly embedded in the daily life and culture of the school.
- There is a strong culture of welcome and inclusion that permeates the school, reflected in the exemplary behaviour of pupils, who treat one another with dignity, kindness and respect.
- In religious education lessons, pupils demonstrate independence in their learning and collaborate respectfully, listening carefully to the opinions and ideas of others.
- The school benefits from strong and flourishing partnerships with parents, the parish and the wider community.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the integration of Catholic social teaching across the curriculum so that it is more explicitly understood, articulated and lived out by the whole school community.
- Strengthen strategic planning and self-evaluation by systematically monitoring the impact of actions to ensure professional development leads to sustained and measurable improvement.
- Ensure regular opportunities are provided for the effective evaluation of prayer and liturgy so that pupils and staff can identify strengths and areas for further development.

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

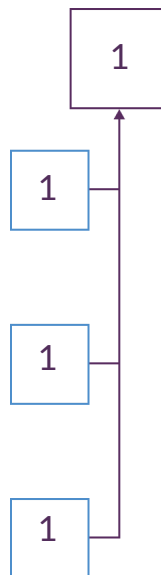
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



Pupils speak with confidence and pride about the school's mission statement and clearly understand how it shapes their daily lives and relationships. They describe the school as a place where they feel happy, safe and secure, explaining with sincerity that 'God loves everyone', and that 'God has called you by your name; He knows your name – you are His'. Pupils know about St Thomas Aquinas and relate his example to their own lives, particularly when discussing resilience and perseverance. They value the many opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities, including Mini Vinnies, Legion of Mary, STAMP, Eco Committee and School Council. They speak enthusiastically about serving others through these roles. One pupil explained, 'I feel happy to help others to have faith in God'. Key Stage 2 pupils demonstrate a mature understanding of active participation in Catholic life, comparing the apostles before Pentecost with the courage needed to live out faith in action today. They speak passionately about supporting charities locally, nationally and globally, including the local foodbank, Cafod and their links with a school in Zambia. Pupils are acutely aware of their responsibility to care for creation, reflected in the school's Green Flag Award. They engage thoughtfully with Catholic social teaching, reference scripture confidently and show deep respect for people of all faiths and backgrounds.

The mission statement, 'I have called you by your name; you are mine' (Isaiah 43:1), is central to the life of the school community and is lived out authentically by pupils, staff and leaders. Pupils sing the mission statement proudly as part of the choir repertoire, and staff explain that its message is deeply embedded in everyday school life. At the beginning of each academic year, every class reflects on its significance to ensure pupils understand how it

should shape their relationships, attitudes and actions. Relationships across the school are notably strong and nurturing. Staff describe the school as 'like a family', explaining that they feel valued, supported and genuinely cared for, with careful consideration given to workload and work-life balance. Staff are strong role models for pupils and one another through the kindness, compassion and respect they demonstrate daily. Support for the most vulnerable is a significant strength, exemplified through initiatives such as the Basket of Blessings and the provision of pre-loved uniform. The school environment is exceptionally well maintained, welcoming and reflective of its Catholic character. Chaplaincy provision is carefully planned and highly effective. A particular strength is the long-standing Sepo Day tradition, where pupils come together in joyful community to take part in fun activities and fundraising for their sister school in Zambia; pupils understand that Sepo means 'hope.' These opportunities strongly support pupils' spiritual and moral development. Relationships, sex and health education is thoughtfully planned and securely rooted in Catholic teaching.

Leaders and governors ensure that Christ is at the heart of the school, and this is evident in the quality of relationships and daily interactions across the community. Significant investment has been made to ensure the environment reflects the school's Catholic identity. In particular, the chapel provides a sacred and reflective space that promotes spiritual calmness and inspires pupils to be present with Christ. Leaders and governors engage proactively with the Diocese of Northampton and actively welcome diocesan training and support to strengthen provision further. Governors work diligently to ensure the school remains at the service of the local Church. This is seen through strong parish links and the many opportunities provided to support sacramental preparation and the spiritual journey of pupils and their families. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and its leadership. Leaders are inspirational witnesses to the Gospel and to Catholic social teaching, ensuring that resources and budget allocation prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable pupils. Governors are highly ambitious for the school and play an active role in its self-evaluation. To strengthen provision further, leaders of different curriculum areas should work more strategically together to ensure Catholic social teaching permeates the wider curriculum.

