



St Thomas More Catholic School

Croftdale Road, Blaydon, Tyne and Wear, NE21 4BQ

School Unique Reference Number: **137851**

Inspection dates:	28 February– 01 March 2019
Lead inspector:	Maura Regan
Team inspector:	Rachael Blackburn

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Catholic Life:		Outstanding	1
Religious Education:		Outstanding	1
Collective Worship:		Outstanding	1

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Thomas More Catholic School is Choose Judgement

- The headteacher's purposeful leadership creates an environment in which all are supported and are able to grow within a caring, worshipping community. This vision is shared by the whole community.
- Students and staff are fully engaged in promoting the distinctiveness of the school and recognise the part they play in living out the values of the school within the wider community.
- The quality of provision, assessment and progress in Religious Education is outstanding. The head of department and all staff have great expectations of students and deliver a high quality experience. Students make excellent progress and this is reflected in results over time.
- Collective Worship is outstanding. The chaplaincy and pastoral team provide wide and diverse opportunities for worship for the benefit of the whole community. The headteacher, governors and leaders regard Catholic Worship as central to the life of the school.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Thomas More Catholic School is a larger than average Catholic secondary school with a large sixth form.
- It is situated in Blaydon and recruits its pupils from twelve parishes.
- The majority of pupils are white British.
- The proportion of students supported through Educational Health Care Plans are below average and the proportion of students eligible for pupil premium funding is also below average.
- Attainment on entry is above average.
- St Thomas More Catholic School converted to an academy in February 2012.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Further develop the Catholic Life of the school by:
 - refining the monitoring of Catholic Life so it is an integral part of the school's planning cycle.
- Have greater involvement in Diocesan programmes that recognise student leadership qualities by:
 - encouraging more students to participate in programmes that recognise and celebrate Christian leadership such as the John Paul II award.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The promotion of the Catholic Life of the school is led by the headteacher and governors and is shared by all.
- Students make an invaluable contribution to the work of the chaplaincy team both formally and informally. More recently there have been moves to further develop student involvement with the wider community and an increasing number of student led initiatives have been introduced.
- Students are key to determining the direction and importance of the Catholic Life of the school. They are encouraged to take an active part in the Catholic Life of the school and the chaplain is effective in engaging with all students, especially vulnerable groups. They find him approachable, supportive and inclusive.
- The mission statement and vision are emblazoned on key walls around the school reminding all of the core values of the community.
- Students take an active part in the evaluation of the school mission statement and are able to articulate the importance of the school's mission and ethos and always display tolerance and respect for others. They display high levels of personal development and social responsibility.
- Students make a positive contribution to the Catholic Life of the school through their participation in and leadership of acts of Christian kindness at local, regional and national level and have an exceptional record of support for charities and charitable causes.
- Pastoral care is central to the life of the school and students respond positively to staff and to other members of the community. They display positive attitudes in class and around the school and it is evident that the school is a place of safety, learning and spiritual and religious development. All students contribute to and embrace the wide range of opportunities afforded to them.
- Staff ethos days and the student retreat programme contribute to the provision for Catholic Life in the school community and ensure that it is central to the spiritual and moral development of all.
- Students are proud of the contribution they make to the school and the wider community and respect the Catholic tradition of the school.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- Students are well supported and are actively encouraged to engage in a wide range of activities relating to Catholic Life. Students take part in the Source, Flame and other Youth Ministry Team organised events. A number of pupils take part in the diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes.
- Catholic social teaching in action pervades all aspects of the Catholic Life of the school. This is particularly evident in the sixth form with a general Religious Education programme that has a key practical element with students working on community projects. Students and staff work closely with groups and organisations such as the Salvation Army, Help the Homeless and St Cuthbert's Care.
- The impact of the chaplaincy team cannot be overestimated as their work and influence is tangible in all aspects of provision. They work effectively to provide varied and extensive opportunities for all to contribute to and benefit from being part of a vibrant Catholic community. These range from regular staff prayer, form Masses and annual liturgical celebrations. The team have spearheaded a pivotal shift in managing pastoral care through a consistent approach to behaviour and creating a positive approach that focuses on celebrating success. This has had a major impact on all members of the community.
- A key part of new staff induction is a session with the Ethos lead and chaplain so that all are fully aware of their role in supporting the spiritual development of students in all aspects of school life. All staff understand the part they play in the spiritual and moral development of all students and how they contribute to the quality of Catholic Life.
- Students are encouraged and given many opportunities to express and develop their own faith. Student contributions are celebrated both formally and informally in assemblies, forms, classrooms and display walls.
- The chaplaincy team have responsibility for the school's pastoral programme and Catholic Life and in so doing link the pastoral programme with Religious Education provision in such a way that Catholic Life is seen as the responsibility of all staff rather than the domain of the Religious Education department. The team have also developed an extensive programme of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for staff to reinforce and support this element of the school's work. Much of the provision for Catholic life is based on the CAFOD mantra to protect human dignity and this is especially evident in the provision for vulnerable groups.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The headteacher is committed to promoting his vision and is the lead witness of faith in this vibrant Catholic community. Governors share the headteacher's vision and are also passionate about promoting the value of every child within the school community.
- Leaders monitor the work of the chaplaincy team and the positive impact of the assistant head of pastoral care and ethos is clear and pivotal in the high expectations and provision for Catholic Life.
- Governors monitor and evaluate Catholic Life through reports to governors and through a programme of regular visits to the school. Regular updates by leaders for governors ensures there are clear lines of accountability and that the provision for the Catholic Life is constantly under review. The school would benefit from refining the monitoring and evaluation systems so that the Catholic Life of the school is developed and reviewed within

