NOTTINGHAM DIOCESAN INSPECTION REPORT ON DENOMINATIONAL EDUCATION
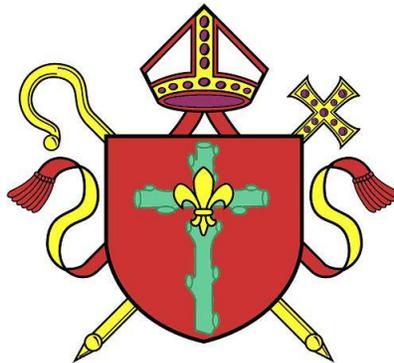
NOVEMBER 2008

6TH November 2008

SAINT THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Newstead Road
LEICESTER
LE2 3TA

(Section 48, 2005 Education Act)

SECTION 48 DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

Name and address of School:	**Saint Thomas More Catholic Primary Catholic Primary School Newstead Road Leicester LE2 3TA**
Headteacher:	Mrs Patricia Mason
Chair of Governors:	Mr Jeremy O'Dwyer
Date of Inspection:	6th November 2008
Inspection Team:	Jan Butlin Caroline Caille
URN & DCSF Numbers:	DCSF: 8563426 URN: 120226
Overall Grade Awarded:	1 OUTSTANDING

A. DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

Saint Thomas More is an average sized primary school which primarily serves the Catholic parish community of St. Thomas More, Leicester. The school is situated in an affluent area of the city, where parental expectations are high. The school is very popular and over-subscribed. Attainment on entry is at least in line with national expectations.

Of the 273 pupils on role 85% are baptised Catholics, 6% of Christians of other denominations and 9% of other world faiths.

The number of children with additional learning needs is very low at 8%, with 3 statements. The number entitled to free school meals is also very low at 4%.

B.   OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective and efficient is the provision of Catholic education in meeting the needs of learners and why?

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	1			

The overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school and commitment to community cohesion are at the heart of this outstanding Catholic school, where each child knows they are valued as a unique creation of God.

The leadership of the Headteacher is a strength of the school. She is ably supported by the Deputy Headteacher, Governors and staff of the school who share her vision. They are dedicated to providing an outstanding education for the children in their care within a Christ centred community. Curriculum Religious Education is taught to an excellent standard which facilitates the growth of the whole child.

High expectations in terms of attainment and behaviour, along with good subject knowledge facilitate the intellectual, moral and spiritual development of children.

There is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities aimed at developing the whole child within an affirming and celebratory community.

C.   The capacity of the school to make further improvements and why.

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	1			

The school's overall self-assessment is accurate. The school has effectively addressed the issues raised in the last Inspection; evaluative marking is now a strength of the school. Other initiatives such as developing liturgy and improving assessment procedures point to the school's commitment to self-evaluation as a tool for diagnosis and the implementation of change.

D.   What steps need to be taken to improve the provision further?

Saint Thomas More is an outstanding Catholic school, the leadership should consider the following recommendations to further enhance the quality of provision:
*   To make greater use of pupil peer and self-assessment in Curriculum Religious Education.
*   To ensure that pupils can identify how they have met their learning objectives in Curriculum Religious Education.
*   To further develop classroom collective worship including the end of 'Here I Am' Celebrations to ensure consistency across the school.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and Management

1.   How effective are leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school?

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	1			

Saint Thomas More is an excellent school which is true to its Mission statement. The Headteacher is a most effective leader and is passionate about the school. The highly focused governing body are committed to sustaining and developing the Catholic life of the school.

Leaders at all levels have a strong sense of the educational mission of the Church and ensure that this is lived out within the school. There is a strong sense of spiritual purpose which manifests itself in mutual respect and high levels of pupil care. Children are well nurtured and thrive in this outstanding Catholic community and in turn nurture each other. The inclusion of all learners is a strength of the school which prides itself on welcoming the stranger. The children know that their Christian values should impact on the way they live their lives.

The school council and house system ensure that the 'pupil voice' affects the life of the school.

Good relationships are at the heart of this Catholic school. Children, staff, governors, parents and parishioners work together to create a vibrant community with a sense of common purpose. This includes Sacramental Preparation and the school's involvement in Sunday Liturgy. Lived gospel values are a hallmark of this excellent Catholic school.

Collective Worship

2.   How good is the quality of Collective Worship?

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	1			

The provision for prayer and collective worship are strengths of the school. They are an integral part of life at Saint Thomas More's School, facilitating the spiritual and moral development of the children. The school has worked hard to develop its provision including the regular visits of the R.E. Governor, who leads non-Eucharistic liturgies in Foundation and Key Stage 1.

