



## St Thomas More Catholic School

URN: 137851

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Hexham & Newcastle

11 March 2026 – 12 March 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

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Yes

Yes

Fully

## What the school does well

- The headteacher is passionately committed to her school, being held in the highest regard by her colleagues and students. She leads by example and, as a result, all staff serve as outstanding role models.
- The subject leader for religious education has a meticulous and considered approach to improvement. Her support for those in her department is commendable and her vision for the subject has ensured outstanding outcomes, particularly in Key Stage 5.
- The lay chaplain and the lead for Catholic ethos are an inspirational team. They have invigorated chaplaincy provision through their understanding of the needs of all members of the school community. Thus, ensuring a richer and fuller Catholic experience.
- Pastoral care is exceptional. Consequently, relationships between staff and students are outstanding, with the school having a real focus on supporting the most vulnerable within its own and the wider community.
- Embedded and incisive monitoring and evaluation processes ensure that the collective worship offer at St Thomas More is consistent and relatable. This supports all staff in the delivery of prayer and liturgy.

## What the school needs to improve

- Create opportunities for students to reflect on and articulate the impact of prayer and liturgy, enabling them to explain how these experiences influence their thinking, their faith and their response to the world around them.
- Embed Catholic social teaching more explicitly across the Catholic curriculum so students can confidently explain the 'why' behind the school's charitable work and service to others.

## 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

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Students feel inspired by the school's mission at St Thomas More Catholic School and this is evident in their strong commitment to striving for excellence in both their learning and personal development. They apply themselves well in lessons and demonstrate ambition; recognising their God-given talents and using them to fulfil their potential. The wider curriculum strengthens this formation by helping them develop character, resilience and the confidence needed to navigate the wider world. Students speak clearly about feeling known, valued and loved and this leads them to treat others with dignity and respect. Many confidently explain the significance of Imago Dei, recognising the inherent worth of the individual, applying this understanding in their relationships with others. This extends beyond the school community, where students demonstrate a strong commitment to justice and service, regularly supporting charitable initiatives and responding to the needs of others. However, students are not always able to confidently articulate Catholic social teaching principles when doing this. When mistakes are made, students are given opportunities to reflect and restore relationships through the school's strong pastoral systems, rooted in forgiveness and reconciliation. This encourages them to take responsibility for their actions and grow in maturity; becoming the best version of themselves and living out the mission of the school in their daily lives.

The rich range of opportunities on offer enables pupils to flourish. Retreats, pilgrimages and numerous charitable initiatives help students deepen their faith, responding to the needs of the local, national and global Church. Staff and students value these opportunities, speaking positively about the strong sense of community. One member of staff reflected that the

school cares for everyone and that this is highlighted through the culture of compassion that has been cultivated. Initiatives such as Lenten alms and the Feeding Families campaign enable students to support those in need, while each pastoral group champions a chosen charity throughout the year. Groups such as Faith in Action give students meaningful ways to put their faith into action. The lay chaplain is a creative and influential driver of Catholic life, playing a central role in nurturing the spiritual life of the school and providing opportunities for prayer, service and formation. She is a valued member of the community and is spoken about very positively by staff and students. A clear behaviour curriculum and strong pastoral care ensure the school is inclusive and rooted in the dignity of every person through Imago Dei.

The headteacher's vision for her school is deeply rooted in Catholic tradition and gospel values. This forms the foundation for the school's direction and clearly shapes policy, practice and strategic decision-making. This vision is well understood and shared by staff and governors, ensuring it remains central to school life. The assistant headteacher for Catholic ethos has worked hard to embed a rigorous quality assurance process that ensures all leaders and governors know their school well. The school's incisive monitoring and evaluation processes draw on the views of a wide range of stakeholders to inform future planning and improvement. The dynamic partnership with parents ensures that they are fully engaged in the mission and charism of the school, parental involvement is a key strength. Staff, including early career teachers, speak positively about the support they receive from leaders and governors; particularly the pastoral care and guidance offered. Leaders are regarded as inspirational witnesses to the faith and staff report feeling valued, respected and listened to. Professional development for Catholic life and mission is carefully planned across the academic year, enabling staff to understand and actively promote the school's mission with confidence and commitment.