the framework of the school development planning cycle. This would enhance accountability of staff.

- Parental questionnaires and pupil and staff feedback help senior staff and governors evaluate provision and they are open and prepared to introduce new initiatives as the school constantly seeks to improve.
- The headteacher regards the professional development of staff as central to the furthering of the Catholic Life of the school and a wide and cross section of staff have completed or are enrolled on diocesan leadership programmes.
- Staff value highly the way in which leaders and governors promote the Catholic Life of the school and ensure that all feel valued.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is outstanding.

- Students are enthusiastic in Religious Education lessons, contributing to discussions and debates. They are actively engaged in lessons and support one another in their learning and find this a useful learning tool. Students are equally confident in working alone and are supported throughout by high quality teaching.
- Students are overwhelmingly positive and respond well to challenge. As a consequence they make strong progress. Results at all key stages are very good and external results at GCSE level are positive and there is an upward three year trend. Results in the sixth form are equally as good and there is an excellent take up of Philosophy and Ethics.
- Work is always well presented, students take pride in what they do and as a consequence progress is sustained over time. Homework is set regularly and completed providing additional challenge and reinforcing learning.
- Students are able to articulate their love of Religious Education believing that all individual ideas are valued equally. They especially like being able to choose how best to present their work in a way that is suited to their style of learning. They are able to provide extended answers both verbally and in written work and their use of key terminology is excellent.
- The atmosphere in classrooms is overwhelmingly positive and provides environments where students can challenge and question their own beliefs and values.
- Outstanding progress is the result of quality teaching, learning and assessment and there are high expectations of students at all key stages.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding.

- Teaching is at least good and often outstanding in all key stages. This reflects excellent departmental planning and assessment and the sharing of outstanding practice in and beyond the department. All staff have an excellent subject knowledge.
- Lessons are well structured and collaborative planning is a strong feature across the department. Lessons contain strategies to revisit key concepts and embed learning such as a 'Make it Stick' feature which allows students to embed their learning. Tasks vary and link well with one another making the lessons flow and the learning builds as the lessons progress.
- Lessons feature an approach whereby students respond to marking positively and are able to reflect on their own progress. The use of the 'green pen' means that the students' responses are easily identified and this provides an effective aid to learning.
- Questioning in lessons is excellent. Students are always asked to justify their answer and all

questions are open ended to further develop learning. Strategies are employed by staff to help students demonstrate high order skills and enable them to answer the particularly demanding essay style questions on the new GCSE exam.

- Assessments allow students to demonstrate skills and knowledge at all levels and what they need to do to progress further. Detailed feedback is given to the students on all assessments which shows how they have demonstrated skills, and the level at which they are working. Evidence from books indicates that students have clear targets and understand the framework for progress. Assessment tasks are mapped out using the whole school assessment map and the department assessments feed into the whole school assessment framework.
- Relationships between staff and students are excellent and there is a calm atmosphere in lessons resulting in focused teaching and learning.
- All resources are provided on a central system for staff to access and contribute to. This sharing of resources is a key feature and strength of the Department as it allows for a consistent approach to teaching across the department.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding.

