

St Thomas Becket Catholic School

URN: 142747

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Northampton

26–27 February 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

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

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

1

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

2

Compliance statement

- The school is compliant in relation to the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' conference.
- The school is compliant in relation to any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- The school is compliant in relation to previous areas for improvement which have been addressed.

What the school does well

- Creates a welcoming, vibrant environment of care and spirituality based on 'Christ's Love as our Foundation'.
- Adopts creative approaches to teacher recruitment to ensure all students have access to the full curriculum provision in religious education.
- Provides opportunities for students to express themselves through prayer using their gifts and talents.
- Student-led music ministry plays a significant and vibrant role in enriching prayer and reflection within the school.
- Draws on expertise from across the Trust to support professional dialogue and the moderation of Religious Education.

What the school needs to improve

- Leaders to ensure effective internal monitoring of Catholic life, including student evaluation, which leads to positive change.
- Implement appropriate staff training in religious education, which includes deepening subject knowledge.
- Formally capture outstanding practice in prayer and liturgy and share with all staff to achieve greater consistency in collective worship.

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

Pupil outcomes

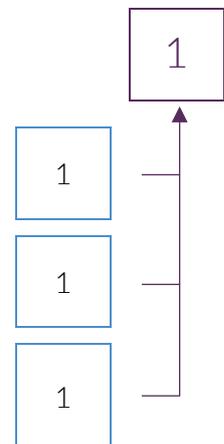
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



St Thomas Becket school creates an environment in which individuals feel valued. Scripture is strategically placed around the building, which supports an ethos of positivity, care and motivation, exemplifying the school's mission that 'Christ's love is our foundation'. Students show a deep respect for each other and the staff, whom they clearly value. The formation of the faith and ethos group has ensured that students create opportunities to be servants of faith in action, both in school and their parishes. Students value the opportunities to extend their Catholic life and service into their community, giving of their time willingly. They value the chaplaincy provision and, among the many opportunities available, choose to take up leadership roles within groups such as the St Vincent de Paul Society, faith leaders and ethos teams. A sixth form student commented that being involved in this group has enriched his life. Sixth form students are instrumental in leading whole school charities linked to their Faith in Action lessons. Students value activities to be servants of Christ through whole school events such as The Big Lent Walk and Christmas hamper provision. A Year 7 student, when asked why they chose to come to St Thomas Becket, spoke about the feeling of welcome and care in a nurturing community.

Staff actively engage with the mission statement and readily implement these values in whole school life. Leaders prioritise an inclusive culture. A Year 9 student expressed how wonderful it was to have the introduction of Black History Month and a celebration of languages around the school. Staff are positive role models for each other as well as for the students. A staff member remarked, 'As a non-Catholic I cannot imagine not working in a Catholic school anymore. The ethos is everything'. A parent commented, 'We strongly believe the Catholic ethos and mission is very present in all the school strives to do'. Students are aware of the principles of Catholic social teaching and can link learning objectives and actions with this teaching. Parents report the

highest level of pastoral care for their children, particularly at primary transition. Students value recent changes, such as a move to a rewards-based behaviour management approach, particularly noted by students in Key Stage 3. They also welcomed the introduction of the new house system, with one student saying, 'It has motivated me to want to win the house cup.' The chaplaincy provision is a central and celebrated aspect of the life and mission of the school, witnessing to the school's commitment to the flourishing of all. A dedicated team of parish priests work closely alongside the chaplains. Provision for relationships, sexual and health education meets the diocesan requirements.

The governors and chaplains have an outstanding vision for Catholic life. Governors are keen to work appropriately with the school and support the ongoing growth of opportunities for the school to act out its mission. The school works well with the diocese ensuring mission is at its heart, working regularly with trust advisors, directors and the chief executive officer to ensure monitoring and evaluation of opportunities for the whole school community. There is strong regular participation in diocesan and trust training events, collaboration and celebrations. Governors within their guardianship role support student voice, as seen in the student request to formulate the faith leaders and ethos teams within the school. All leaders have delegated responsibilities for aspects of the Catholic life of the school, bringing the thread of mission into focus for everyone. Staff with responsibilities now need clear accountability regarding their role for monitoring and reviewing, leading to positive actions.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

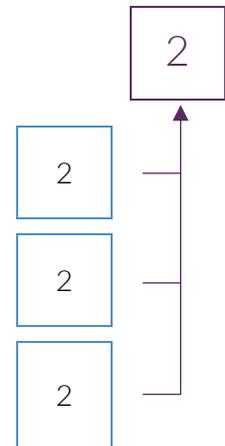
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

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

Leadership

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



Students are developing learning that reflects the *Religious Education Directory*. Outcomes in external examinations remain below diocesan and local levels at Key Stage 4 and 5. Internal data however, shows a pattern of improvement across year groups. Student behaviour is good and the majority of students express an enjoyment of the subject, and in most cases respect and support each other in their learning, engaging in discussion and shared activities. Students feel they know what they have achieved and how to get help to progress their work further. They understand religious literacy when used in lessons, and most can apply appropriate terms in their work, supported by the pre-teach vocabulary systems in place. Students respond well to ‘why’ questions, and most are comfortable asking questions and offering opinions when prompted to do so. Similarly, students are able to work independently when asked to do so. Whilst students are encouraged to take care in their presentation, this varies in terms of quality.

