



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Thomas More Catholic High School, North Shields

URN: 137734

Carried out on behalf of the Canon Peter Leighton V.G., Diocesan Administrator of Hexham and Newcastle on:

Date: 09-10 February 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	1
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.....	1
Religious education (p.5) The quality of curriculum religious education.....	1
Collective worship (p.7) The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.....	1
The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	✓
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	✓
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- Chaplaincy provision is exceptional and inspires students to take leading roles in shaping the Catholic life and mission of the school.
- Religious Education specialists have excellent subject knowledge which allows pupils to make outstanding progress.
- Pastoral care is the bedrock of the school. Students are known by name and cared for deeply. The most vulnerable students are prioritised in a community where all feel valued.
- Leaders and governors have an unwavering commitment to Catholic Social Teaching and have supported pupils ably to challenge injustice through a variety of campaigns.

- Collective worship is authentic and diverse. Most notably the feast day Mass is the highlight of the liturgical year, with hundreds of students, staff and parents attending this voluntarily.

What the school needs to improve:

- Deepen opportunities for those from other faith communities to live and pray in fidelity to their own commitments.
- Provide more opportunities for celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

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:.....	1
Pupil outcomes The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school	1
Provision The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school	1
Leadership How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school	1

Outcomes in Catholic life and mission are outstanding because students fully understand and embrace the distinctive Catholic identity, charism and mission of their school. Students feel valued, safe and loved, enabling them to flourish academically and holistically. They have respect for their peers and understand how this creates a positive culture in the school and community. Students utilise the various opportunities provided by the school to become positive role models for each other, and they are proactive in supporting their local communities and parishes. The Tyne and Wear Citizens, Laudato Si' group, and student council speak confidently about why they challenge injustice, care for the environment, and support the poorest and most vulnerable. Students are also active in tackling local, national, and global issues, such as fair bus fares for students and anti-racism, sharing their work to inspire peers. They recognise their work is underpinned by the teachings of Jesus and by an unwavering commitment to Catholic Social Teaching, which significantly enhances the Catholic life and mission of the school. They talk passionately about their role in supporting charities and in organising fundraising to help the poorest, the sick and the most vulnerable.

The quality of provision for Catholic life and mission in the school is outstanding because the mission statement, 'Work, Worship, Relationships', is evident throughout the school. Students and staff clearly articulate its meaning, purpose, and significance. Staff cherish the school and are pivotal in driving the strong sense of community, which permeates throughout. One member of staff, describing how relationships flourish during the annual pilgrimage to Lourdes, said, 'We go as friends, we return as family'. Central to the provision of Catholic life and mission is the school chaplain. He has designed a dynamic, robust and extensive chaplaincy programme to provide opportunities for all students, including retreats, trips, and regular opportunities for prayer and worship. The feast day Mass of St Thomas More is a highlight for students and they look forward to being part of the annual celebrations. Students appreciate and respond well to the inclusive nature

of the chaplaincy and, as a result, want to share their gifts and talents with it. The school already responds to the faith needs of non-Catholic students but acknowledges they could go 'the extra mile' to support them further. The pastoral provision at the school is outstanding because staff provide the highest levels of pastoral care to all students, particularly the more vulnerable. The school offers robust and transparent systems for promoting positive behaviour and modelling high expectations for students. The provision for relationships, sex and health education is carefully planned to ensure that it meets statutory and diocesan requirements.

Leaders and governors are outstanding in their commitment to Catholic life and mission. They energetically ensure Christ is at the heart of the school and, consequently, they inspire the whole community. Cross-curricular links are a strength showing that religious education is at the core of the curriculum. Staff feel well-supported and say that leaders contribute to their continual development through regular professional development and staff induction, and through adapting practices to support their wellbeing and workload. Students leading the Laudato Si' group are grateful to senior leaders for sharing their vision and for providing support and resources to enable them to care for their common home. Leaders adopt an 'open door' policy, encouraging students to share their opinions to contribute to the school's self-evaluation. Communication through the parent portal, class charts, and whole-school newsletters engages and empowers parents and carers as the first educators of their children. This enables them to share in the mission of the school. All policies and procedures reflect the Catholic identity of the school.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

1

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

1



Religious literacy is an outstanding feature of the department. Students demonstrate the ability to speak with accuracy about concepts such as eschatology, creation, capital punishment, philosophy, ethics, and challenges to religious belief. The depth of the religious literacy of students has led to results in the most recent public examinations being significantly above the national average for most students at both GCSE and A-Level. The department has created assessment booklets for each year group to ensure that there is a consistent approach to assessment. This allows students to have a clear understanding of the assessment objectives and how to improve. Students respond frequently to the detailed and informative feedback provided using a consistent approach, leading to improved outcomes. Students behave extremely well in lessons and student voice supports the view that this is a highly valued subject.