- The head of department is an outstanding practitioner and exhibits outstanding leadership skills. She has high aspirations for her team and the students in her care. Robust systems are in place for the monitoring and tracking of students.
- Detailed information is provided to staff about students with additional needs and strategies are shared supporting the teacher in their teaching of identified students.
- The head of department has very detailed monitoring documents which show book reviews, lesson observations and challenge of all teaching. These are used to inform future planning and provide targeted support of staff.
- Department meetings and CPD times are dedicated to planning, standardising work and sharing teaching strategies to further strengthen the department. The department is an Eduqas hub centre, sharing good practice at GCSE level. Student voice is gained through student evaluations which help leaders to evaluate the effective working of the department.
- The head of department has an excellent awareness of the department and has high expectations of staff. She is constantly identifying ways in which the department can improve even further.
- Such is the regard that senior leaders have for the department that Religious Education staff are regularly called to lead teaching and learning CPD for all staff.
- The curriculum complies with the requirements of the Bishop and CPD for staff revisits the requirements so ensures continued compliance.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship is outstanding.

- Acts of Collective Worship demonstrate a range of effective styles of delivery from high engagement of pupils to a more traditional delivery by the headteacher. All are linked to the same theme which reflects the liturgical year and significant events within the school calendar. The acts of Collective Worship feed into the wider pastoral programme within the school and local community engagement. This allows students to view Collective Worship as integral to their spiritual life and development.
- Staff and students contribute to the preparation and delivery of liturgical celebrations both small group focused to major whole school events, such as the staff prayer group, form prayers and welcome Mass for year 7 and leavers' Masses.
- Students are actively encouraged to take ownership of worship and prayer opportunities and to view its worth in the widest context from meditation to acts of community engagement and acts of giving and charity. They are enthusiastic in supporting remembrance events, ranging from the Holocaust to marking the centenary of the ending of the First World War to the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the opening of the school.
- Students are keen to point out that acts of Worship are shared in many areas of the school such as in the music department where liturgical music features highly and choir and orchestra members have a clear view that this is a form of Collective Worship. They believe that such a wide spectrum of involvement adds to the richness and value of Collective Worship and enriches their community.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- The provision for Collective Worship is outstanding with all staff engaged in the delivery of high quality Collective Worship. All pupils are involved and take an active part in worship both within formal activities and more informal settings. The range and diversity of provision gives students the opportunity to explore their own faith and to gain an understanding of the faith, traditions and beliefs of others.
- The quality of provision is what makes St Thomas More school stand out as a centre of excellence for Collective Worship. It provides the back drop for all works in pursuit of the common good.

- The provision for Collective Worship goes beyond that for students and there is an impressive programme for staff which they value highly.
- There is a Worship band, chamber choir and orchestra that supports liturgy in and beyond the school community.
- There are strong parish links and parents and parishioners are regularly invited to take part in acts of Collective Worship.
- Collective Worship is central to the life of the school for both students and staff and the opportunities afforded to all enhances the spiritual development of all and endorses the school as a worshipful and worshipping community.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- The headteacher regards Collective Worship as central to the life of the school as through it students are able to explore and develop their own moral compass. He encourages a diversity of worship to allow students to gain a greater understanding of others and the world in which they live.
- Leaders and governors are fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the provision for Collective Worship. They seek the views of stakeholders, as part of a systematic self-review process, ensuring the further development of all aspects of Collective Worship.
- Annual surveys of students and staff are used to inform leaders of the impact of Collective Worship and to review quality. The outcome of such reviews is used to inform the programme for the annual staff Ethos day. In this way the Catholic ethos of the school is always at the centre of training and development for staff and a constant area of growth.
- The chaplaincy team have an exciting and inspiring programme for Collective Worship and the assistant head pastoral is rigorous in her monitoring of the impact and effectiveness of it.
- The assistant headteacher is robust in her pursuit of excellence with regard to the quality of Collective Worship and seeks and responds to the student voice in this area.
- The team have an in depth understanding of the liturgical calendar and build a programme that reflects this and share this with other school leaders.
- Events and liturgies are planned around the liturgical year and significant events within the school year such as Advent, Lent, welcome Mass for year 7, and Leavers' Mass for year 13. This is key to the life of the school and leaders regard it as a fundamental aspect of their work in leading the school.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

HOW EFFECTIVE THE SCHOOL IS IN PROVIDING CATHOLIC EDUCATION:**1****CATHOLIC LIFE:****1**

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.

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The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**1**

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

1

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

1

How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

1

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:**1**

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.

1

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

1

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	St Thomas More Catholic School
Unique reference number	137851
Local authority	Gateshead
This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt Reverend Séamus Cunningham the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle under canon 806 of Canon Law. For voluntary aided schools it also fulfils the responsibility the governing body has to inspect the school under s48 of the Education Act 2005.	
Chair of governors	Mr David Brophy
Head teacher	Mr Jonathan Parkinson
Date of previous school inspection	February 2014
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