## 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

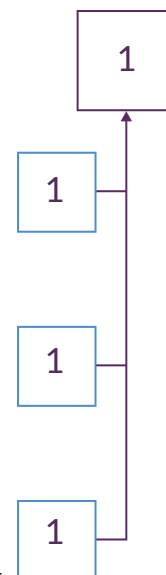
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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 enjoy religious education and talk positively about their lessons. Strong relationships and a climate of mutual respect enables them to feel valued, enabling them to flourish and develop an appreciation of the subject. This mutual respect, coupled with the department's focus on inclusivity and high expectations, results in positive engagement and maximises learning. Religious literacy is excellent and students use this well during recall sessions. They are confident when contributing to discussions, utilising their religious vocabulary well, and respond enthusiastically to the wide variety of activities on offer. This results in high quality work that is typically presented well. Students demonstrate knowledge and understanding that is aligned with the rigorous requirements of the *Religious Education Directory*. They have a good understanding of how well they are doing in the subject, a consequence of the strong assessment and feedback provided by all staff. At Key Stage 5 students articulate their learning fluently, making links across the curriculum and demonstrating curiosity. Academic outcomes are consistently above national figures, and comparisons with other core subjects are significantly positive. This success is rooted in a culture of belonging and shared purpose, enabling all students to flourish academically and spiritually.

Religious education staff are passionate about their subject. They have strong subject knowledge and are driven to inspire a curiosity about learning. This is reflected in their approach to teaching. All teaching is consistently good, with there being clear evidence of outstanding practice within the department. The consistent and thought-provoking

assessment and feedback provided by teachers ensures that all students make progress in their learning. The effective deployment of knowledgeable teaching assistants enables students who require support to achieve the objectives set in lessons, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to achieve well. Praise is used frequently to motivate and recognise the efforts and work of students, they respond well to this. Questioning is a particular strength. Teachers utilise skilful questioning techniques that increase engagement and maximise learning. Time for reflection is built into lessons and this affords students an opportunity to consider their work in a personal context. Classroom routines and expectations are consistently implemented and there is a wide variety of good quality resources available, these are often used very effectively. Provision in A Level and core religious education is outstanding, with teachers inspiring students to be curious learners, fostering a love of the subject.

Leaders and governors hold religious education in the highest regard, it is seen as the beacon subject in the curriculum. There is parity with other core subjects and leaders prioritise training for religious education, taking up the development opportunities on offer with the diocese and the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust (BWCET). The subject leader for religious education is well supported by other senior leaders and has a clear vision for her department. Her considered approach to leadership ensures that all members of the department feel supported. She has ensured that the religious education curriculum is carefully planned, ensuring that all students access their learning in a manner that allows them to confidently build on their prior learning. The *Directory* has been fully embraced and implemented with integrity and academic rigour. There is highly effective collaboration between the subject leader and the senior leadership team and this is underpinned by a meticulous, evidence-based approach to self-evaluation. Leaders ensure that all students are exposed to enrichment activities that extend their learning within religious education. The take up for these opportunities is impressive. Quality assurance processes, which effectively identify clear areas for development, inform future planning and provide the focus for further professional development.