Lessons show consistency of expectation and content. Teachers are committed to the value of religious education, communicating this effectively with students in a variety of ways. Catholic social teaching is linked to the topics being covered, and, in some cases, explored within the learning. All teachers use ‘think, pair, share’ discussion and group work consistently to promote independent thinking. There are however, inconsistencies in the delivery of provision. In the best lessons, a range of assessments for learning helps move learning forward. Planning for adaptive learning strategies is in place; however, delivery and use of these are still inconsistent. When used, techniques such as timers, thinking time, seating plans, modelling and retrieval practice help with pace and focus, moving learning forward within the lessons. Teachers create a positive learning environment which encourages students to participate. A marking and feedback policy is in place, but it is not consistently applied. There is an over reliance on self and peer assessment

without any regular follow up to check the accuracy of student assessment and or corrections to feedback.

The head of the religious education department has a clear vision of what he wants to achieve at Key Stages 3 and 4. The current structure also has the head of sixth form managing and leading sixth form religious education, known as faith in action for core provision, supported by the lead for religious education and the chaplains. Leaders have worked creatively to fill vacancies and embraced a range of career avenues for teacher training to fill vacancies. A level provision is offered with uptake currently in Year 12 only. Linked to this, leaders acknowledge the support and training required by those staff engaging in early career programmers, seeking support from the trust to extend the formation of new staff in the teaching of religious education. There is currently parity of funding for religious education, and the school is providing the required curriculum time across the key stages. However, there is limited access to additional adult support in the classroom. Leaders have therefore underpinned support for students with special educational needs through a whole school adaptive teaching framework, which is consistently applied across the religious education department.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

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

1

Students embrace prayer in their own individual ways, ranging from silent reverence, to praise through song. They engage in all opportunities to pray and reflect whether they are of faith or no faith. A deep reverence is seen when invited to pray and many take on the opportunity to lead and guide others. A parent commented, 'Because of the school my child has grown spiritually through retreats and a youth spiritual programme, The Ascent. These have really strengthened my child's faith'. Students and staff demonstrate respect and reverence when called to prayer. In some classes, the school prayer is recited proudly and clearly, while others choose to use more traditional formal prayers which they feel comfortable with. Students with musical talents have embraced the opportunities provided to enrich prayer and liturgy opportunities in assemblies and other cross-school events, often extending to their own parishes. Students work collaboratively with leaders and chaplains to create moments of awe and wonder; for example, the Friday prayer and worship session, where students of all ages gather to sing, pray, reflect and praise God.

The school is privileged to have a beautiful chapel, which is buzzing with life at break and lunchtimes. Every classroom has a prayer board, and religious education classrooms have an additional focus prayer area. When the chapel is too small for voluntary prayer activities, the auditorium provides a focal area for larger prayer gatherings, with a large cross lit at its centre, welcoming all to prayer. Provision for Mass, Adoration and private prayer are available to all members of the community, and there is open access to the chapel for everyone. Staff and students all engage in a celebration of the word on a Monday morning, which sets the theme for the week through reflection, prayer and liturgy. The creative, artistic skills and expertise of students and staff have been identified and nurtured to enable them to use their gifts confidently to enhance the prayer for others. A wide range of high-quality music, when appropriate, is

integrated in a way that significantly enhances these experiences for participants and reflects the riches of the church. The school works hard to ensure flourishing partnerships with local parishes, with student input and leadership of prayer and liturgy extending to the surrounding community. One parent commented, 'Our children have taken part in many activities, reflections and Mass within the school community and beyond, which supports and promotes the growth of their faith and that of the school.'

A committed and passionate team of priests and chaplains have a clear vision for supporting the faith journeys of all members of the school community. The school takes guidance from diocesan and trust training and actively takes part in trust events. Governors support, review and reflect on provision, acting as conduits between the school and the parishes, encouraging students to lead events. The school's policy on prayer and liturgy is accessible and useful to relevant staff, incorporating an understanding of the skills of participation that are reflective of age and capacity of students. Leaders acknowledge that there is no ceiling to students' ability to lead and have embraced this. Enabling student led spontaneous worship results in exemplary, inspiring contributions from students in prayer and liturgy, which draws others to do the same. The leaders and governors promote invitational discipleship. Staff members quoted that they had been encouraged to return to work at the school, due to its faith provision. One commented, 'Even though the profession is stressful, this place makes it less so', and another remarked, 'We feel seen here'.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Thomas Becket Catholic School
School unique reference number (URN)	142747
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9414703
Full postal address of the school	Becket Way, Kettering Road North, Northampton, Northamptonshire, NN3 6HT
School phone number	01604493211
Headteacher	Paul McCahill
Chair of governors	Chris Atkin
School Website	http://www.thomasbecket.org.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Academies Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	June 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Catherine Burnett	Lead
Clare Cattle	Team
Clodagh Benning	Team

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