

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School

Mission Statement

LEARNING TO LIVE OUT OUR CALLING WITH
COMPASSION AND LOVE

Rationale

- We believe parents are the first and best educators of their children.
- We believe in fostering strong parish and home school links to enable staff, children, parents and parish to work together to support the community in which we live, work and worship.
- We believe Religious Education is central to the educative mission of the church.
- We believe Religious Education to be 'the core of the curriculum'.
- We are aware that evangelisation and catechesis are happening in our school and we are clear that the specific contribution Religious Education makes to the Catholic Life of the school is primarily educational and will be planned, taught, assessed and monitored with the same rigour as other curriculum subjects.
- We understand Religious Education to be the systematic study of the teaching of the Church and the mystery of Christ. Religious Education is, then, the core subject at St. Mary's, it is a rigorous academic discipline and as such is taught, developed and resourced with the same commitment as any other core subject. The outcome of Catholic Religious Education 'is religiously literate young people who have the knowledge, understanding and skills appropriate to their age and capacity to think spiritually, ethically and theologically, and who are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.

Introduction & Values

St. Mary's School is a Catholic school as part of the Christ the King Catholic Collegiate, in the trusteeship of the Diocese of Birmingham. The school bases its teaching on the Gospel message of God's immeasurable love for us, and invites the children to respond by loving God and by loving their neighbour as themselves. The children are encouraged to take Jesus as their model in seeking to live out their calling with compassion and love. St. Mary's School achieves this by teaching the children to know and love God and the Gospel teachings. This permeates all aspects of the curriculum and the daily life of the school. This teaching is celebrated in worship and liturgies, rites and rituals of the Catholic Church. Parents are encouraged to uphold and reinforce the fundamentals of the Catholic faith taught in the school.

At St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, we believe in providing a curriculum that widens the experiences of our children leading them to have high aspirations. We aim to develop our children to compete in an ever-changing global society. Therefore, we equip our children with the necessary skills not only to cope with such a society but also to be able to excel alongside their peers. We create an environment that is safe, nurturing and loving in order to provide the best conditions for our children to achieve. The uniqueness of every child is embraced and we instil in them the belief that they are made in the true image and likeness of God. We recognise that parents are the first educators of their children and so we strive to work in partnership with them to enable the children to reach their full God given potential.

Leadership of Religious Education

Religious Education is the responsibility of the Religious Education (RE) subject leader and the Headteacher. The Subject Lead and Headteacher are supported by the Worship Lead (Mrs C Wrigley). Their role is to monitor and assess the RE curriculum throughout the school to ensure continuity and progression. They also ensure that the aims and learning outcomes in the Curriculum Directory are identified and fulfilled. A school governor (Mrs J Rogers) has specific responsibility for RE and liaises closely with the staff of the school to fulfil their monitoring duties.

Curriculum Content

RE is a core subject in our school, alongside English, Maths and Science, and therefore we devote 10% of our curriculum time to its delivery. We adhere to the Curriculum Directory guidelines and learning outcomes. This provides a cohesive approach and opportunities for whole school assemblies and liturgies as well as displays which are relevant to every child. The core of our curriculum is based on the RECD and the Learning and Growing as the People of God scheme of work. These themes are developed with greater depth and breadth each year as the child progresses through the school, and form the core of learning in RE.

"What are we to teach? Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. "

This document is intended as guidance for governors, teachers and parents. Its purpose is to guide teachers and help them to become familiar with the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Its aim is to help schools and teachers to ensure that the religious teaching is faithful to the Catechism. It leads teachers through the content of the Catechism, so that they may make reference to the approved text itself.^{2 5 5} The essentials of Catholic religious teaching is present in the curriculum in our school, even if only in a simple and elementary way in the early years. Throughout the school years, the presentation of the whole Christian message must grow and develop so becomes ever challenging and central to the lives of our children. Teachers should make the time to read through this document to become familiar with the layout of the Catechism.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Catechism of the Catholic Church provides an excellent topic index which will assist teachers' own understanding of the faith. This is for teachers to use as a resource.

