

DIOCESAN INSPECTION REPORT

St. Thomas More Voluntary Catholic Academy

(Part of St Cuthbert's M.A.T), St Thomas More Road, Kingston upon Hull, HU4 7NP

School Unique Reference Number: **118055**

Inspection dates:	22 – 23 May 2019
Lead inspector:	Mr. Mark Ryan
Team inspector:	Mrs. Mary Brown , Mr. Simon Greaves (trainee inspector)

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Catholic Life:		Outstanding	1
Collective Worship:		Outstanding	1
Religious Education:		Outstanding	1

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St. Thomas More Voluntary Catholic Academy is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- The executive leadership team, senior leaders, governors, teachers and support staff are all united in their vision and mission in putting Christ at the heart of their actions. The sense of unity and shared vision is tangible at every level of this school community. This school community clearly benefits from the drive to improve outcomes for pupils. Leaders, at every level, rigorously monitor their school and as a result they know their school well and drive positive change.
- Staff development and investing in people has clearly benefited the school community. A comprehensive, programme of continual professional development has empowered staff at all levels. This has enabled future leaders to be creatively and systematically developed so they improve outcomes for pupils. Opportunities for staff to work collaboratively across the Academy Trust clearly benefit their professional development.
- Collective Worship is very well developed, and the leaders ensure that the church's seasons and liturgical year are followed and are the focus of Collective Worship and prayer. Older pupils lead on worship and prayer and have an active voice in its development.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Pupils are rightly proud of their school. They are articulate, friendly and talk openly about their faith and their learning in Religious Education. As a result, they are open and honest and confident to share their views. The pupils value their school and talk openly about the mission of the school and feel involved in living this out through their actions.
- The pupils and staff have a clear sense of belonging and commitment to living out their mission statement. There is a strong Catholic identity to the school, and this is embraced by all.
- The teaching of Religious Education is strong due to the continual professional development of staff and the teaching observed was never less than good. Pupils are engaged in their learning and the driver words are used to focus the learning.
- The academy chaplaincy team's contribution to the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding. They enrich the experience for the pupils and the school community with a thoughtful, engaging and spiritual programme. This is continually reflected upon so that it constantly evolves and improves.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Thomas More became part of the St Cuthbert's Academy Trust in October 2017, having previously been federated with St Mary's College, Hull.
- The school is a smaller than average primary school with 181 pupils on roll. Of these 38% are baptised Catholics. A high proportion of pupils (33%) are in receipt of pupil premium.
- 20% of the teachers within the school are Catholic.
- The school serves 4 parishes, 3 of which are in West Hull: St. Joseph's, St. Wilfrid's and Corpus Christi. The school also serves Our Lady of Lourdes parish, Hessle. The closest parish church is approximately 20 minutes' walk from the school.
- A growing proportion of pupils (35.4%) do not have English as a first language.
- 39.5% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds
- 19% of pupils are identified SEND (Special Educational Needs or Disabilities) with 5% of all children on roll having an EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan)

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Improve the Catholic Life of the school by:
 - Further developing and broadening pupil voice and involvement in the Catholic Life and mission of the school.
 - Further develop and extend links with the wider parish community.
- Improve Collective Worship by:
 - Providing wider and more varied opportunities and varieties of worship and prayer for staff and pupils
 - Providing wider opportunities for pupils to deepen their reflection of their Worship and prayer as opposed to simply 'evaluating' what they do
- Improve the quality of Religious Education by:
 - Using differentiation by task to improve outcomes for all – ensuring that vulnerable pupils have carefully planned tasks and there is greater scope for pupils who need further challenge.
 - Ensuring formative assessment clearly reflects pupils' learning progress so that future steps and needs are accurate and improve learning outcomes for pupils.

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 school lives out its mission statement and this is used to underpin all its work. Pupils are actively involved in reviewing the mission statement and this is known by the pupils and they can speak, at an age-appropriate level, as to what this means and how they can live out the mission. The chaplaincy team and the leaders plan thoughtfully so that the pupils can shape and experience the mission of the school. The school 'Mission Day' clearly helps children reflect and consider their role within the school and the wider community.
- Pupils embrace the Catholic Life of the school. Pupil voice is well embedded and pupil representatives e.g. RE Ambassadors, talk with clear conviction and passion as to their roles. Pupils take their roles seriously and they enjoy leading others as they feel listened to. However, the numbers of pupils who participate in these groups are quite limited.