The school now needs to further develop classroom liturgy including the "celebrate" section of 'Here I Am', to ensure consistency across the whole school.

The school provision reflects the value it places on prayer through its careful planning for a variety of celebrations which mark the school and liturgical year. The school is greatly involved in the liturgical life of the parish, both through regular involvement in Sunday Masses and through the welcome extended to parishioners to attend school services. The parish priest is a regular visitor and plays an active role in the liturgical life of the school.

Pupils respond well to the opportunities offered by the school, gathering calmly, showing respect, and demonstrating an ability to reflect on what they have experienced.

There is evidence that children take part in the preparation, as well as the delivery, of collective worship, but the former could be developed more consistently to the benefit of all. Monitoring of liturgy is carried out informally by the Headteacher and this could be developed to include evaluation.

However, collective worship makes not only an outstanding contribution to the spirituality and moral development of the children but to their enjoyment of school life and overall sense of well being.

Community Cohesion

3.   How effectively the school promotes community cohesion:
**   inwardly (within the school);**
**   within the local faith community (parish and education communities);**
**   and the wider social, cultural and educational communities.**

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	1			

Community cohesion is a core value of this outstanding Catholic school. Children from differing ethnic backgrounds mix easily with each other, sharing mutual respect. All leaders in the school – indeed all who work in the school – are firmly committed to ensuring that harmony and inclusion are lived values at Saint Thomas More.

Children are taught about other world faiths and there are strong links with local schools where the majority of the pupils come from faiths other than Christianity. Activities include sharing religious beliefs and practices, and sharing a picnic and games.

The children care deeply for each other and show the hand of friendship in many situations, including the role of playground pals. During their time at Saint Thomas More children are given increasing responsibilities and they rise to the challenge. The confidence nurtured in the children pays dividends.

The children are aware of the world beyond their immediate environment and the call to give support to those less fortunate than themselves. The school community has always been extremely generous in its support for a variety of charities including Cafod and Children's Choice LRI.

Excellent relationships exist between Saint Thomas More and its local 'family' of schools, both primary and secondary, the Headteacher having chaired the primary group for many years.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and Standards

4.   How well do learners achieve?

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	1			

Attainment is very good both in respect of the pupils' own abilities and relation to national levels of achievement. Learners are developing their knowledge and understanding of religion and an ability to reflect on meaning across all Key Stages. Progress is also excellent. There is good coverage across the strands of each attainment target. By the end of Key Stage 1 children can re-tell religious stories, describe religious actions and symbols using religious words and can describe some ways in which religion is lived out by believers. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils can describe various liturgies using religious words, understand the importance of religious belief and how it shapes life and have a growing understanding of religious sources and ideas. They are display an increased level of skill and confidence when talking about their own beliefs.

Excellent behaviour in all key stages is a strength of the school and contributes to the pupils' enjoyment of school life.

In order to raise standards further the school has correctly identified the need to involve pupils in self and peer assessment.

Quality of Provision for Religious Education

5.   How effective are teaching and learning?

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	1			

The quality of teaching and learning overall is outstanding. It is consistent with curriculum guidance. Teachers have good subject knowledge and a secure understanding of the Religious Education curriculum and its key skills. Teaching is stimulating and imaginative and a variety of teaching styles and methods are used to engage pupils and promote their development. Well-planned and structured lessons with clear differentiation, help all pupils, including those with additional needs, to make good progress. In the most successful lessons teaching is well-paced with positive reinforcement and activities and demands that are sensitively matched to meet learners' needs.   Teaching assistants are usefully deployed to offer support and reinforce learning. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is also effectively deployed.

Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and based on mutual respect. Pupils regard their teachers as 'helpful and caring' and this creates a positive atmosphere in the classroom which in turn supports learning. Parents and carers are supported in assisting in their childrens' Religious Education by being provided with appropriate suggested activities.

The school uses the assessment opportunities provided by the Diocese. This could be developed to include peer and pupil self-

assessment.

6. How well does the Religious Education curriculum meet the needs and interests of learners?

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	1			

The curriculum provision fulfils the requirements of the Bishops Conference 'Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools' and is appropriately based on the approved 'Here I Am' programme. The Religious Education themes and topics follow the 'Here I Am' programme and include the liturgical year. The 10% entitlement is in place.

The curriculum has a strong impact on the spiritual and moral development of the children. It is inclusive. It covers and is respectful of other faiths. It is further enriched by providing opportunities for pupils to visit places of worship and making excellent links with other local schools to learn about other faiths. This link allows the children to reflect on their own understanding of the Catholic Faith as they explain it to others. The curriculum provided builds on pupils' prior attainment and experience. Pupils enjoy lessons and find them 'fun and interesting'. This is demonstrated by the way they involve themselves enthusiastically in lessons, by their positive attitudes and by the pride they take in their work.

