



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ST. HELENS

Tuesday 16 May 2006

Inspectors Mrs. Marie Connolly Mr. Michael Halford

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Catholic Primary
Age range of pupils	4-11
Number on roll	268
Chair of governors	Mr. R. Houlton
School address	Rainford Road, Windleshaw, St. Helens, WA10 6BX.
Telephone number	01744 621380
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E-mail address	stthomasofcanterbury@sthelens.org.uk
Date of last inspection	18 May 2001
Headteacher	Mr. R. Orlandi

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Description of the school

St. Thomas of Canterbury is a larger than average Catholic Primary School. There are 268 children on roll of whom 256 are baptised Catholics, 10 come from other Christian denominations and there are 2 children from *Other Faith* traditions. The socio-economic circumstances of children attending the school are mixed. The number of learners identified as having a statement of special educational need is higher than average. The majority of learners come from white European backgrounds. When children start school their skills and knowledge are about average. There are 14 members of staff 10 of whom are Catholic. Eleven teachers teach Religious Education.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Overall effectiveness of the school

St. Thomas of Canterbury is a good Catholic school with several outstanding features. It is a caring, supportive community, underpinned by a strong Catholic ethos, which establishes a very positive climate for work. Excellent relationships have been established by working closely with both home, parish and the local community. Standards are good. Learners achieve well and make good progress in each key stage. Teaching is good overall but some is outstanding. Assessment provides clear guidance on learning. The curriculum is well planned. Learners' behaviour is outstanding. The provision for learners' spiritual and moral development is outstanding. The headteacher, supported by the new Religious Education coordinator, has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and a vision of how to meet development needs. Since her appointment the coordinator has made tremendous progress, ensuring initiatives requested by the Archdiocese have been undertaken. This has enabled further progress to be made in curriculum Religious Education.

Grade: 2

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 23 Inspection in May 2001 the school has had two coordinators, the current coordinator being appointed in February. The Religious Education coordinator, supported by the headteacher, has worked enthusiastically to ensure progress has been made in addressing the previous key issues identified in the report, and other areas identified by the school's own self-evaluation.

Grade: 2

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory. It relates well to the school improvement plan but needs to be more comprehensive in outlining development strategies and the projected timescale, to address areas for improvement. Clarification of the school's Mission Statement, aims and objectives is crucial, as this document underpins everything that happens in a Catholic school. The leadership has a clear understanding of what needs to be developed and is committed to improvement. There is good capacity for further improvement.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

- Involve all who form part of the school community in the continued development and clarification of the Mission Statement, aims and objectives. This should enable ownership by everyone including the children;
- Provide in-service to support policy formation, planning and delivery of Collective Worship, wherever and whenever it takes place;
- Ensure the issues highlighted through the school's own monitoring programme are addressed.

Achievement and standards

Learners' attainment on entry to the school is about average. Learners make good progress in the school and by Year 6 many learners exceed expectation. Standards in Religious Education overall are good. The manner in which learners express their understanding of what they have learnt is outstanding. There is no significant difference in performance by learners of different gender or ethnic background. Learners with special needs make good progress in Religious Education. The school checks on the progress made by all through regular assessment, marking and monitoring. Marking is challenging and consistent throughout the school. In all key stages learners are confident in discussion, ask very good questions showing knowledge and understanding of the subject. Learners write well independently in a variety of styles. Standards should continue to improve by maintaining the monitoring of planning, teaching and learning and evaluation of assessment to ensure its effectiveness, and by informing learners of ways in which they can build on their current performance.

Catholic beliefs and values are at the heart of learners' spiritual development. The school celebrates achievements in lessons and assemblies. Children show real enjoyment of their work throughout the school. They have a very good understanding of the life and teaching of Jesus and are able to apply his teaching to their own lives and experiences. Learning about *Other Faiths* has led children to an awareness of how other religions make sense of the world, and the need for tolerance and respect. There are a wide variety of systems in place to reward effort and good behaviour, which is exemplary. Learners have an excellent sense of right and wrong. The Gospel values of forgiveness, tolerance, respect and justice clearly underpin the provision for learners' moral development enabling learners make an outstanding contribution to the school community.

Grade: 2

Quality of Provision for Religious Education

Teaching and learning

The quality of provision for Religious Education is good. Teaching is good overall with several examples of outstanding teaching. Outstanding practice needs to be shared through the monitoring process. Lessons are planned well. The majority of lessons have good pace and timing, which maintains learners' interest and concentration and keeps them on task and focussed. Work is provided that meets the learning needs of all learners. The more able are challenged in a variety of ways and good support given to those less able. Effective use is made of learning assistants. Teachers use a variety of teaching and learning strategies that capture and retain learners' interest and involvement. Learners are enthusiastic and show real enjoyment in Religious Education lessons, particularly those observed in Foundation Stage. Teachers ensure that tasks set meet the learning objective and learners are thoroughly engaged. All teachers ensure learners understand the purpose of the lesson by sharing the learning objective, and plenary sessions help consolidate and reinforce their learning. Regular assessment of learners' work is good. Evaluations are kept and information will be used to inform future planning. Excellent photographic evidence supports teacher evaluation.

Parents and carers are enabled to become involved in their children's Religious Education by the provision of curriculum meetings, reports, newsletters etc. informing them of what is to be covered. Some of these initiatives have been undertaken as a result of parents' questionnaires. Work is taken home and parents informed of ways in which they can help and asked to comment.