Pupils are actively involved in the evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school and they contribute to its development. They are confident at articulating their views and their reflections.

- The chaplaincy team are instrumental in helping the pupils to develop their voice. Pupils feel comfortable talking about their faith and what it means to them. They feel that adults listen to them and value their ideas and as a result they feel that they shape and change the Catholic Life of the school.
- The Catholic Life of the school clearly helps to form the pupils into caring, thoughtful and reflective individuals. They have a strong sense of religious identity and talk openly about what their faith means to them and how they do acts of kindness to help others. They deeply value their charity work and relate this to the school's mission.

Pupils speak with appreciation of their experiences. They talk with pride about their 'Be Spirited Days' and days of prayer; how they explore their faith; ask 'Big Questions'. Pupils were proud of their time spent studying 'Laudato Si' (the Pope's encyclical to Our Common Home) and they were proud of their Prayer Tree in response to it. The pupils feel passionate about their roles within their school and they felt valued. An example of this are the pupils who represent the Mini Vinnies. They talked with a sense of seeing their role as being important and they greatly appreciated the time they were given to go the Trust Commissioning Day to meet pupils from other schools to share ideas. They felt valued and knew that their voice was recognised by others.

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

- The Catholic Life of the school is promoted throughout the school through beautiful displays promoting its importance and value. These show the rich varieties of experiences and encounters offered to the pupils. The strong Catholic Life of the school is reflected and promoted everywhere around the school.
- The quality of provision is greatly enhanced as the school has a highly effective, structured and well-planned system of continual professional development for all staff. As a result, staff are completely committed and have the necessary skills and passion to ensure that the school has its Catholic Life at the heart of all that it does. The vision of this school is completely embraced by the staff at every level and the aspirations of the executive leadership team are completely lived out.
- The chaplaincy team and the Religious Education (RE) leader form a strong partnership to improve the quality of the provision. They work with imagination, creativity and passion to create meaningful opportunities for the pupils. They are continually reflective and ensure that nothing is simply repeated for the sake of it. They reflect on the impact of their work and talk directly with staff and pupils to see how they can continually improve. Their work is highly valued by parents and by the parishes in which they serve.
- Families speak highly of the school and its Catholic Life and they speak with full support and appreciation of all that the school does to live out its faith. Parents speak about how pupils embrace experiences offered to them.
- This school is a warm, friendly and happy school, where pupils are nurtured. Opportunities for personal and spontaneous prayer are central to the life of the school. Pupils choose to come and say the Rosary with chaplains and leaders as it is important that they spend quality time together in prayer. The pupils listen carefully to each other in prayer and their words are important. What they say and do is respected by others.
- Pupils access prayer outside of the classroom and they use the Peace Garden to worship, reflect and pray.
- The Academy Trust values the parish sacramental programmes and it celebrates and promotes these important programmes by hosting days for all pupils across the trust to come together to share their experiences.

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

- The Catholic Life of the school is given the highest priority by the school and this is echoed in the work of the wider Academy Trust. Rigorous systems of monitoring ensure that all aspects are evaluated and reported back to the leaders and directors of the Trust. Leaders have set a clear direction for the school and this is lived out in its actions.
- Leaders in the school ensure that standards are improving over time and that the Catholic Life of the school continually develops. It is given the highest priority.
- The RE leader's passion for the subject is a major contributing factor the success of the school. This is ably supported by leaders within the school, who all are deeply committed to ensuring the school continually improves.
- The quality of provision is greatly enhanced because staff receive highly effective professional development, both from the Diocese and through in-school development and as part of the Academy Trust. This professional development is continually reviewed for impact.
- New members of staff to the school receive clear guidance and a well-established, highly effective programme

of induction ensures they quickly develop. As a result of this, the staff's understanding of the school's mission is coherent and staff feel valued and thus make a clear contribution the ethos of the school.

- Leaders actively promote the Catholic Life and involve parents in various ways, and they evaluate these and alter their methods to ensure they continually improve. 'Stay and Play' sessions have further developed into 'Share and Pray' sessions to further involve parents/carers in the curriculum and the Catholic Life of the school. As a result, parents/carers are well informed.
- The Trust chaplaincy team help give the Catholic Life the highest priority and they play a clear part in the school's self-evaluation so their ideas and reflections are listened to in order that their work can continually develop.
- The school's self-evaluation is detailed, accurate and is driven by evidence and impact. Leaders use this evaluation to plan for further improvements. There are clear levels of accountability and responsibility at all levels.
- Executive leaders are highly ambitious for the school and they have high expectations. Governors and directors challenge the school to improve and they have a clear monitoring schedule to evaluate the life of the school. They have a wealth of experience and they know their school well.
- There is a clear unity in direction for this school at every level.