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

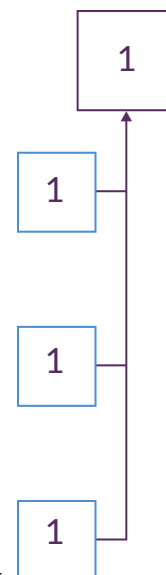
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons and are developing the knowledge and skills required by the Religious Education Directory. The most confident pupils speak readily about their learning and can relate it meaningfully to their daily lives. Pupils make good progress from their starting points, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who are supported effectively to achieve the best possible outcomes. Pupils are becoming increasingly religiously literate. In a Key Stage 2 lesson observed, pupils discussing evidence of the Resurrection engaged thoughtfully in peer discussion, evaluating scriptural sources. Pupils demonstrate independence in their learning and collaborate respectfully, listening carefully to the opinions and ideas of others. Older pupils have responded positively to the newly introduced approach to recording their learning, explaining that it enables them to express themselves in greater depth and rise to the challenge presented in religious education lessons. Their work in books is increasingly reflecting the quality of discussion and learning seen in lessons. Pupils ask thoughtful questions of one another, with the use of 'I wonder' statements having a positive impact on deeper thinking. Behaviour across lessons is exemplary, and pupils remain fully engaged. In the Early Years, continuous provision was linked creatively to learning about Pentecost, with pupils experiencing the wind of the Holy Spirit through sensory activities involving fans.

Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge, a deep commitment to religious education and consistently high expectations for pupils. Across lessons observed, teachers create calm, purposeful learning environments where pupils are confident to contribute, reflect and

deepen their understanding of scripture and Catholic teaching. Questioning is used skilfully to assess pupils' understanding and extend learning. Teachers do not just accept superficial responses. They probe thoughtfully and challenge pupils to justify their ideas, explain their reasoning and make increasingly sophisticated links between prior learning, scripture and their own lived experience. As a result, pupils are developing greater religious literacy and confidence when discussing theological concepts. In Key Stage 1, 'I wonder' time is used particularly effectively to encourage reflection, deeper thinking and respectful discussion, enabling pupils to articulate their responses with maturity and growing independence. In the strongest lessons, teachers adapt explanations carefully during learning to address misconceptions and extend pupils' thinking further. Additional adults are deployed effectively and support pupils with SEND well, ensuring they participate fully alongside their peers. Relationships between staff and pupils are highly positive and contribute significantly to pupils' confidence, engagement and exemplary behaviour for learning. However, while verbal adaptation during lessons is strong, tasks recorded in books are not yet consistently adapted with the same precision to fully reflect pupils' differing starting points and ensure that all pupils are routinely challenged at the highest level.

Leaders and governors have chosen a religious education scheme that reflects the expectations of the Directory and demonstrates a clear commitment to ensuring religious education is valued as a core subject within the school. Appropriate budget allocation is provided for religious education, including resourcing, accommodation and high-quality professional development. Leaders and governors actively engage with training opportunities provided by the Diocese of Northampton and through collaboration within the local cluster of Catholic schools. As a result, staff feel well supported and increasingly confident in responding to new developments within religious education. Half-termly training sessions are provided for teachers prior to the introduction of each new topic, ensuring that staff are prepared effectively to deliver the curriculum with accuracy and confidence. This support is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' engagement in lessons. Leaders also ensure that pupils benefit from a range of enrichment opportunities that broaden their understanding of faith and the wider world, including visitors from other faith communities and work linked to Cafod. To strengthen consistency in teaching and learning further, leaders including governors should ensure that developments within religious education are planned strategically, monitored carefully and evaluated rigorously for their impact on pupils' learning and outcomes.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

