



Saint Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Religious Education Policy

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| Consulted with staff | |
| Agreed by governor committee | Not applicable |
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| Date for review | Sep 2024 |
| Signature of Chair of Governors | |
| Signature of Headteacher | |

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Religious Education Policy

Introduction

Jesus Christ said 'Let the children come to me, do not hinder them' (Matthew 19:14). As a Catholic school it is our mission to educate pupils in such a way that no matter what their abilities or background they may reach their full potential as human beings. We thus seek to overcome any hindrance that might prevent any pupil accessing the fullness of the curriculum, opportunities and activities we offer.

Intent

At Saint Thomas More Catholic Primary School our mission is to 'Learn and Grow as God's Holy People.' We aim to encourage the spiritual and moral development of the children within the context of the Catholic faith, whilst sustaining a respect and understanding of other faiths and beliefs. We promote core Gospel values and aim to keep Christ at the centre of what we do.

Religious Education at Saint Thomas More School has a very high priority in the life of the school. Not only is it an important area of the curriculum but is also recognised as a core subject that has the capacity to engage pupils' intellect, heart and imagination.

In addition, we aim:

- To develop an awareness and understanding of the presence of God in each individual child's life and to encourage a personal response to faith and the ultimate questions about human life, its origin and purpose.
- To allow each child to develop their conscience and make sound moral judgements based on commitment to following Christ and the skills to engage in examination of and reflection upon religious belief and practice.
- To enable each child to learn and develop to their full potential according to their abilities and adopt attitudes of care and respect for each other.
- To promote the sacramental life of Catholic families and to encourage parents to take an active part in the preparation of their children for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation.
- To promote knowledge and understanding of Catholic faith and life.

Curriculum Objectives

The objectives of curriculum religious education at St Thomas More Catholic Primary school are:

- To develop knowledge and understanding of the mystery of God and of Jesus Christ, of the Church and of the central beliefs which Catholics hold;
- To develop awareness and appreciation of Catholic belief;
- To develop knowledge and understanding of the mystery of God and of Jesus Christ, of the Church, and of the central beliefs which Catholics hold;
- To develop awareness and appreciation of Catholic belief, understanding of its impact on personal and social behaviour and of the vital relationship between faith and life, life and faith;
- To encourage study, investigation and reflection by the pupils;
- To develop appropriate skills: for example, ability to listen; to think critically, spiritually, ethically and theologically; to acquire knowledge and organise it effectively; to make informed judgements.
- To foster appropriate attitudes: for example, respect for truth; respect for the views of others; awareness of the spiritual, of moral responsibility, of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life and especially the challenge of living in a multi-cultural, multi-faith society.

The Teaching of Gospel Values and Virtues

Saint Thomas More School exists for the express purpose of teaching, practising and passing on the Catholic faith to our young people and therefore the Gospel message underpins everything we do here. We maintain very close links with our local parish and the Priest and Deacons play an important role in the life of our school.

At Saint Thomas More we are following the Archdiocese of Birmingham's Catholic Schools Profile. In the profile there are eight sets of values and/or virtues which have been paired together because of their complimentary and harmonising relationship to one another. Each half term, we focus on a pair of values and think about how we can grow more like Jesus in our daily lives.

| Pupils in Saint Thomas More Catholic Primary School are growing to be... | Schools in the Archdiocese of Birmingham help their pupils grow... |
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| Grateful for their own gifts, for the gift of other people, and for the blessings of each day; and generous with their gifts, now and in the future. | By encouraging them to know and be grateful for all their gifts, developing them to the full so that they can be generous in the service of others. |
| Attentive to their experience and to their vocation; and discerning about the choices they make and the effects of those choices. | By promoting the practice of attentive reflection and discerning decision making: in teaching, in the examen, prayer and retreats; and through the practice and example of school leaders and staff. |
| Compassionate towards others, near and far, especially the less fortunate; and loving by their just actions and forgiving words. | By being compassionate and loving in the way pupils are treated, especially when a pupil is in trouble; and by opening pupils' eyes to those who suffer poverty, injustice or violence. |