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.

- Collective Worship at St. Thomas More is often joyous and spiritually uplifting. Pupils pray reverently, they respect and deeply consider the words of their peers and they greatly value prayer and Worship. They sing joyfully and participate with reverence and enthusiasm in worship.
- There is a structured approach to developing pupil-led Worship. Younger pupils are involved in selecting reading and songs for Worship. When pupils reach year 6 they carefully prepare and lead liturgies for the whole school and for their classes. Evidence clearly shows that the pupils regularly plan and develop their own Worship.
- Worship in the school predominantly takes the form of a Liturgy ('Gathering; Word; Response; Mission'). This is in class-based Worship and whole school Worship.
- Pupils deeply respect the prayers of their peers and they share their thoughts and feelings with each other with great sincerity and respect. Pupils feel confident to share what lies within their hearts and these are always respected and valued.
- Pupils are eager to take a lead in Worship. Younger pupils joyfully participate; they sing and play instruments with joy and they listen carefully and think deeply about the Word of God. Acts of Worship are thought provoking and provide real moments for the pupils to reflect and take time with God.
- The involvement in prayer and Worship has a very real effect on the school community. Pupils and adults all embrace and value Worship and prayer.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is good.

- The school follows the Church's liturgical seasons, and these are central to themes of prayer and Worship. These are known by pupils and all adults. Leaders and chaplains plan to create a programme of Worship and experiences throughout the year. This planning involves pupils, parents, the parish and, when possible, the wider community.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are borne from trust. The pupils look up the chaplains with respect and they greatly enjoy their time with them. Many pupils seek the chaplains out at play and lunch time to spend time with them in prayer.
- Pupils see worth in their Worship and prayer and the older pupils felt it enabled them to reflect on their friendship with God. One pupil when discussing transition to secondary education, said, "It enables me to

take my faith with me.”

- Pupils regularly evaluate Worship and there is a clear procedure and system in place to do this. Some of the responses were quite factual as opposed to spiritual and in these instances the pupils were not led to deeper reflection on their Worship.
- Whole school Worship uses traditional and contemporary music to engage and inspire pupils. Pupils listen and pray with reverence and respect.
- Worship generally follows the format of a four-part liturgy across the school and in whole school Worship. This is also evidenced in the school’s self-evaluation and through discussions with leaders. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to experience other forms of prayer and Worship.
- Pupils embrace Worship in their classes and they range from moments of joy and celebration to moments of calm, stillness and deep reflection.
- Outdoor space is used for prayer and Worship. However pupils stated they would like to use it more frequently.

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

- Leaders deliver Collective Worship with passion and commitment. They know how to plan and lead in Worship to bring pupils closer to God and to give the pupils special moments with God.
- There is a highly effective programme to develop staff in their ability to lead in Worship. The RE lead and the chaplaincy team are a source of strength for the school and they provide excellent support to less-experienced staff.
- Evidence clearly shows that the provision for Collective Worship is regularly monitored and reviewed to improve its quality.
- The spiritual development of staff is given a high priority. Opportunities are provided to staff over the course of the school year. ‘Foundation Stones’ sessions are shared with staff to develop their own spiritual understanding and to help them on their spiritual journey.
- School leaders and chaplains seek meaningful opportunities to promote and share the spiritual life of the school with parents/carers. Regular newsletters are used to involve parents and to promote the spiritual experiences of the children. Parents spoke highly of these and they also said they feel included and welcomed.
- Governors, leaders and directors regularly review and examine the effectiveness of Collective Worship within the school. They rightly value the work of the school and the commitment and impact of the chaplaincy team and the RE leadership team.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1

- 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.

