

St Thomas More Language College

Cadogan Street, SW3 2QS

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 28 - 29 November 2018



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- The content of classroom religious education is outstanding.
- The requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory are met in an engaging and creative way, addressing the needs of all groups of learners.
- Achievement in religious education is outstanding.
- The religious education department is a leading department within the school and attainment in religious education is better than in other core subjects.
- Key Stage 3 provides the foundation for Key Stage 4 in shaping pupils' excellent attitudes, relationships and love of the subject, leading to excellent outcomes.
- Teaching is good with pupils achieving well over time.
- Teachers have high expectations and teach lessons that deepen pupils' religious literacy.
- Leadership and management of the religious education department is outstanding.
- The acting head of department, as chaplain and a member of the leadership team, promotes and embodies a coherent, dynamic and inspiring vision for religious education which has at its centre a strong sense of the educational mission of the Church.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- Religious education is at the heart of the school and permeates all aspects of school life.
- Pupil experience of religious education is enriched by the extensive number of activities, which promote the Catholic life of the school.
- The school meets the Bishops' Conference requirements for pupils to receive the weekly entitlement of 10% curriculum time in Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school and very much part of the fabric of life at St Thomas More Language College, as a result pupils speak with a passion and conviction about their faith.
- Pupils live out their faith and spirituality and this was seen repeatedly in their reverence in prayer in a variety of contexts.
- The commitment to the Common Good is outstanding. Pupils and staff demonstrate a dynamic and creative understanding of the call to human flourishing.
- The school motto, 'Serving God, Striving for Excellence' underpins the approaches to the holistic development of the individual.
- The partnership between parents, school and parishes is outstanding. The school cultivates excellent relationships with parents, parishes, Catholic schools and the Diocese of Westminster.
- The headteacher is an inspirational leader and, with the leadership team, is fully committed to the importance of religious education influencing all aspects of school life.

A. Classroom Religious education

What has improved since the last inspection?

The religious education (RE) department continues to offer excellent opportunities to all pupils to develop their religious literacy within lessons and beyond. The recommendation from the last inspection was for the head of department to lead on dissemination of outstanding practice across other subjects in the school to further develop religious literacy. This has been addressed through working with the science department and ongoing input into staff professional development sessions. The chaplain began teaching religious education in 2016 and as a result has further raised the profile of religious education outside the department. This has also improved the cohesion of approach between the department and the senior leadership team.

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding. The requirements of the curriculum in religious education are met in an engaging and creative way, addressing the needs of all groups of learners. It is explicitly mapped at each key stage, is inclusive, progressive and logical; the four strands are used to inform planning. As a result, lessons systematically build on pupils' understanding. To enhance the quality of provision at Key Stage 4 the department has invested in a range of engaging resources.

Pupil achievement in religious education is outstanding

Achievement in religious education is outstanding. Pupils enter the school with knowledge and skills that are generally in line with national averages and make excellent progress in religious education. The religious education department is a leading department within the school and attainment in RE is better than in other core subjects. At Key Stage 4, pupils excel and achievement is higher than the national average. The outcomes at Key Stage 4 indicate rapid and sustained progress. Evidence of this progress was seen particularly in the high levels of religious literacy in books and student responses at Key Stage 4. Pupils made outstanding progress at Key Stage 3 when measured against diocesan and whole school baseline measures. This key stage provides the foundation for Key Stage 4 in shaping pupils' excellent attitudes, relationships and love of the subject, leading to excellent outcomes. Different groups of pupils make good or better progress at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. A range of intervention strategies to support identified areas of underachievement for individual pupils and groups are used with effect in Key Stage 4. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and excel through high teacher expectations and engagement in their own learning. Their attitudes to religious education are very positive. They enjoy RE and are keen to succeed. Pupils have a good understanding of their target grades and apply a wide variety of skills to great effect in their work.