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| Faith-filled in their beliefs and hopeful for the future. | By passing on the living and faith-filled tradition of Jesus Christ; by having persevering faith in the pupils, and by encouraging them in turn, to have faith and hope in themselves and others. |
| Eloquent and truthful in what they say of themselves, the relations between people, and the world. | By developing an eloquent language which pupils can use to understand and articulate their emotions, beliefs, and questions, encouraged by the example of their teachers to be truthful in the way they represent themselves and speak about the world. |
| Learned , finding God in all things; and wise in the ways they use their learning for the common good. | By the breadth and depth of the curriculum; by excellence of teaching, and the creation of opportunities to become more learned and wise . |
| Curious about everything; and active in their engagement with the world, changing what they can for the better. | By leading pupils to be curious about the universe and all human activity, and to take increasing responsibility for their own learning, and by providing opportunities for them to be active in the life of the school, the Church, and the wider community. |
| Intentional in the way they live and use the resources of the earth, guided by conscience; and prophetic in the example they set to others. | By being a school community which is intentional in its way of proceeding to build-up quality of life; and which is prophetic in the way it offers an alternative vision of education and the human person rooted in the gospel |

Cross Curricular Links

The ethos of the school and the teaching and learning of all subject areas is underpinned by the teachings of our Catholic faith, our Catholic Life and in particular, the learning that takes place in RE. Opportunities to consolidate RE learning, and to clearly establish links to other areas of the curriculum are optimised and developed throughout the wider curriculum, for example in learning about developing countries in Geography and sustainability in science. In PSHE, and in particular in RSE (Relationships and Sex Education), the teachings of the Catholic faith and the learning that has taken place in RE are supported through the use of the Ten: Ten scheme.

Teaching Strategy

At the heart of our religious teaching is the RE strategy, 'Learning and Growing as the People of God', the Diocesan strategy

'Learning and Growing as the People of God' is the RE strategy that is used throughout the school. It is the strategy prepared by the Archdiocese of Birmingham. It provides the core of spiritual and doctrinal teaching of the Catholic Church as proclaimed in The Catechism of

the Catholic Church. Teaching and learning methods are appropriate to the child's age and level of maturity. Giving the correct emphasis to the main aspects of R.E ensures depth and balance within the Strategy.

- Revelation – God's self-revelation;
- Church communion of life in Christ;
- Celebration – living the Christian mystery in worship and prayer;
- Life in Christ – the search for holiness and truth;
- The presentation of the life and teaching of Jesus and of His calling to us to follow Him, spreading the Gospel message by the example of our own lives;
- Opportunities for prayer, reflection and celebration. Spiritual growth;
- The language of religious experience;
- An awareness and understanding of other faith communities and cultures within our society.

Structure of the Strategy

By following the 'Learning and Growing as the People of God' continuity and progression (which are intrinsic elements of the strategy) are ensured.

The Strategy is divided into several units, usually twelve, which cover four main areas of study. It is through the construction of a spiral curriculum that children's knowledge and understanding is developed.

The children learn about the Liturgical Seasons of the Church's year. They find out about the significance of each season, its signs and symbols and the different liturgies celebrated in each season.

The children study both Old Testament and New Testament scripture in order to give them familiarity and knowledge of a breadth of scripture as well as allowing them to explore and understand how our Catholic beliefs are rooted in what scripture reveals to us.

As part of the strategy the children learn about how it is to live as Christians today, how the Church is organised from global to parish level and also the opportunities which exist for them to participate in the life of the Church.

Development of Prayer Life/Spirituality

For more detailed information about Collective Worship, please also refer to the Holy Cross Catholic MAC Collective Worship Policy.

Prayer

Throughout the different stages, EYFS, KS1 and KS2, children are encouraged to develop their individual prayer life through the practice of participation in morning prayers, grace before and after meals and evening prayer.

At appropriate stages, each class experiences prayerful reflections, including silence, and short prayer services based on topics covered in The Strategy.

Formal prayers, appropriate to the age and maturity of the year group, are taught throughout the strategy. This includes the responses and prayers of the Mass.

Prayer in school is progressive and we follow the 'Teach Us to Pray' document.

Each child is given the opportunity for open prayer within the class and whole school assemblies so that family situations, illness, thanksgiving and individual concerns can be expressed and supported.

Religious Celebrations

The children have the opportunity to participate in religious celebrations:

- **School Mass**

As the Mass is the centre of liturgical worship in the Catholic Church, it has an established place in the life of the school. The children are involved in the planning and celebration of Mass, which is usually taken from the Mass of the Day. Sometimes the readings are adapted (with reference to our Parish priest) to suit the children's understanding. Mass is usually celebrated each Wednesday when two groups represent the community. On feast days, beginnings and end of terms and when there is a particular need, the whole school attends Mass. Parents and the parish community are always welcomed too.

