

Strategic Objective 2020-2025	Progress to date: Summer 2021
1. Eliminate Financial Deficit	The Budget submitted in May 2021 will eliminate the brought forward deficit by April 2022 thus the re-structuring and cost saving over the past two years are starting to pay off. The forward projections from Spring 2022 indicate a carry forward surplus.
2. Increase pupils numbers	Significant increase in applications for Nursery from September 2021 and there has been an increase in the in-year admissions too.
3. Education with a Catholic ethos	<p>Due to Covid restrictions, Collective Worship has been logistically challenging. Nevertheless, we didn't lose our Catholic ethos. In fact, through these hard times, it grew deeper and stronger. The SLT successfully delivered live streamed Collective Worship sessions where the ET visited specific year groups whilst the other years tuned into the stream allowing children to participate and remain in their class bubbles. The newly appointed Chaplaincy Team created weekly inspirational messages to link with the liturgical themes and they placed these on display throughout the school.</p> <p>There has been the opportunity for several individual class Masses to be celebrated in person at Sacred Heart and live streamed into classes for the whole school to participate. Many of our Year 3 children prepared for their First Holy Communion over the past five months and celebrated the sacrament on 3rd July at Sacred Heart.</p>
4. Ensure appropriate ENF funding	Through the submission of rigorous evidence and paperwork, our SENDCo/INCo has secured 'Local High Needs Funding (LHNF) for a significant number of pupils as well as conversions to EHCPs which are banded and funded according to individual needs. This has resulted in a significant increase in funding to support these children for 2021-22 and beyond.
5. Stabilise Leadership structure	The SLT has now been established for the past two years and consists of the part-time Executive Headteacher (ET), the full-time Head of School (HoS) and the part-time SENDCo/INCo. From September 2021, this will also include the EYFS leader due to the line management of staff in the EYFS. All teachers who are subject leaders have received professional development enabling them to lead their subjects well. This includes the creation of a curriculum from the EYFS to Year 6 and the implementation of a 'Deep Dive' methodology which mirrors the expectations of an Ofsted Inspection when evaluating the subject. Self-evaluation is accurate and effective at ensuring our curriculum offer falls within the 'Good' category as a minimum.

6. Quality of Teaching

Our school has had several visits this year from representatives of the Local Authority, to evaluate the quality of provision for our children. The first was in the Spring Term (January) when we took part in a 'Mock Ofsted' (Mocksted) which included a 'Deep Dive' into Mathematics across the whole school and a focus on the EYFS. This was led by a senior District School Effectiveness Advisor and she was supported by two Early Years Advisors – one focusing solely on Safeguarding. The visitors worked alongside the SLT and Vice-Chair of Governors with the review at the end of the day shared with the Chair of Governors.

For the Mathematics 'Deep Dive':

'review of documentation indicates that the curriculum is coherently planned and well sequenced in terms of mathematical knowledge, concepts and procedures and ensures new content is divided into manageable steps' 'leaders have defined a consistent pedagogical approach to the teaching of mathematics which uses resources that enable pupils to develop a deep understanding of the concepts they are learning' and 'all teachers spoken to reported positively about the ongoing support they had received from the subject leader and head of school'.

Agreed Actions: to ensure consistency in all areas across all classes and to look at the system we use to record our formative and summative assessment.

Since the visit, the subject leader has fully addressed these agreed actions.

6. Quality of teaching continued

There was also a discussion about other curriculum areas:

Discussions with senior leaders indicate that there is a very clear and well thought through vision for the overarching design of the curriculum at St Thomas More' and 'leaders can define clearly how they match their intended curriculum goals and drivers'.

Agreed Actions: to ensure we have a clear progression from Nursery to Year 6 and to consider how subject leaders across all areas of the curriculum are likely to find it helpful to review their systems and processes to ensure consistency across all subjects. Since the visit, all subject leaders have taken part in rigorous ongoing professional development to ensure consistency.

The 'Mocksted' included a focus on our 'vulnerable' pupils (those eligible for the Pupil Premium 'grant)

'...clearly defines the barriers experienced by the pupils on rollhigh quality whole class teaching; time limited, evidence based interventions; the implementation of wider, whole school strategies' and 'leaders are determined that the curriculum will not be narrowed, for any pupil'.

Agreed Actions: carry on with ensuring all curriculum areas are adapted to meet the needs of all pupils.

For the EYFS 'inspection', the following was noted:

'The children entered in a calm, well-established routine, and undertook the self-registration activity'

'The learning environment is well organised, well-delineated and contains some interesting and engaging resources in zones for learning. The role play area in particular has an inviting range of both 'real' and natural resources to promote high quality learning opportunities.'

'...adults modelling aspirational language to the children were observed'

'...positive example of effective adult support during child initiated learning was when the children were supported to create aeroplanes from junk materials.'

'The children's attitudes and behaviour towards the visitors indicated that they felt confident and safe in their learning environment.'

Agreed Actions: to continue to update risk assessments, remove the outdoor climbing frame, move the changing unit back into the EYFS unit, put a lock on the fridge and provide ongoing training to staff to ensure that open ended questions are asked naturally and routinely.