Grade: 2

Curriculum

The Religious Education curriculum is well matched to the needs and interests of learners. The school using the *Here I Am* programme recommended by the Archdiocese meets the requirements of the curriculum directory for Religious Education. A whole school approach is used and appropriate levels of the programme are being followed in different classes. Provision is made for those learners with additional educational needs by some differentiation of tasks set and also by the support given. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child and meets national and diocesan requirements. At least ten per cent of total curriculum time is allocated to Religious Education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales. Very good links are made with home, parish and the local community. The Religious Education curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to learners' spiritual and moral development. The policies supporting the development of learners' spiritual and moral development need updating.

Grade: 2

Leadership and Management

Religious Education

The leadership and management in Religious Education is good. There is a clear vision for the subject within the mission of the school with a focus on high standards. Achievement has been maintained. The new coordinator is outstanding, providing effective and efficient support to staff and has made a significant contribution to the subject in the short time she has been in post. She shows genuine enthusiasm for her role. Some good documentation guides and directs staff in their delivery of Religious Education. The subject leader has compiled a handbook consisting of some policies and plans to support staff in this area. Other documentation needs updating. Workbooks and planning have been monitored this term, and teaching monitored by the previous coordinator. It is essential to ensure the issues identified by the school's own monitoring programme are addressed as part of the ongoing professional development of staff. St. Thomas of Canterbury is socially inclusive by providing equality of access and of opportunity for all staff and learners. All but one of the staff teaching Religious Education have a suitable qualification. This is good. Learning assistants are generally well planned for and utilised during lessons and for other purposes e.g. providing display. The subject leader attends coordinators' meetings and information is disseminated to all staff during staff meetings or in-service time. Priorities for the subject are identified and some targets set. There needs to be greater clarity in outlining development strategies and the projected timescale, to address areas for improvement when the self-evaluation document is completed. The school is developing its resources to support Religious Education. A half set of *God's Story* would significantly enhance work undertaken using scripture. Greater use could be made of information communication technology to enhance the delivery of the subject. The headteacher and subject leader keeps governors informed on matters relating to Religious Education. They discharge their responsibilities effectively.

Grade: 2

Catholic Life of the School

The leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school through the Mission Statement is satisfactory. There are currently two statements that support the life and work of St. Thomas of Canterbury School. It is essential to involve all who form part of the school community in the continued development and clarification of the Mission Statement, aims and objectives. This should enable ownership by everyone including the children. Clarification of the school's Mission Statement, aims and objectives is crucial, as this document underpins everything that happens in a Catholic school. St. Thomas of Canterbury School is a place in which the gospel spirit of love, care and compassion for all permeates every aspect of its life and work. The concise set of aims and practical objectives, that flow from one statement show how the school's educational mission is very evidently lived out on a daily basis. These practical objectives would also provide an effective system

by which to monitor and evaluate the Catholic life of the school and direct all policies and plans. The school makes excellent links with home parish and the wider community in many ways including its support of numerous charities. The school council has effectively endeavoured to enhance the school environment and meets regularly to consider initiatives suggested throughout the school.

Grade: 3

Collective Worship

The quality of Collective Worship is satisfactory. The school provides Collective Worship in a variety of ways for each child daily, in class, year group or whole school gatherings. This fulfils government and Archdiocesan guidance. The policy and guidelines that support the planning and delivery of Collective Worship needs to be updated. In-service to support this planning and delivery, wherever and whenever it takes place, needs to be provided. The Collective Worship observed contained some good elements. Collective Worship stimulates reflection on spiritual and moral issues and on personal beliefs. Learners respond well and actively participate in acts of worship. This needs to be encouraged further. Acts of worship should include various forms of prayer and scripture, reflection and other elements that support liturgical formation. The coordinator should monitor Collective Worship to enable good practice to be shared. Masses, services and assemblies organised by the school are greatly appreciated and supported well by parents and governors. Collective Worship makes a good contribution to learners' spiritual and moral development.

Grade: 3

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory and grade 4 inadequate	Judgement
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OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective and efficient is the provision of Catholic education in meeting the needs of learners?	2
The effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school	2
The effectiveness of Religious Education	2
The effectiveness of the school self-evaluation	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their work	1
The behaviour of learners	1
How well learners make a positive contribution to the school community	1

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting learners' needs	2
The extent of the suitability and rigour of assessment	2
The extent of identification and provision for additional learning needs	2
The extent of parents/carers involvement in their children's learning and development	1
How well does Religious Education curriculum meet the needs and interest of learners?	2
The extent that Religious Education curriculum meets external requirements and is responsive to local circumstances	2
The extent to which the curriculum in Religious Education contributes to the spiritual and moral development of the learners	1

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in Religious Education?	2
How effectively does the Religious Education subject leader lead and support staff	1
How effectively performance in Religious Education is monitored and improved through quality assurance and self-assessment	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are well taught	2
The adequacy and suitability of learning resources	2
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve high standards	2
The effectiveness with which governors discharge their responsibilities	2
How effective are leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school through the Mission Statement?	3
The quality of the school's Mission Statement	2
The extent to which aims and objectives are derived from the Mission Statement	2
The extent to which the school Mission Statement affects its Catholic life and work	2
How effectively is the Catholic life of the school monitored and evaluated	3

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How good is the quality of Collective Worship?	3
Learners respond to the school's provision of Collective Worship	Yes
How well Collective Worship contributes to the spiritual and moral development of learners	2