- Teachers are highly effective and consistent in their planning and delivery of lessons. The majority of teaching is of a high quality. There are obvious shared whole- school approaches to teaching and learning to maintain consistency, and as a result, pupils make excellent progress over time. Pupils are engaged in their learning in lessons and they have clear expectations. Rigorous tracking and assessment ensures that all groups of children make at least expected progress over time.
- Marking and feedback is continually reflected upon to provide maximum impact on learning. The school is not afraid to take risks and to work together to try new solutions. The school has recently reviewed its marking and feedback systems and will review this impact as part of its monitoring cycle and in staff discussions with leaders. As a result, pupils are clear as to their achievements and what they need to do next to improve their work further.
- The vast majority of pupils are set clear expectations within lessons and learning is made clear. The 'driver words' are central to learning and these are known by pupils. Pupils generally know what levels they are working at and they know what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils show excellent attitudes to their work and they work with a great deal of independence. Pupils remain engaged with their work and are resilient learners.
- Teachers offer a wide range of opportunities to interest and engage pupils. Learning tasks are varied and they try to provide a wealth of opportunities for the pupils. Some teachers intuitively knew when to bring the learning back together as a class and also when they needed to simply allow pupils the freedom to learn independently. The pupils talked in some lessons about Pentecost and what this would mean to the apostles. These pupils had clearly reflected on what this story meant to the apostles and how they would feel. They were completely engaged with the 'talk' task and this was then skilfully developed into independent writing.
- Scaffolding is used very effectively in some lessons to provide the support some pupils need. With the older pupils, who were considering the anointing of the sick, the teacher was very skilful at using various scaffolds to guide the pupils into developing a variety of links and in doing so, deepened the pupils' explanations.
- In EYFS, staff are extremely skilful in engaging the pupils in meaningful ways and to promote a love of learning and a love of each other. The pupils see RE as something of joy. They love their learning and they engage with a sense of awe and wonder.

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

- The teaching of RE is at least good and it ensures that pupils understand their learning and what is expected of them.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge due to the highly effective support and development they receive. This is exemplary. Leaders in the school have developed a wide range of strategies to support staff so that they have the knowledge they need to teach. These range from accessing diocesan training, in school training and shared collaborative work across the Academy Trust.
- Pupils know what is expected of them and they have clear targets. The marking and assessment system provides expectations to the pupils. Some parents said that their pupils are very excited if they attain 'legendary'. From the teaching seen, and from evidence in books, the vast majority lessons are differentiated by outcome. However, opportunities were not always taken to sufficiently differentiate for maximum learning.
- The school has clearly worked together to adopt a common approach to 'learning walls' for RE to provide support and guidance to pupils. These were extremely well presented, and the common approach was clear across the whole school. A great deal of time and investment had been put into these.
- Classes are calm and the pupils engage in their learning. Teachers are skilled at knowing which pupils to further support and guide. As a result, progress in lesson is always at least good.
- Relationships are a strength of this school. The teachers clearly share the vision of the senior leadership team and the executive leaders for teaching and learning. Teachers clearly trust them and the systems they have introduced. Parents think teaching and learning has improved and they now see their children as pupils who enjoy coming to school and who like learning.
- Teaching and learning have clearly been a positive journey of continued improvement with increased outcomes for pupils.

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

- The RE curriculum meets the requirement of the Bishops' Conference. Coverage in pupils' books, class portfolios and in the wide-ranging displays reflects that at least 10% of curriculum time is dedicated to the teaching of RE.
- The school has a clear vision for teaching and learning and what it wants for its pupils. This vision is driven by the executive leadership and it is embraced by the whole school. They have ensured that RE is the core subject of the school.
- RE is given a high priority by all leadership levels of the Academy trust. They clearly recognise the need to develop their teachers and to support and challenge them, they are investing in the future, with their work as an Initial Teacher training partner, hopefully developing the next generation of Catholic teachers.
- The RE curriculum lead is clearly skilled, passionate and committed to delivering the highest outcomes for the pupils. He is highly valued by stakeholders. He is a reflective practitioner, who works with teachers to develop and improve their practice.
- Leaders and governors are rightly proud of the recent progress of the school and the impact this has had on the pupils. This hasn't happened by coincidence and chance. This is the result of highly effective school improvement.

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.

1

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

1

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

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.

2

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

1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**1**

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

1

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

2

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

1

SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	St. Thomas More Voluntary Catholic Academy
Unique reference number	118055
Local authority	Kingston upon Hull
This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt Reverend Terence Drainey the Bishop of Middlesbrough 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 Board of Directors	Mr Peter Fearnley
Executive head teacher	Karen Siedle / Michelle Ryan
Date of previous school inspection	October 2014
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Head of school	Mrs Julia Eley
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