



## **DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD**



### **Inspection Report**

**Name of School: St Thomas More Catholic Primary School**

**LEA: Essex**

**Inspection Dates: 20<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

**Reporting Inspectors: Mr Anthony Castle and Ms Colette Dawson**

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

**Type of School: Primary  
School Category: Voluntary Aided  
Age range of pupils: 4 - 11  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 214  
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body  
Date of previous Inspection: June 2005**

**School Address:  
Priory Street  
Colchester Essex CO1 2QB  
Tel. No. 01206 865722  
Fax No. 01206 868745  
Chair of Governors: Mr. Simon Fenning  
Headteacher: Mrs. Bridget Harris**

## **Introduction:**

The Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education (Schools) Act 2005 by inspectors appointed by the Diocesan Bishop at the request of the Governing Body of the School.

The Inspectors acknowledge and are appreciative of the full support, co-operation and courtesy they enjoyed from Governors, Headteacher, Staff and Pupils of the School both before and during the Inspection. The Inspectors wish to express their gratitude to all concerned.

## **The focus of the Section 48 Inspection was:**

- Classroom Religious Education
- The Catholic nature of the School through;
  1. Worship
  2. Links with the Catholic and wider community
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development

## **The Section 48 Report**

**St Thomas More Catholic Primary School,  
Priory Street  
Colchester  
Essex  
CO1 2QB**

**Head Teacher: Mrs Bridget Harris**

**Date of Inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

## **Description of the School:**

St Thomas More Primary School is a voluntary aided Catholic school situated in Colchester Town Centre, in the County of Essex and in the Diocese of Brentwood. It is an average sized school, located next to the parish Church. It caters for children who are mainly from Catholic families across a relatively wide area around Colchester. St Thomas More is an oversubscribed and very popular school. It is highly regarded by the community it serves. The school has gained several awards: Activemark, Artsmark, Basic Skills, Healthy Schools, Inclusion Mark and Investors in People.

## **Record of Evidence Base:**

Two Inspectors were in the School for the equivalent of two inspection days.

- The study of pre-inspection documentation including the Self-Evaluation Form/ Denominational Provision (SEF/DP).
- The observation of complete lessons.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Attendance at a Dress Rehearsal of Christ Child.
- Meetings with the Head Teacher, a Priest from the parish, the R.E. Co-ordinator who is also the Deputy Head Teacher and the School Council.
- Observations of R.E. Displays in the Class rooms and around the school.

## **What the School does well:**

St Thomas More is an outstanding Catholic School which displays numerous strengths. It is firmly committed to developing its Catholic identity under the inspirational and outstanding leadership of its Head Teacher who is very well supported by her Leadership team, committed Governors, highly motivated Staff, Pupils and their Parents and the Priests from the parish.

Religious Education (R.E.) is an area of high focus in the school. The **'Here I Am'** programme, recommended by the Bishop of the Diocese, is fully implemented. The 'Before You Begin' element of the process is securely embedded at the beginning of each topic. They clearly understand the **'Here I Am'** process and use it effectively to provide a high quality and stimulating curriculum. Information Communication Technology (ICT) is used effectively to enhance the quality of lessons.

The overall quality of teaching and learning in R. E. is outstanding. Lessons are well planned and learning objectives are stated, explained and revisited. In all of the lessons observed, pupils were on task, engaged, highly motivated, challenged and enjoying their R.E. Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils were enthusiastic and purposeful and worked well together. Relationships and class management are recognised strengths of the school.

Assessment in R.E. is consistent in all year groups. It is systematic, rigorous and informative. There is a clear assessment focus for each of the **'Here I Am'** topics which gives excellent evidence of **'Relate'** knowledge and understanding. Positive feedback is given to the pupils and this enables them to make progress. The children's self evaluation at the end of each topic is a further strength of the school.

The leadership and management of the R.E. by the R.E. Co-ordinator are outstanding Her leadership drives the assessment procedures used by all the teachers; she monitors R.E. lessons and is very supportive of all staff, teachers and teacher assistants. Her line of management ensures that there are good links between R.E., the liturgical life of the school and Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education.

The School meets both the national and diocesan requirements for the allocation of curriculum time for taught R.E.

Collective Worship, liturgical celebrations, the celebration of major Saints' feast days, the feast of St Thomas More and the school's links with the local parish are all strengths of St Thomas More. The school participates in the Diocesan Christmas celebration – the Christ Child- which is organised by the Brentwood Catholic Youth Service. The inspectors attended a Dress Rehearsal for this event. It was outstanding.

St Thomas More School promotes an outstanding and tangible Catholic ethos. This is subscribed to by all the stakeholders – Governors, the Head Teacher and her leadership team, staff, pupils and their parents. There is a well chosen and beautifully exhibited Mission Statement and a very tasteful Statue of the school's Patron Saint. The School provides outstanding opportunities for the pupils to develop a strong sense of community through activities which engender feelings of loyalty and belonging. St Thomas More School continues to develop strong links with other schools in the Deanery and beyond. In particular St Benedict's to which the majority of children transfer at the age of eleven. The emphasis on community cohesion is an outstanding strength of the school. St Thomas More School participates in the Diocesan Citizenship Awards which are held annually, each Spring Term.

Displays and artefacts in R.E., in the classrooms and around the School, are outstanding.

St Thomas More Primary School values its links with parents with every effort being made to improve and maintain communication with parents as their children progress through the school. The governors of the school are very dedicated, hardworking and supportive of everything the school does.

Pupils are given every opportunity to become responsible citizens. This is evident in their concern for each other and for those who are in need. This is particularly evidenced by the work and role of the School Council and the generous fundraising for the charities that the School supports. The older pupils take on a variety of responsible roles.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is an outstanding strength of the School. This was recognised by its recent Ofsted report 'Pupils' personal development and well-being including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding.' (Ofsted May 2008) The Section 48 Inspectors endorse this judgement wholeheartedly.

### **What needs to be improved?**

There are no specific areas requiring improvement other than ensuring that the areas highlighted by the Section 48 Self Evaluation Form continue to be addressed.

**Overall**, St Thomas More Primary School is an outstanding Catholic School which displays numerous strengths. It prepares its pupils so that they transfer to their Secondary Schools as happy, well-adjusted young people who are a credit to themselves, their parents and their school. The School owes much of its success to the strong and committed leadership of the Headteacher and her Leadership Team and to the valued support and expertise of her staff and governors.