Planning, Assessment & Recording

Teachers follow the Learning and Growing as the People of God scheme and plan units of work with due regard for the Standards for Primary Religious Education, ATs 1,2 and 3 and ensure that pupils are provided with opportunities to record their learning and show that they are working at the expected standard for their age and / or ability. Teachers provide evidence of a piece of work that reflect the expected standards for each unit and these samples will be verified by or matched against samples of work moderated at Academy RE Meetings. Assessment of Religious Education at our school is designed to assist our children's learning and to enable them to strive for a feeling of confidence and success in their understanding of the Catholic faith. Progress is monitored through discussion, questioning, posing problems and giving pupils opportunities to present their knowledge to others in a variety of ways including *'Developing Thinking Skills'* activities. Attainment records are completed at the end of each assessed unit (as decided by the Diocese) to show children's levels of understanding and the Senior Leadership Team monitor pupils' attainment and progress.

Marking & Feedback

In line with the school's marking policy, marking of children's religious work should always be positive and supportive to encourage the child in his/her faith journey. Marking will focus upon religious content and comments, feedback and next steps given will look to enhance religious skills, knowledge and understanding, rather than Literacy skills of spelling, grammar and punctuation. However, inaccurate spelling of important religious key words will be corrected within the children's books. The school has a separate feedback policy for RE (see Appendix Three for marking codes). The two main intentions of feedback are that the children know what they have done well and secondly how they can improve.

Teaching Staff

All teachers at St. Mary's School are either Catholics or are sympathetic to the teaching of the Catholic faith which permeates all aspects of our school life. Through example, commitment and teaching, the children are encouraged to develop a loving and trusting relationship with God, an experience which it is hoped will influence their attitudes to life and their relationship with other people. All teaching staff have the responsibility of teaching Religious Education to the children in their class. All staff are encouraged to regularly attend relevant courses. The diocese provides information on courses and teachers are asked to feedback to the RE Leader. Our diocesan advisor is invited to contribute to our staff professional development and her help and advice sought about policy and practice.

Home Links

The school recognises it cannot teach our children without the cooperation of the parents. The parents/guardians are the first educators and they are in partnership with the teachers who have the professional skills to help parents in teaching Catholic faith. We endeavour to do this in an atmosphere of trust and confidence. During the year, parents and friends are invited to join us at many masses and celebrations. Throughout the year, parents play a part in our commitment and Sacramental masses. At the end of the year, we hold a leavers' mass to say farewell to those children leaving us and to thank them for their contribution and commitment to the life of our school. Parents are always invited and welcomed to all our school and class celebrations which include school masses, class masses and assemblies. Each week, a child is chosen in each class to take the Prayer Bag home and share a worship with their family.

Parish Links & Parish Priest

We recognise that the school stands in the midst of the local community. At parish level, a class from attends the Friday morning mass at Holy Trinity every week. We give regular support to CAFOD through our parish representative (Mr P Mayland) enabling our children to become aware of the needs of the wider world.

Father Paul, our Parish Priest and one of our governors, has responsibility for the pastoral care of the school community. The parish priest promotes the spiritual life of the school. He leads the celebration of liturgies and whole school and class Masses. In addition, the parish priest visits the school on a regular basis to discuss the development of RE and parish links. Father Paul is supported by Father Marco, who visits school as part of our Bible Club sessions and wider learning days e.g. Vocations Day.

Chaplaincy Team

A group of pupil volunteers work with the RE Lead and Headteacher to prepare for our weekly whole school Gospel assembly. They also play an active part in preparing the altar on the days where mass is celebrated in school. This Chaplaincy Team is designed to give the children more ownership and understanding of this central aspect of their faith. They are selected after completing an application form and being interviewed by our Headteacher. They receive their Chaplaincy Team certificate at a special commissioning service during a school mass at the start of the year. In addition to the Chaplaincy team, there are various other leadership groups that provide the children to develop and live out their faith e.g. Minnie Vinnies, Bible Club, Guardian Angels and Laudato Si Leaders.