Leadership and Management

7. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in Religious Education?

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
	1			

The leadership of the school as a whole, is fully committed to raising achievement and supporting all learners in Religious Education. The Religious Education Co-ordinator and Headteacher have a clear vision and sense of direction. The School Improvement Plan is strongly focused on raising standards and achievement. High-quality resources are allocated appropriately to facilitate this.

The School's Mission Statement is given the highest priority – it is lived out in the school.

Teachers are highly effective in their teaching, and are committed to improving their skills. They are supported and guided well. Regular staff training takes place, and links between the curriculum and worship opportunities are discussed. Religious Education is effectively managed and Governors are regularly informed of developments and standards. The work of the Religious Education Co-ordinator inspires, motivates and influences both staff and pupils.

The commitment of the leadership to providing high quality resources which are effectively deployed enhances the quality of Religious Education. The Governing body has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. It ensures that the best possible standards in Religious Education are maintained.

Common grading scale for all inspection judgements

Grade 1   Outstanding

Grade 2   Good

Grade 3   Satisfactory

Grade 4   Inadequate

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective and efficient is the provision of Catholic education in meeting the needs of learners and why?	**1**
• **the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school and its provision for community cohesion;**	1
• **the overall effectiveness of the provision for the Catholic Religious Education curriculum, its main strengths and areas for development**	1
• **the effectiveness of steps taken to promote improvement since the last inspection**	1
• **the capacity to make further improvements**	1

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

How effective are leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school?	**1**
• **how well the governing body fulfils its role in relation to the school's Catholic foundation**	1
• **how effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction which promotes high quality care and education and leads to improvement**	1
• **the quality of the leadership of the Headteacher and senior staff in leading and developing the Catholic life of the school**	1
• **how effectively leadership at all levels in the school promotes learners' spiritual and moral development**	1
• **the impact of the involvement of the local priests on the work of the school**	1
• **how effectively the leadership promotes relationships and communication with key partners in education**	1
• **how effectively the Catholic life of the school is monitored and evaluated**	1
How good is the quality of Collective Worship?	**1**
• **the quality of the provision for prayer, Collective Worship and liturgical life of the school and its frequency**	1
• **learners' response to the school's provision**	1
• **how effectively the provision is planned, monitored and evaluated**	2
• **how well the liturgical life, prayer and Collective Worship contributes to the spiritual and moral development of the learners**	1
How effectively the school promotes Community Cohesion?	**1**
• **how effectively leadership at all levels promote community cohesion within the school**	1
• **the efforts of the school to promote community cohesion with the wider Catholic faith and education communities**	1
• **how well does the school work in partnership with the wider education, cultural and social communities**	1
• **the inclusive nature of the provision for prayer, Collective Worship and the liturgical life of the school**	1
• **how far the Religious Education curriculum promotes community cohesion**	1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How well do learners achieve in Religious Education?	**1**
• **learners' success in achieving challenging targets including qualifications and learning goals, with**	1

trends over time and any significant variations between groups of learners	
• the standards of learners' work	1
• learners' progress relative to their prior attainment and potential, with any significant variations between groups of learners	1
• the extent to which learners enjoy their work	1
• the behaviour of learners	1
• learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
• the extent to which learners' contribute positively to the school and broader community in the school	1
How effective are teaching and learning in Religious Education?	**1**
• how well teaching is used to meet learners' needs and curriculum requirements	1
• the suitability and rigour of assessment in planning, monitoring and informing learners' progress	2
• the diagnosis of, and provision for, additional learning needs	1
• the involvement of parents and carers in their children's learning and development	1
How well does the Religious Education curriculum meet the needs and interests of learners?	**1**
• the extent to which the Religious Education curriculum matches learners' aspirations and potential, building on prior attainment and experience	1
• how far the Religious Education curriculum meets external requirements and is responsive to local circumstances	1
• the extent to which the curriculum in Religious Education contributes to the spiritual and moral development of the learners	1
• the extent to which the Religious Education curriculum contributes to learners' enjoyment and achievement	1
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in Religious Education?	**1**
• how effectively whole school and subject leadership in Religious Education lead and support their 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 their potential	1
• the adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are well taught	1
• the adequacy and suitability of specialist equipment, learning resources and accommodation	1
• how effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve high standards	1
• The extent to which governors discharge their responsibilities	1