

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Religious Education Teaching and Learning Guidance

Policy produced by Diocese/School

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Background

Our school is situated within an increasingly diverse community, reflecting a multi-faith and multi-racial community, which we recognise and value. The school aims to reflect the local community while ensuring that the Christian foundations are still maintained.

As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting individual beliefs. Upon introduction to the school, parents/ carers are informed about the Catholic basis of our teaching. It is therefore unlikely that parents/ carers would wish to exercise their legal right of withdrawal. However, should such a case arise, the parents/ carers concerned should consult the Head of school.

Mission Statement

Our school aims to provide a caring, stable, stimulating environment where all children can develop to their full potential. Staff are committed to ensuring that the children's time at school is productive and successful. We aim to raise achievement in all aspects of the curriculum; developing self-confidence, motivation, self-reliance and co-operation.

We are committed to equality of opportunity and serve the local community by welcoming children from all backgrounds and faiths. Whilst our ethos is positively Catholic, we value and respect the diversity of our community and aim to set all children on life's path through compassion, thoughtfulness and understanding to one another and respect for one another's differences.

We believe that parents and teachers have a responsibility to ensure that children leave school with:

- good basic skills in English, maths and ICT
- a love of learning
- good social skills
- a sense of responsibility towards society
- the confidence to stand up for themselves
- the knowledge that they are special in God's eyes

so that they are well equipped for a successful future.

Our school motto

Go shine in the world and live as Jesus lived with compassion, honesty and integrity

Nurturing spirituality

Children are capable of deep spiritual experiences from an early age. Before they even find words to express it, they become aware of something other than themselves and their small worlds, something that is inspiring and good. An understanding of God is already within children and we are asked to give them the verbal vocabulary to express what they already experience.

Through liturgy and through everyday experiences, children come to know that they are not alone in their spiritual beliefs and that there are ways of communicating with and about their spiritual nature.

Spiritual and Moral Development

Spiritual and Moral Development is a life-long process and in the life of the children, is shared between parents/ carers, the school and the wider community. We acknowledge the wide variety of beliefs that make up our community; however, our policy reflects the Christian focus of our school. Therefore, we seek to foster values and morals based on Christian teaching, which are also shared by the major world faiths. Key ideas and words that have been identified as being particularly appropriate when exploring spiritual and moral concepts include the following:

- Life, birth, creation, death
- Sleep, refreshment, renewal
- Friendship, fidelity, love, passion, patience
- Imagination, inspiration, enlightenment
- Elation, delight, joy, gladness, laughter
- Sorrow, sadness, grief, reconciliation, forgiveness, self-control
- Injustice, pain, suffering, anger, courage, shame, guilt
- Kindness, gratefulness
- Pity, compassion
- Wonder, awe, reverence, adoration
- Splendour, beauty, perfection
- Stillness, calm, peace, silence, tranquillity, harmony
- Light, darkness
- Eternity, mystery, infinity
- Hope, dream, fact, fantasy
- Insight, intuition, belief, faith, trust
- Truth, certainty, uncertainty, proof

Exposure to poetry, stories, paintings, photographs, natural objects, and music are some of the ways that children can be encouraged to be thoughtful and reflective.

Religious Education Policy

As a Catholic school our aim is to provide the experience of a living worshipping community with a focus for knowledge and understanding of the content of the Faith. For this reason, Christ must be at the very centre of the school. We aim for our children to reach their full potential, thereby empowering them to be caring individuals, capable of critical independent thought.

We aim to do this by:-

- Fostering a life of faith
- Experiencing a wide variety of prayer and liturgy
- Developing a Catholic practice
- Encouraging social and moral values which enable the children to respect themselves and others
- Continuing to develop a partnership with parents, parish and the wider community
- Providing a stimulating learning environment
- Showing a generosity of spirit in relationships
- Reviewing and evaluating our methods and practices

We are a sign of God's presence to each person we meet and our aim is to create an environment where each person, regardless of race, religion, colour, sex, age, language, ability, job, background or family circumstance, feels valued and encouraged to develop a sense of worth, dignity, security and belonging.

Philosophy

*Religious education in a Catholic School is not one subject among many, but the foundation of the entire educational process. The beliefs and values it communicates should inspire and unify every aspect of School life.
Bishops' Conference of England and Wales – February 1988*

In the life of faith of a Catholic school, religious education plays a central and vital part. At the heart of Catholic education lies the Christian vision of the human person. This vision is expressed and explored in religious education. Therefore, religious education is never one subject among many, but the foundation of the entire educational process. The beliefs and values studied in Catholic religious education inspire and draw together every aspect of the life of a Catholic school. We are committed to classroom RE, then because all pupils have the right to receive an overall religious education which will enable them, in the light of the faith of the Church, to engage with the deepest questions of life and find reasons for the hope which is within them (1 Peter 3:5). Religious education is, then the core subject of a Catholic school.