## Collective worship

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

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

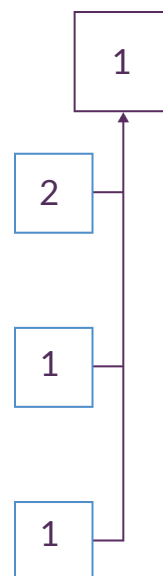
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

#### 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



At St Thomas More, prayer and liturgy opportunities, that are aligned with the liturgical calendar, are consistent and relatable to all. Students are aware of the liturgical calendar, understanding that this shapes their prayer life in school. The familiar pattern of high-quality, daily prayer provides a purposeful pause in the day. They can articulate the range of ways that they pray, and participation is good during these times. Students' involvement allows the school's prayer and liturgy opportunities to influence their decision making and actions, commenting that their reflections encourage them to support others with compassion and also reflect upon their own spiritual growth. However, a number are not able to make these explicit links and cannot always articulate how their prayer experiences influence their decision making and actions. Students collaborate well with staff to prepare and lead prayer and liturgy events that impacts upon them and those in their community. They are influential in shaping the prayer life of the school, with most approaching this responsibility with a genuine desire to inspire their peers to action. Their evaluative role, in the school's prayer and liturgy provision is something that they value, knowing that their comments are acted upon.

Staff and students affirm the centrality of prayer for the whole school community. Supported by strong partnerships with local clergy, they complement the work of the lay chaplain who offers guidance and support that is timely and appropriate. Daily prayer in form-time provides opportunities for reflection on weekly themes that consolidate students' familiarity with the Church's liturgical year. This is supported by the prayers said at the end of every lesson. Consequently, students understand that their school prayer life is shaped by the Church's calendar. Staff lead well-structured celebrations of the word skillfully, working collaboratively

with the lay chaplain and students to plan meaningful experiences that have scripture as their focus. All are confident in this work, commenting that guidance is readily available, which enables them to deliver prayer and liturgy that matches the needs of individuals. Dedicated prayer spaces, including the chapel, are used frequently and have an impact on daily prayer life in school. The school recognises that they are the Church for some students and their families. They plan accordingly to include them in their prayer and liturgy experiences, providing numerous opportunities for them to do so.

Leaders and governors have ensured their focus on prayer and liturgy has Christ at the centre, upholding Catholic tradition. They ensure that ample time and resourcing are dedicated to an outstanding offer, taking time to plan events that motivate and engage students. The prayer and liturgy policy is well-considered, with recent staff training having taken place on this. A renewed focus is evident through discussions with staff. Local priests regularly celebrate Mass in school and the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. Leaders plan effectively for key events in the school year, with Mass being offered to mark these, both in school and local parishes. There are regular formation opportunities within the school's training and development programme throughout the year and staff comment upon the importance of this. Leaders, staff and students place a high value on the evaluation of prayer and liturgy and this informs future planning, refining the prayer and liturgy experience for all. The mutually beneficial relationship between the school, diocese and BWCET has enabled senior leaders to focus upon strengthening the offer and their work is recognised by the school community. Staff formation is a priority for all and attention to detail is evident in resources that are prayerful yet accessible, reinforcing the school's commitment to excellence in provision.



## Information about the school

|                                                |                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Full name of school                            | St Thomas More Catholic School                                       |
| School unique reference number (URN)           | 137851                                                               |
| School DfE Number (LAESTAB)                    | 3904606                                                              |
| Full postal address of the school              | Croftdale Road, Blaydon, Tyne and Wear, NE21 4BQ                     |
| School phone number                            | 0191 499 0111                                                        |
| Headteacher or Head of School                  | Mrs Jillian Turner                                                   |
| Chair of Governors                             | Claire Iles                                                          |
| School Website                                 | <a href="http://www.stthomasmore.org.uk">www.stthomasmore.org.uk</a> |
| Trusteeship                                    | Diocesan                                                             |
| Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable) | Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust                            |
| Phase                                          | Secondary                                                            |
| Type of school                                 | Academy                                                              |
| Admissions policy                              | Non Selective                                                        |
| Age-range of pupils                            | 11 - 18                                                              |
| Gender of pupils                               | Mixed                                                                |
| Date of last denominational inspection         | 01 March 2019                                                        |
| Previous denominational inspection grade       | Outstanding                                                          |

## The Inspection Team

Mark Taylor

Lead

Michael Hughes

Liam Milne

## 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 |