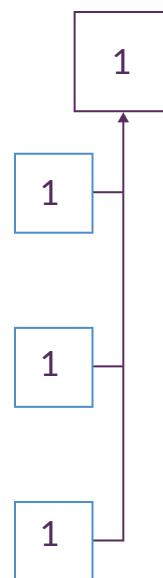
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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



Pupils eagerly anticipate the cyclical celebrations and traditions of the Church's liturgical year. This includes the forthcoming crowning of Our Lady during the May procession, which holds deep significance within the school community. They demonstrate a strong understanding of the many forms of prayer that are part of the Catholic tradition, including traditional prayers, scripture reflection, silent contemplation, adoration, the Rosary and Lectio Divina. Pupils participate confidently and respectfully in prayer and liturgy, making thoughtful links between scripture, seasons and feast days. They know a wide variety of prayers and speak sincerely about the importance of prayer within their daily lives. Pupils value stillness and silence as a way of growing closer to God; for example, a guided meditation observed in Key Stage 2 enabled pupils to reflect deeply and prayerfully. Pupils work well collaboratively when planning and preparing prayer and liturgy and show enthusiasm and reverence in leading others in worship. They pray compassionately for those in need and readily give thanks to God. While pupils contribute thoughtfully to the preparation of prayer and liturgy, opportunities to evaluate the quality and impact of these experiences are not yet fully developed, in order to help them identify how they can improve and deepen future acts of worship.

Prayer is central to the life of the school and is embedded naturally throughout the daily experience of the school community. A rich and reflective pattern of prayer is evident, including the special devotion to the Sacred Heart celebrated on the first Friday of every month, when each class participates in sacred time dedicated to prayer and reflection. Scripture is carefully chosen to reflect the liturgical year, and pupils and staff proclaim the

Word of God with reverence, always handling the Bible with care and respect. Staff are exemplary role models who lead prayer and liturgy with confidence, sensitivity and authenticity. The school makes excellent use of both indoor and outdoor spaces to create beautiful areas for prayer and reflection that support pupils' spiritual development. Leaders have identified and nurtured highly skilled staff who confidently use their gifts to enhance prayer and liturgy. Strong partnerships with the local parish and families enrich the Catholic life of the school. Parents speak warmly of the school's impact, noting how pupils are inspired to attend Mass, serve as altar servers and participate in opportunities such as the Legion of Mary, trips, visits and leadership responsibilities. Consequently, pupils demonstrate a mature understanding of prayer, collective worship and religious education and speak confidently about how the school helps them to grow in faith, service and their relationship with God.

Leaders and governors have ensured that the school's policy for prayer and liturgy is carefully formulated, regularly reviewed and readily accessible to all staff. They have established a clear and progressive prayer pathway which supports pupils in deepening their understanding and experience of prayer as they move through the school. The effectiveness of this provision is reflected in the reverent, confident and increasingly independent manner in which pupils participate in prayer and liturgy across all key stages. Opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist are thoughtfully planned throughout the year and contribute significantly to the spiritual life of the school. Strong parish links further enhance this provision, including the parish priest offering the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. Pupils are also given opportunities to participate in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, helping them to develop stillness, reverence and a deeper relationship with God. Leaders and governors have prioritised high-quality formation for staff and provide effective support where needed. Training has ensured that staff understand and confidently use a wide range of prayer forms within the Catholic tradition, including Lectio Divina, guided meditation and scripture reflection. To strengthen practice further, leaders and governors should develop more rigorous systems for evaluating the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy, ensuring that pupils contribute more fully to this process.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	110476
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8263369
Full postal address of the school	ST MARY'S AVENUE, MILTON KEYNES, MK3 5DT
School phone number	01908 373977
Executive Headteacher	Mr Robert Mundy
Chair of Governors	Mr Stephen Wheatley, Mrs Marian Pearce
School Website	www.st-thomasaquinas.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	01 July 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The Inspection Team

Evelyn Ward

Lead

Stephanie Gavin

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