- **Benediction**

Eucharistic Adoration is particularly valued and takes place either in church or in the school hall with due reverence and respect. This happens at special times of the year e.g. Parish Day of Prayer for Vocations.

- **School and Class Assemblies**

The children are encouraged to participate in corporate acts of worship and to be actively involved in the preparation of such occasions, which celebrate the talents of all the pupils through the media of music, art, singing, drama, poetry, etc. All school and class assemblies have a firm foundation in religious, spiritual and moral content, which is relevant and consistent with the Catholic ethos of the school.

- **Para-liturgy**

Throughout the year the children are given the experience of participating in devotional services as follows:

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| September | New School Year, Harvest Thanksgiving, CAFOD |
| October | The Rosary |
| November | The practice of prayer for the dead (Feast of All Saints and All Souls) |

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| December | Advent, Blessing of the crib, Nativity Plays and Carol Services and concerts |
| January | Epiphany and Candlemas |
| February and March | February/March ~ Lent: Focus on the Stations of the Cross each class is invited to visit the Stations in church. Lent charities are adopted. Whole school presentation of the events of Holy Week, use of the Walk With Me booklets and calendars. |
| April | Easter |
| May | Pentecost ~ the work of The Holy Spirit; Reflections on the life of Mary as portrayed in art, music and prayers. May Procession. |
| June and July | Pupils and staff are encouraged to reflect on aspects or events in Christ's life, highlighting his humanity and love, for example, reverence for the Blessed Sacrament and respect for his Sacred Heart |

Celebration of the Sacraments

The Strategy outlines specific preparation for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation. It also ensures that all of the sacraments are introduced and studied throughout the age groups. Children of Other Faiths within the class, take the learning journey with the Catholic children supporting and understanding the importance of the sacrament being celebrated.

- The Sacrament of Reconciliation
Preparation for this sacrament precedes that of the Eucharist and is distinct from it. Preparation for Reconciliation is viewed as a continuous process, which reaches beyond the first celebration. The catechesis concerned with this sacrament aims consistently to deepen the awareness and understanding of morality and their individual relationship with God our Father. It is experienced as a joyful celebration in the community. The sacrament is celebrated in the school community during Lent, Advent and at other times when specifically needed.
- The Sacrament of the Eucharist
The preparation for receiving the Sacrament of the Eucharist is not wholly confined to specific lessons, but is fostered through developing skills, saying thank you, celebrating meals and birthdays, thereby instilling in each child the sense of belonging to a larger family community. A very important part of each child's preparation to receive the sacrament lies in participating in worship and celebration of the parish and in the fostering of the practice of prayer. The main doctrinal content is specifically outlined in the Strategy for Year 3. This enables the child to

engage with the Mass and provides a foundation of faith and practice which continues through the child's life at Saint Thomas More.

- The Sacrament of Confirmation

The core teaching is presented in the Strategy for Year 6. The importance of the communal, parish celebration is emphasised, as is the link between the Sacrament of Confirmation and the Sacrament of Baptism. Central to this is the renewal of Baptismal promises during the service. The children are encouraged in understanding the impact of the Holy Spirit in changing the lives of the Apostles at Pentecost, and the impact of the Holy Spirit on their own lives. They are encouraged to develop an appreciation of the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit and to reflect on how they may use these in their daily lives with deepening awareness and maturity as followers of Christ.

- The school works closely with the parish to prepare children for the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion. The school works in conjunction with parish catechists who prepare children who are not in Catholic schools. Whilst the school supports heavily in sacramental preparation, the receiving of the sacraments is a Parish celebration, and as such, final decisions regarding the sacraments themselves, e.g. dates, times and the structure of the service/Mass, reside with the Parish Priest.

- Parental Involvement in Sacramental Preparation

Every effort is made to ensure the vital links between home, school and parish community are established and sustained. Programmes of scheduled meetings are provided to parents. The parents are invited to attend meetings with the Parish Priest, Head teacher, and class teacher and RE Co-ordinator. For all three sacraments it is seen as vital that the parents attend both the Commitment Masses and the actual celebrations with their child. Throughout the school year, parents are invited to attend Class Masses and weekly acts of worship. Parents are asked to support the nurturing of the Faith of their children by encouraging prayers at home and by attending weekly Sunday Mass and by listening to and talking with their child.