Prayer

An essential part of the Catholic ethos of the school is the prayer life. The most important aspect of prayer for children is that they realise it is their way of communicating with God. Children are encouraged to pray in different ways according to their age and personal development. Children are introduced to a variety of different ways of praying:

- quiet reflection / meditation
- praying together
- writing own prayers
- prayers through music
- learning traditional Christian / Catholic prayers

Staff are encouraged to pray with children, and to be an example for them. Through prayer, we endeavour to develop our relationship with God. All classes have a prayer tables which contain various religious artefacts. This area changes with the liturgical year and on a half termly basis to reflect the virtues for that half term. Whole school prayers are prayed in each class four times a day alongside the traditional prayers of the Church for that year group. Children take part in whole school assemblies where children and staff join together to pray. Children are encouraged to pray their own prayers. All of the children take part in and plan worship in their classes each week.

Sacramental Preparation

Through our R.E. scheme, knowledge of all the sacraments is established, with special emphasis upon Baptism, Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation. Years 5 & 6 also learn about the Sacrament of the Sick and Holy Orders. The children are prepared in school for the Sacrament of First Holy Communion from Year 3. All of our Sacramental celebrations are shared with other children from within the parish. In this way, we hope to achieve true partnership between school, family and parish, with the children celebrating their First Communion in their local church. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is also led by school staff. Like the Sacrament of Communion, the preparation for Reconciliation starts at the beginning of the child's school life. It begins with the child's first experiences; teachers and helpers work towards a loving, caring and forgiving atmosphere in school.

Multi-Faith

St. Mary's is a Catholic school and therefore by the very religion that causes its existence, it must be a school that encourages tolerance, respect and care for all people, regardless of colour, race or creed. Whilst Religious Education at St. Mary's is specifically of the Roman Catholic tradition, we welcome input from other faiths and denominations. We appreciate how the beliefs and values of other faith communities can enrich our own spiritual existence. We teach and learn about the other major faiths as part of our multi-faith week and as part of our Big Question programme throughout the academic year.

Spiritual & Moral Development

The religious character of our school is seen as giving shape to every aspect of school life, especially the spiritual and moral development of our children. Spiritual development is understood as the development of all those aspects which enable us to appreciate goodness, beauty and truth. Through our teaching, we enable children to reflect on their experiences of life. Through their awareness and understanding of themselves, they recognise God's action in their lives. In addition, pupils are taught about the importance of the mission of the Church. Helping children to make their moral decisions is a crucial part of the formation of a moral conscience. Through our Building the Kingdom approach to the curriculum, we aim to help children to have an understanding of the Gospel of Jesus and through self-awareness enable them to come to good moral judgements and make a positive difference in our world.

Environment

It is our intention that the environment of our school reflects our mission statement and that we are providing a caring, well-ordered and stimulating environment that reflects our Christian beliefs. Work is displayed in a variety of ways throughout the school. Each classroom has an RE area with a display board and prayer table, where our mission tagline is displayed. The display board will reflect the colour theme of the liturgical year. There are various Religious Education displays throughout the school that demonstrate the extent to which the Gospel message is valued. Bibles, candles, artefacts and pictures are all used to enhance and present our Catholic faith.

Special Needs

The RE curriculum, as with other areas of the curriculum, is differentiated to meet the needs of our children through our planning. As with other subjects, we use a 'scaffolding up' approach as opposed to 'differentiating down'. This approach is used to remove the ceiling from learning enabling all children to reach their potential in any given lesson. In the classroom we intend:

- to provide a happy, caring environment so all children achieve their potential.
- that plans should indicate a variety of learning styles for all children.
- that children's work should show a variety of recording to suit all abilities.
- that teaching focuses on learning outcomes.
- to build on the child's strengths to allow maximum participation in all activities.
- children grow spiritually and develop a strong sense of the value of God's world.