The quality of teaching is good

Teaching is good with pupils achieving well over time. Teachers have high expectations and teach lessons that deepen pupils' religious literacy. Lessons are planned collectively and scaffolded effectively to build on pupils' prior learning. Teachers create a positive climate for learning in lessons and pupils are interested, engaged and eager to do well. Specialist teachers have strong subject knowledge and confidence in imparting this, which inspires pupils and contributes to their ongoing progress. Non-specialist teachers are supported by a range of rich resources used to promote pupils' interest, develop their knowledge and understanding of scripture and support independent thinking. At Key Stage 3 the introduction of the 'Faith Through Art Diploma' offers pupils the opportunity to deepen their understanding of religious concepts and beliefs in a variety of ways. In two Year 10 lessons focusing on 'Why do Catholics believe in the sanctity of life?', skilful questioning was used by teachers to deepen conceptual understanding. In a Year 11 lesson, the

teacher modelled effective approaches to exam questions to build expertise and confidence. While stretch and challenge activities were seen in some lessons, these were not always utilised fully to extend the most able pupils and is an area for ongoing development. Teaching assistants are used effectively in lessons to support individuals and groups to access key learning objectives. Pupils are set targets, and generally know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Pupils are provided with diagnostic feedback, however at Key Stage 3 this is not always consistent in terms of frequency and pupil responses. At times, the nature of the teachers' feedback needs to have a greater religious literacy focus to enable pupils to respond fully. Homework is set regularly across both key stages and contributes to pupils' learning and deepens their knowledge.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education is outstanding

The acting head of department, as chaplain and a member of the leadership team, promotes and embodies a coherent, dynamic and inspiring vision for religious education which has at its centre, a strong sense of the educational mission of the Church. He plays a key role in ensuring an appreciation of the centrality of religion education in the day to day life of the school, working within and beyond the religious education department with pupils and staff, cultivating excellent relationships and providing professional development and support. The acting subject leader's very good subject knowledge is reflected in a strategic understanding of the strengths and areas for development in religious education for example, the ongoing drive for improvement of the curriculum at both key stages to further enhance creativity and as a result, pupils' learning experiences. He also has a realistic understanding of the strengths of the RE team currently and has rightly focused on maintaining the quality of teaching and learning. As acting head of department, he plays a crucial role in supporting non-specialist staff within the department and ensuring high standards and parity of experience for all learners. There are well-established systems in place to evaluate the work of the department, these frameworks should continue to be used to support the development of all aspects of RE provision. The leadership of the school have identified the need to prioritise recruitment and retention within the department and are looking at ways within and beyond school to address this.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- Address recruitment and retention to secure the quality of religious education provision in the long term.
- Ensure consistency in approaches to marking and feedback at Key Stage 3.
- Further develop provision to ensure the most able are challenged.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

The school's drive to improve the Catholic life of the school is relentless and this is evidenced in the many initiatives and activities introduced since the last inspection to enrich the spiritual experiences of pupils and staff supported and promoted by the headteacher and senior leadership team. The school improvement plan clearly reflects Catholic life priorities.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

Religious education permeates all aspects of school life. Pupil experience of RE is enriched by the extensive number of activities which promote the Catholic life of the school. The school meets the Bishops' Conference requirements for pupils to receive the weekly entitlement of 10% curriculum time in Key Stages 3 and 4. The department has three dedicated rooms for RE lessons and pupils have regular access to a beautiful chapel. The budget for the RE department is on a par with other core subjects. There are also additional budgets for chaplaincy, liturgy and the Catholic life of the school. The department is staffed by three specialists and two temporary non-specialist teachers. Ongoing professional development is used to drive improvement in the department as a whole and to address individual developmental needs. The headteacher, leadership team and RE link governor work closely with the department to review the place of RE in the school.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

is outstanding

Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school and are very much part of the fabric of life at St Thomas More Language College. As a result, pupils speak with a passion and conviction about their faith. The passion and commitment of the chaplain is evidenced in his knowledge of pupils, the majority of whom he knows by name. There is a calendar for prayer and worship with the theme of the week taken from the Sunday Gospel. The school excels in offering daily opportunities for pupils to develop their spirituality through prayer and reflection in both traditional and improvised ways. Pupils live out their faith and spirituality and this was seen repeatedly in their reverence in prayer in a variety of contexts. For example, in a Year 10 morning worship which took place in the chapel, pupils silently reflected and prayed for persecuted Christians. More informal prayer opportunities exist in the Utopia group, where again, silent prayer was much in evidence. The impact of the introduction of exposition into morning worship was seen in pupils' attitudes, and their appreciation of Christ's presence among us. Pupils also plan and devise worship and prayer. There was a very reverent and engaging assembly prepared by House Captains on Red Wednesday where pupils came together to celebrate from all years. The sacraments are offered on a very regular basis. Reconciliation is offered both formally and informally to pupils as they express a need for it, for example in the playground. Mass is celebrated every day in the school chapel. Holy Days of Obligation are celebrated and there is an annual celebration Mass to mark St Thomas More day. Parents are invited to key celebrations. The school offers a retreat programme to all year groups as well as drop-down days and is continually looking to develop and improve these further to maximise impact. The school offers an annual pilgrimage to Rome. There is a culture of ongoing evaluation of the opportunities for prayer and worship, however this is not always formalised.