Acts of Worship

The cultivation of an active prayer life for children and adults is central to our work.

Daily school liturgies are as follows:

| Day | Liturgy | Led by |
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| Monday | Mission assembly | Head or Deputy |
| Tuesday | KS1 assembly KS2 Class Collective Worship | Rota of KS1 teachers Class teachers |
| Wednesday | Class Collective Worship Mass | Class teachers Parish Priest |
| Thursday | KS2 assembly KS1 Class Collective Worship | Rota of KS2 teachers Class teachers |
| Friday | WOW assembly (celebrating the gifts bestowed by God) | Head or Deputy |

Multi-Cultural Aspects and Race Equality

The children we teach come to us from many different backgrounds, bringing with them a wide range of life experiences and also a range of abilities. Our teaching of Religious Education needs to reflect our sensitivity to these differences. The Curriculum Directory makes the following comments 'we appreciate the difficulties of the task facing our schools. They cater for children and young people from a wide variety of backgrounds, not only in social terms but also in terms of the level of practice and understanding of the faith. Among the pupils may be included Christian children and young people who are not Catholics and, in some circumstances, children and young people from other faiths or even from no specific religious background. Families, too, present the diversity of our multi-cultural and multi-faith society, as do the teachers, who bring to the task a wide variety of experience. They are often called to work against a background of social, financial and educational pressure. This makes religious education today a real challenge, which often includes the tasks of pre-evangelisation. In drawing up and implementing a strategy, all involved have to not only respect this reality, but also to remain faithful to the Gospel and to the teaching of the Church.' (Curriculum Directory, p.9.)

At Saint Thomas More we recognise the need to familiarise the children with other Christian traditions and non-Christian faiths, and to encourage the children to foster attitudes of tolerance, respect and understanding for beliefs and traditions of other faiths. While remaining true to their Christian faith, the children are encouraged to acknowledge with respect the truth and value of other faith traditions and to establish good relationships with members of other faiths without prejudice. The children are also encouraged to recognise

and value the international and multicultural nature of the Catholic Church. (This is supported by educational materials from CAFOD and links with Mary's Meals in Africa.)

The teachers follow a whole school overview of Multi Faith Religions. There is an opportunity in each Year group for the children to learn about a different religion and celebrate and embrace its culture.

Pedagogy

Resources

In order to support the Strategy, other resources including books, artwork, Bibles, posters, music are available. Pupils are encouraged to use ICT in searches on the Web. There are many Catholic, Christian and World Religions represented on the Internet.

Information and Communication Technology

ICT will be used wherever appropriate and as facilities allow. It is our intention to present the Catholic Christian faith in as many ways as possible and demonstrate its relevance to contemporary life by using contemporary technology.

Staff Development

R.E. is regularly the focus of Staff Meetings where teaching, learning and assessment are discussed. The R.E. Co-ordinator attends Diocesan Cluster Group meetings each term and other relevant courses at the Diocesan Centre. Furthermore, the Head Teacher regularly attends briefings and training relevant to leading a Catholic school, encompassing areas such as leading prayer life and leading within the Catholic ethos via the Diocesan Centre. Staff are kept up to date with the content of these courses and other developments. Other more informal meetings are held with individual teachers and Year Groups where necessary.

Teachers receive additional support by attending RE training courses.

Further Diocesan support is received through monitoring meetings, which enable the RE Lead and Head Teacher to enhance provision in RE, Catholic Life and Collective Worship and to share good practice with staff.

Equal Opportunities /Special Educational Needs/Disadvantaged children

All pupils at Saint Thomas More are treated as individuals, regardless of race, gender or religious background, within a caring atmosphere of Christian love. Children with special educational needs, whether children with learning difficulties, or exceptionally gifted children, will be presented with tasks to suit their ability. Differentiation for these children may be in the amount of support and attention offered by the teacher and/or assistant, or in simpler tasks, or tasks which will extend the more able children's appreciation of the topic being covered. Financial support for resources or pupil well-being can be provided.

Children of other Faiths have opportunities to participate in collective worship and to share and celebrate their beliefs and traditions with their peers.