Teachers in the department care deeply about all students. They have developed excellent professional relationships with their classes, which leads to a purposeful climate for learning. Teachers are enthusiastic, charismatic, and engaging. Students state that they know they can always seek out support from their teachers and that they genuinely care for them. All staff within the department are subject specialists which allows them to use their expert knowledge to inspire the next generation of theologians. An impressive number of teachers in the department are also former students, highlighting the success of the religious education department in inspiring students. Teaching across the department is strong and is exceptional at Key Stage 5. This leads to outstanding engagement and inquisitive students at A level who love their lessons and describe A-level lessons as 'interesting, fun and relevant.' The strongest lessons demonstrate excellent pace, use of music and media, cold-calling, academic challenge, debate, and fun. In A-level lessons, there is more evidence of creative approaches to teaching which allows students to express themselves in a variety of forms. This is something which the department should endeavour to embed in greater depth across the Key Stages 3 and 4 so that more students have the opportunity to demonstrate

their learning through the expressions of drama, role-play, spoken presentations, artwork, and music.

Curriculum leaders for religious education have a passionate and ambitious vision for the department. They ensure that staff share workload and have collective ownership over the lessons that are delivered. Curriculum leaders have embedded an open classroom policy whereby teachers within the department can regularly observe, coach, and share good practice. Early career teachers are particularly well supported by a large and experienced team of colleagues. The curriculum is planned with precision, thought and logic using a sequenced learning journey, therefore allowing students to build upon prior knowledge in each year group. This has led to recent significant improvement in outcomes at both GCSE and A-level. The religious education department is given full parity with regard to staffing, budget, and curriculum time, which places religious education at the centre of the curriculum. Leaders and governors are deeply committed to monitoring, supporting, and challenging the leadership of the department through regular internal and trust-wide curriculum reviews and monitoring visits. The link governor offers excellent support and challenge to members of the senior leadership team for all standards. Post-COVID, leaders in the department are offering more opportunities for visits, guest speakers from Ampleforth Abbey, and further enrichment opportunities.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

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

1

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

1

Students participate in a wide range of opportunities for prayer and liturgy. Assemblies require students to read and reflect on scripture and provide clear opportunities for a variety of prayer and reflection for all students. Students can articulate clearly how the daily routines of prayer impact their actions. They are encouraged not just to join in prayer, but to reflect on the meaning of specific parts of prayer and how it should impact their thoughts and actions. Collective worship is student-led with the assistance of the school chaplain and other experienced members of staff. Opportunities for prayer take place in a variety of forms based on the liturgical year and students express themselves through scripture, music, art and quiet reflection. Staff morning prayer led by the school chaplain also provides opportunities for students to volunteer and lead in music and prayer. The liturgical formation of the students at St Thomas More is highly effective and clearly embedded. Students can demonstrate clear examples where they are encouraged to reflect on the needs of the school and community and how this leads to action. Very strong links between the school and the local clergy have led to the sustained provision of opportunities for students to attend Mass and sacramental preparation.

Staff consistently demonstrate how prayer and liturgy is central to school life. A wide range of staff are involved in providing opportunities to enhance prayer and liturgy in school and take pride in their contributions. Through effective collaboration of staff, students have the opportunity to be involved in the choir, feast day, Advent services, and stations of the cross. Staff work together to plan ways to engage students in prayer and liturgy. The school chapel and religious art throughout the school enhance the atmosphere. Staff confidently assist students with prayer and liturgy, eliciting a wide range of contributions. New staff are provided with effective personal development in prayer and liturgy to develop their knowledge and understanding of how to enhance the prayer life of students in school. The commitment of leaders to the prayer life of the school has created a culture of confidence and enthusiasm. As a result, staff inspire students to adopt a positive approach to their own practice of prayer.

The approach to the prayer life of the school is formulated by leaders and governors. Opportunities to reflect on the effectiveness of prayer life in the school are evident and areas for development are identified for example, celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Governors have a clear knowledge of the provision for prayer and liturgy and show a clear vision for improvement. Leaders and governors systematically plan for a wide range of activities and consider how all students can participate. School governors have a wealth of knowledge of the specific needs of the community. They are highly committed to working with leaders and clergy to develop opportunities for students to work with their local community. The chaplain is regularly supported by governors in providing a variety of opportunities for students such as the confirmation programme, Advent services, Mass and attending the annual pilgrimage to Lourdes.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas More Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	137734
Full postal address of the school	Lynn Road, North Shields, Tyne & Wear, NE29 8LF
School phone number	0191 258 8340
Name of head teacher or principal	David Watson
Chair of governing board	Salome Bolton
School Website	www.stmacademy.org.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	11-19
Trustees	Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	11-12 2014
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Francesca Craik	Lead inspector
Michael Hughes	Team inspector
Andrew Young	Team inspector
Rob Young	Team inspector

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