The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice –

is outstanding

Pupils and staff demonstrate a dynamic and creative understanding of the call to human flourishing. There are excellent relationships between staff and pupils. The school motto, 'Serving God, Striving for Excellence' underpins the desire for the holistic development of the individual, supported by initiatives such as 'Be the Best You Can be' which encourages resilience, independence and high aspirations. Pupils' openness and commitment to their school is a testament to the school's investment in the development of their wellbeing. There is very strong tradition of celebrating success, recognised in a number of ways. A wide variety of opportunities are provided to engage pupils' understanding of the call to action for justice and peace. Pupils put their faith into action in service continuously and are very aware of how they can contribute to improving the lives of others. They have a sensitive understanding of the needs of different groups in society. They are immersed in charitable acts locally, through their links with the Cardinal Hume Centre, and on a national and international level through Aid to the Church in Need and Mary's Meals. Pupils articulated their understanding of the Common Good as fairness and justice as foundation for their charitable acts.

The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

is outstanding

The school cultivates excellent relationships with parents, parishes and Catholic schools and the diocese. Parents feel welcome at the many school events which celebrate the Catholic life of the school. An example of partnership working effectively is very evident in the work of the pastoral and academic leaders who are fully committed to working with parents to ensure individual pupils fulfil their potential. Parents express strong support of the school and are very happy with the quality of religious education and the Catholic life of the school. A Year 10 parent commented that she was happy with the Catholic life of the school and how well her children are supported. There are strong links with parishes and the school continues to look for ways to further develop this. The chaplain regularly attends meetings of local deanery clergy. There are very good links with the diocese; the headteacher, chaplain and members of the RE department attend regular Diocesan training and moderation days. The headteacher attends the Diocese of Westminster headteacher conference and members of staff have undergone Section 48 training. The chaplain also leads on transition and visits prospective students in their primary schools, which greatly supports the transition process.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school

is outstanding

The headteacher is an inspirational leader and, with the leadership team, is fully committed to the importance of RE influencing all aspects of school life. The vision for encouraging lifelong discipleship is central and the mission statement is a lived reality. The school is an inclusive community which has at its heart a sense of a family. Testament to this is the way in which pupils expressed their pride in their school and their desire to stay beyond Year 11. The headteacher and leadership team provide direction and support to ensure a culture of relentless ambition and high expectations. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and all staff have a performance management target linked to the Catholic life of the school. Governors are supportive, holding the school closely to account.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- Ensure consistency in approaches to the evaluation of the impact of prayer and worship.

Information about this school

- The school is a 4 form entry Catholic secondary school in the locality of Chelsea.
- The school serves the parish of St Mary's Chelsea and a number of parishes throughout the Diocese of Westminster and the Archdiocese of Southwark.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 99.0%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 0.5 % and from other faiths is 0.5 %.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 56.1 %.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 4.
- There are 10 % of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 15 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average.
- There is a well above average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 265 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (46.1%).

Department for Education Number	2074681
Unique Reference Number	100502
Local Authority	Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	623
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr James Kelly
Headteacher	Dr Trevor Papworth
Telephone number	0207 589 9734
Website	www.stmlc.co.uk
Email address	info@stm.rbkc.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 - 16 January 2014
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Outstanding
The Catholic life of the school	Outstanding

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 12 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 2 assemblies and 6 acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Mrs Sharon O'Donovan	Lead Inspector
Mrs Mary Coyle	Shadow Lead Inspector
Mr Stuart Alexander	Associate Inspector
Ms Winnie Greer	Associate Inspector
Ms Caitriona Powell	Associate Inspector

Published by the Diocese of Westminster

This publication is available at: <http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

Vaughan House
46 Francis Street,
London
SW1P 1QN

T: 020 7798 9005
E: education@rcdow.org.uk
W: <http://rcdow.org.uk/education>