Expectations

Religious Education in the Classroom

- Statutory Requirements
To fulfil the requirements of the Curriculum Directory, we ensure that Religious Education receives 10 per-cent of the total teaching time at each of the Key Stages. This is explicit curriculum RE, as distinct from liturgies and Masses.
- *Implicit or unstructured Religious Education occurs when opportunities arise in the course of a school day. Children are helped to apply and develop their religious understanding of situations they might have to deal with among their peers or with adults. Showing children how to build and mend relationships in God's way is an important part of our work. All staff and members of the school community are expected to support and promote this, in accordance with our Behaviour Management Policy and the Visitors Code of Conduct.*
- All parents are made fully aware of the Catholic ethos of the school. They have the right to request that their children be withdrawn from Religious Education lessons. In the event of a parent wishing to withdraw their child from RE lessons, the parent(s) will be asked to meet with the Head Teacher to discuss their wishes.

Prayer Space

- Each class has a special place which is a focal point for prayer to inspire spiritual reflection. Depending on the time of the liturgical year this area may have a lectern for the Bible, candle, crucifix, statues, flowers or other aids to prayer and meditation.
- Liturgical colours are used to enhance the area and reflect the cycle of the Church's Year.
green - Ordinary time
purple - Lent/Advent
white - Easter and Christmas
- The Crucifix is displayed prominently in each classroom and in central areas of the school.

Display

Each classroom will have a Sacred Space which will reflect the Liturgical year.

Each Classroom will display:

- A crucifix
- The current Values and Virtues

- The Class Saint
- Mission Statement
- Keywords and Work linked to the RE unit of work from The People of God.
- Prayers assigned to that year group

Assessment

At Saint Thomas More Catholic Primary we follow the Diocesan expectations for RE assessments

Formative Assessment: Assessment for Learning

- Marking and verbal feedback in RE is given in relation to the RE Learning Outcomes. Teachers will take care to ensure that assessment is of the specific RE outcome, rather than of broader skills, for example literacy.
- It gives guidance to the child about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve and extend their learning through reflection.
- Marking and feedback is linked to the skills identified in the Age Related Standards
- All work in RE is marked in accordance with the school's marking policy.

Attainment on Entry (EYFS)

- The Baseline Assessment for RE, provided by the Diocese should be completed for children on entry to school.

Summative Assessment: End of Unit Assessments (Diocesan Criteria)

- The Diocese will select the strand of RE for monitoring and assessment for all schools to follow (The Liturgical Year, Scripture, The Sacraments or Living as Christians including Prayer).
- Class Teachers are provided with a schedule of which three end of unit assessments are to be completed during the year
- Class Teachers will complete the end of unit assessment sheets (Excel Record) for each child in their class.
- Evidence of standards are kept either by retaining books (1 per band) for each class or by teachers providing the RE subject leader with samples of work for a portfolio: 2 per band i.e. 6 per unit. In either case the work must be monitored by the RE Subject Leader
- Evidence Books and/or Learning Journals are retained for three years + the current year.

Summative Assessment: Age Related Standards (National)

- 3 focus children of different abilities will be selected for each class
- Class teachers will assess pieces of work throughout the year (at least one piece per unit) against the Age Related Standards (National) for the relevant phase using the appropriate template (3-5, 5-7, 7-9, 9-11) (p18).

- Evidence of the Age Related Standards will be kept either by keeping samples of book or compiling a portfolio of work.
- A selection of work samples will be moderated.
- At the end of the academic year an overall assessment judgment will be made for each of the focus children.

Reporting on RE

- Reporting to parents is carried out as part of the annual written report on the child's work and personal response.

Monitoring of RE

- The RE subject leader has an action plan for each academic year which clearly identifies what monitoring is being carried out, when and by who.
- The RE Subject Leader reports and feedback to other colleagues and SLT including Governors on:
 - The monitoring and evaluation of RE
 - The planning and implementation of improvements in RE
 - The impact of their monitoring and support.

Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy is monitored by the Religious Education Co-ordinator and is evaluated and reviewed by the whole staff and governors in line with our school policy review. As a core subject this is every two years, or sooner if there is a change to policy or practice.

Related Documents

People of God- Birmingham Diocese Scheme of Work

Teach us to Pray - Birmingham Diocese Scheme of Work

Archdiocese of Birmingham's Catholic Schools Profile.