*Religious Education in a Catholic school is the comprehensive and systematic study of the mysteries of God, of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the teachings of the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics' hold, the basis for them and the relationship between faith and life; in a manner which encourages investigation and reflection by the pupils, develops appropriate skills and attitudes and promotes free, informed and full response to God's call in everyday life.
Extracts from the statement issued by the Bishop's Conference 2000.*

Aim of Religious Education

The aim of religious education is to promote knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith, its relevance to the ultimate questions of life and the skills required to engage in religious thinking.

What is Religious Education? - A Definition

In our Religious Education lessons, children will receive a spiritual and knowledge based presentation of the Catholic Faith.

It will be realistic, have achievable aims and relate to the children's lives, both inside and outside school.

As teachers, we must be aware of the diversity of backgrounds, family relationships and faith experiences of our pupils and be sensitive in the way we approach discussions based on these themes.

"It is necessary, therefore, that Religious Education in schools be regarded as an academic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigour as other disciplines. It must present the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness and the same depth which with other disciplines present their knowledge. However it should not simply be regarded as one subject among many,

but rather it should engage in interdisciplinary dialogue. ...Religious Education in schools underpins, activates, develops and completes the educational and catechetical activity of the whole school.”
Religious Education Curriculum Directory 2012

Aims

- To foster a love of God through knowledge and understanding of the Catholic Faith from scripture and doctrine.
- To encourage the development of a personal relationship with God.
- To help our children be aware of and respect other faiths.
- To encourage children to study, investigate and reflect.
- To develop the thinking and listening skills.
- To develop respect for truth and for the views of others.

Objectives

Through religious education, each child will be:

- Helped to recognise and appreciate the religious and spiritual dimension of life
- Helped to engage in a personal search for meaning in life and begin to address some ultimate questions
- Enabled to know and enter into the beliefs, practices and worship of the Catholic tradition
- Led to a deeper personal faith
- Enabled to respect religious convictions of others.

Home/School/Parish Partnership

We believe that the school alone cannot undertake a child's religious education. Religious education begins at home at Baptism; the parents are the child's first teachers and support the child with his/her first religious experiences. The school works in partnership with parents and parish to enrich the lives of our children.

We publish a Religious Education newsletter each term to inform parents about the forthcoming Religious Education topics. We notify parents of Masses and Liturgies in our weekly school newsletter.

Our school regularly supports parish events and fund raising e.g. CAFOD, Catholic Children's Society, Advent Appeals, Lenten Appeals, Poppy Appeal and we support the homeless through our local parish.

The Religious Education Programme

We follow the 'Come and See' programme of religious education. The aim of the programme is to explore the religious dimension of questions about life, dignity and purpose, within the Catholic tradition. Links are made with the pupils' own experiences. Links are also made with the experience of other faith traditions. Three topics are studied each term, with each topic lasting approximately four weeks.

R.E. lessons constitute 10% of curriculum time, in all key stages and incorporate class worship, assemblies, and circle-time.

Overview of content

Each term "Come and See" focuses on one of the basic questions about life, its dignity, its purpose and a central Christian belief which relates to and addresses this question.

The Process – Skills and Content

The process for delivering Come and See has three elements which enable the development of skills and the fostering of attitudes. The topics are designed to address a variety of skills and attitudes.

Search – Explore

This is the introduction to the topic where the children's life experience is explored, the question (s) it raises are wondered at, shared, investigated and their significance reflected upon.

Revelation – Reveal

This is the heart of the programme where knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faiths revealed through the Word, in Scripture, tradition, doctrine, prayers, rites and Christian living.

Response – Respond

This is where the learning is assimilated, celebrated and responded to in daily life.

Teaching and Learning in Religious Education

A range of teaching strategies and learning methodologies, (including appropriate and relevant differentiation to ensure effective match according to the needs and abilities of the children), will be employed; depending on the nature of the activities being undertaken. Work will be differentiated in terms of activity or outcome according to the needs and abilities of the children. Approaches will include whole class teaching, group activities and individual work. Children will have opportunities to work individually as well as co-operatively and collaboratively, developing their own knowledge and expertise and sharing their experiences with others.

All work will involve thought provoking reflection and discussion, encouraging the children to develop their moral and spiritual consciences.

Teachers are encouraged to make cross - curricular links when planning Religious Education, incorporating opportunities for Creativity, ICT and extended writing, (in line with our expectations in literacy), where appropriate.

Assessment

There are two attainment targets in Religious Education

- AT1 Knowledge an understanding of religion (learning about religion-content)
- AT2 Reflection on meaning (learning from religion- skills)

Termly assessments should be made by teachers for each pupil. These assessments should be recorded on the Whole Class RE assessment grid and on individual RE Pupil Assessment Records

Other Faiths

For three weeks of each school year, pupils will study other faiths. The whole school will focus on one particular faith for one week during the autumn term. This is usually Judaism. The Other Faith topics will take place after the end of a Come and See topic in the spring and summer term.

All children will study Judaism at their own level. In addition, children will learn about a variety of festivals from other faiths. Where possible, people from other faiths will be invited into school to talk to the children.

Equal opportunities and Inclusion

A central message of the Catholic faith is that although we are all different, God loves each one of us equally, regardless of background, gender or ability. It is therefore vital that we recognize and cater for the individual needs of children, acknowledging that all children have different gifts and talents and that these should be celebrated.