Policy Reviewed by: J. Bridgewater, D Mellor

Date: 1/9/22

Signed:

Headteacher

Date:

Signed:

RE Lead

Policy to be reviewed: September 2023

Appendix One – Sacramental Preparation

The sacramental preparation of children of St. Mary's School is the role of the class teachers along with the support of the RE Lead. First Holy Communion is commonly celebrated by children in Year 3, although children from other classes may join in with the programme. Reconciliation is celebrated as well. The Sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated in Year Six. The school encourages children in their steps in faith through the R.E. curriculum by the emphasis given to aspects of that curriculum at these important times.

Eucharist

The school encourages all children to take part in Eucharist celebrations, within the school community and within the parish. Special roles are given to particular school years in these celebrations, and all children are asked to take part in hymns, prayers and readings. However, we lay special emphasis on:

- Welcoming, at the start of the year/term/ week and at the start of celebrations.
- Recognition of the Eucharist as sharing, of giving thanks for gifts, especially bread and wine as gifts of the earth.
- Recognising that we are a community, of the past and present, and that as members of that community we need to take care of each other.
- Developing, through celebrations of the liturgical seasons, the need to accept responsibility for sin and put matters right: the recognition of special meals shared by Jesus with his friends, knowing that he gave his life for us.
- Going forth to follow Jesus at the end of the celebration and the end of the year.

Reconciliation

We encourage our children in celebrating this sacrament by emphasising the following aspects of our R.E. syllabus:

- Taking responsibility - in school for younger pupils, for the school environment, for their own behaviour.
- Developing awareness that their actions affect others - their rights are others' responsibilities.
- Through stories of famous people/saints to recognise that through repentance and forgiveness lives can be changed.
- The celebration of repentance and reconciliation in services in Advent and Lent and at the start of every Mass.
- The idea of new starts / new life at Easter.
- That Jesus is with us every day as we move on in our lives and in our faith. We are a worshipping community; all our children take part in that worship.

We are a part of the worshipping community that is the parish. We encourage parishioners to take part in the life of the school, to join us for assemblies, mass, to visit on open days, to volunteer their services to help in school. We work to develop our links with the parish so that children can be fully involved in the life of the parish.

Appendix Two – Collective Worship

We acknowledge the legal requirement that there must be a daily act of worship for all pupils (this can take place at any time during the school day and can be either a single act of worship for all pupils, or separate acts of worship in school groups).



The act of worship is distinct from RE lessons. It forms an integral part of school life and is central to the Catholic tradition. In this Catholic School, responsibility for arranging collective worship rests with the governing body after consultation with the Headteacher. Those responsible will ensure that acts of worship are in accordance with the school's instrument of governance and consistent with the rites and practices of the Catholic Church.

As a Catholic school, we hope that parents will be fully supportive of our approach to collective worship as part of living out our mission statement. However, we recognise that parents have the right to withdraw their children from collective worship. In such circumstances, it may be required for the parents to arrange appropriate alternative supervision.

Collective worship is celebrated in a variety of ways including: whole school worship; class worship; worship through hymns; class mass or liturgy; whole school masses during the year, including Holy Days of obligation during term time.

Collective worship in our school community provides opportunities to: deepen our relationship with God; grow in spiritual, moral and liturgical understanding; grow in understanding of our living faith tradition; develop a sense of wonder and inspiration in the person of Christ; reflect upon our own individual faith journeys; and develop the skills of prayer.

Appendix Three – Marking & Feedback Codes

	Deepen your response
	Make a link (scripture, religious artefact, church teaching)
	Give an example of someone who lived this out
	How can you live this out?
	Write an 'I wonder' question related to your learning

SP	Spelling correction
CL	Capital letter
U	Underline
WS	Work completed with support
VF	Verbal feedback given
✓	Correct response
✓✓	Greater depth response