Immediately following the visit, a lock was ordered and placed on the fridge. Risk assessments continue to be updated daily and the changing unit was immediately moved back over to the EYFS toilet area. The outdoor climbing frame was removed by volunteers in April and the area was cordoned off until volunteers created a grass area for the children at the beginning of May 2021. Staff ongoing CPD has been focusing on strengthening confidence with open-ended questions which includes specific questioning vocabulary.

<p>6. Quality of teaching continued</p>	<p>The final evaluation that day was about the quality of the Leadership and Management and the feedback included the following:</p> <p><i>‘leaders at all levels have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality education to all pupils. This is realised through strong, shared values and is underpinned by the distinctive Catholic character of the school.’</i></p> <p><i>‘during the review, aspects of the deep dive methodology were employed in a connected way’</i></p> <p><i>Discussions with the chair and vice-chair of governors indicate that whilst practice has changed as a result of Covid restrictions, typically governors visit the school frequently to gather first hand evidence about the quality of education being provided’</i></p> <p>Agreed Actions: Leaders intend to utilise aspects of the ‘deep dive ’methodology to explore the quality of education in other subjects, in a connected way, as part of their ongoing monitoring schedule. Governors to engage in some training about the expectations of the Education Inspection Framework as part of their ongoing training programme for this academic year.</p> <p>Since this visit, self-evaluation has utilized the ‘Deep Dive’ methodology for SEND provision and support, reading, Science and PE. The FGB attended training on the Education Inspection Framework (Ofsted) in May and some of the Governors have also been part of the ‘Deep Dives’ that we have undertaken.</p>
<p>7. Improve pupil achievement</p>	<p>The government suspended all formal assessments for 2020 and 2021. However, our internal assessment system utilises both formative and summative assessments and support us in identifying gaps in children’s learning that have occurred as a result of the 2 lockdowns over the past 2 academic years. Our focus has been on ensuring there is a systematic approach to our teaching, that our children are taught key areas of the curriculum and that our children are in a good place with their mental health in order for them to re-engage with the learning opportunities and continue to make good progress. Our end of year assessment data has used both formative and summative data to draw conclusions about children’s achievement. We have also worked on developing a curriculum from the EYFS to Year 6 that is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment. We fully anticipate that when the government resumes its testing regime, our children will achieve well.</p>

<p>8. Maintain quality and relevance of curriculum</p>	<p>We have had two subsequent visits from our Hertfordshire Improvement Partner and observations have included:</p> <p><i>'Leaders have taken decisive action to ensure that there is consistency implementing the mathematics curriculum in the way in which they intend'</i></p> <p><i>'New assessment resources have been implemented that are closely aligned to the school's chosen curriculum...'</i></p> <p><i>'governors have undertaken training in the current Education Inspection Framework...they are likely to find it helpful to join senior and subject leaders in elements of the deep dives into reading and PE, planned for the summer term...'</i></p> <p>Each visit has also supported us in developing clear actions for further development – for example creating a bank of 'must reads' for every year group and in particular, developing a bank of suggested reads for the 'free readers' in Upper KS2 to ensure they are accessing high quality and challenging texts from a wide variety of authors. We created an action plan to systematically address suggested actions, with precise time-scales and monitoring arrangements, to ensure all staff are well prepared for the next academic year, with all subjects having a coherently planned and sequenced progression of knowledge and skills.</p> <p>In our final HIP visit for this academic year at the end of this term– which had a main focus on exploring the quality of education provided by the school for pupils with a special educational need and/or disability (SEND), the following comments were made:</p> <p><i>'There are high levels of SEND identified across the school (27%) with an anticipated total of 6 EHCPs. (3.4%).'</i> The national average for 2019 was 12.8% SEND and 1.8% EHCP.</p> <p><i>'Leaders and teachers undertake rigorous provision mapping for all pupils who are considered to be vulnerable.'</i></p> <p><i>'Discussions with pupils indicate that they greatly appreciate and value the support they receive.'</i></p> <p><i>'Where pupils have complex needs there is evidence that these are met through a wide range of strategies and support.'</i></p> <p>Agreed Actions: Subject leaders to collate information already provided by teachers as to how all subject areas are to be adapted to meet the needs of pupils with SEND so they can begin to evaluate how effectively the curriculum is being adapted in their subject area.</p> <p>Consider some tightening of the targets/outcomes on the intervention tracking overviews so that they are more easily measurable.</p>
<p>9. Maintain premises as 'fit-for-purpose'</p>	<p>Our site is fully secure with all of the improvements that have been implemented this year – the perimeter fencing, electronic gates, CCTV. All Diocesan Schools have to register with a system called 'STATLOG' that enables the school and Diocese to identify areas of the premises that need to be updated, improved, maintained and ensure they are 'fit for purpose'. We are fully subscribed and will work alongside the Diocesan team to ensure our school premises continue to be a safe and engaging environment for our children to experience success with their learning.</p>
<p>10. Join a suitable Academy trust</p>	<p>We are currently working with the Diocese to create a local Hub that will bring the Dacorum Catholic Schools together in a partnership that reflects the vision we have for our children. The Diocesan Academies Policy is directing the timescale and processes for these discussions.</p>