Learning tasks should be matched to the abilities of the children to enable them to achieve success, helping them to develop to their full potential and to develop a positive self-image.

We aim to ensure that resources do not reinforce any kind of stereotypes and that they do reflect our own school community. It is important that the children are provided with images, which reflect the multi cultural society in which we live, enhancing their awareness and knowledge of other faiths and cultures, respecting the rights of the individual at all times. This is essential in preparing children to take their places in a multi – cultural society. This also endorses and supports our commitment to Community Cohesion.

Display and Prayer Focus

Classroom RE displays will relate to the topic being studied to stimulate further work or to celebrate the work that has been undertaken. Each class has a prayer area to stimulate and facilitate reflection and prayer. Each class also has a display linked with the topic and the liturgical season.

Other displays around the school will celebrate RE work done in each Year Group or Key Stage.

Resources

Each class has the relevant “Come and See” folder and the relevant texts for their year group. All other resources are kept in the PPA room and the resources room, all of which are labelled. Bibles are stored in the library and in every classroom; other RE and Other Faiths books are also available from the library. Each classroom has a Religious Education folder with supplementary information for teachers to support teaching and learning and assessment of Religious Education.

Class Worship/Reflection Area

Each classroom has a Worship/Reflection Area which displays a bible, candle, a cross and prayers etc

Class RE display

Each class has an RE display in place, showcasing recent work and its links to the Curriculum Directory, supporting learning.

Moral Development

In the light of our Mission Statement we understand moral development to be about the growth of each person as a moral decision maker. This involves the formation of a moral conscience and the motivation to behave in a moral way.

We strive to base moral development in our understanding of the truth about the human person as revealed by God. The human person is not for self alone, but to live in, with and through the community.

We aim to help children to make good decisions by helping them to consider others (School Behaviour and dealing with Bullying and Racial Equality Policies), by involving them in decision making through the Student Council and class discussion work.

We aim to motivate them to work for the “greater good” in a positive way, e.g. collecting for Lenten charities or working towards being Person of the Week.

Spiritual and Moral Connections

English

Through the teaching of English pupils are given the opportunity to recognise, reflect on and identify with the experience of others. Pupils are also encouraged to develop a growing awareness of moral questions and moral choices.

Mathematics

Mathematics permeates creation. There is a beauty of different approaches to mathematical investigation. There is a truth in reaching correct conclusions, through co-operation, writing, discussion, logging and evaluating guides children towards development. Opportunities for reflection, respect for achievement and learning, leads to praise and reward.

Science

Through the teaching of Science and Health Education respect for oneself and others is encouraged. The visits to places of environmental importance give the children a first hand opportunity to see the beauty of God’s work and enable them to reflect on and debate issues surrounding the environment and our responsibilities.

History

Through the study of history children learn to recognise and reflect on the experiences of others, to reach beyond their own knowledge, experience and imaginings. We encourage pupils to search for the truth and to consider peoples opinions. They learn to look beyond their own experience and empathise with others. They learn of heroic deeds and achievements and of moral dilemmas.

The study of history helps children study ways of searching for peace and harmony with others and in carrying out God’s wish for us to love and care for others. They learn about the use and abuse of power and to question and look critically at the world. They can be helped to analyse and reflect on their own responses to moral problems and to be encouraged to think rationally and impartially.

Geography

Geography enables children to study their own environment and the wider world. In looking at the magnificence of God’s creation children can be encouraged to reflect on the wonders and beauty of the universe and can try to understand the way God works in the world and in our lives. We can work with the pupils in considering ways in which we can contribute to God’s creation. We can discuss the importance of governmental decisions affecting the environment and learn of the moral dilemmas faced when altering the natural world to develop modern industries, roads and homes. We can study the interdependence of communities and our responsibilities to each other in the world.

Art

In the teaching of art we encourage children to express their innermost thoughts and feelings through the study of shape, form and colour. Through learning artistic skills they can express their imaginative thoughts. In the study of the artistic works of other artists they can appreciate the skill and beauty of their works. They gain an

understanding of human creativity and how we can respond to God and contribute to God's creation. Through art we can give joy and pleasure to others.

Physical Education

Through PE children can develop and care for the bodies that God has created and to appreciate the wonder of the human body. They can express themselves through physical efforts and an appreciation of line and form. They learn to work as a team and to respect others gifts and talents. They learn the importance of perseverance to love and develop their skills.

Music

Through the teaching of music children can often obtain an insight into the beauty and wonder of God's creation. The opportunity to learn the skills to play a musical instrument or to use the human voice to help develop perseverance, but also joy and wonder at the sounds created. Music can help in contemplation and spiritual renewal. Music helps us communicate with others and share in the performance of a work through active involvement or through appreciation in listening. The appreciation of the works of composers and musicians help us to respond and contribute to the marvels of God's creation.

Design and Technology

Through the teaching of design and technology children learn about the discipline of planning and organisation and structure. They learn to use their skills to create models. They can marvel at the works of inventors and designers who contribute to God's creation through their inventions. They can learn to respect the needs of others and ways in which inventions can help the lives of others. They need to consider the effects of machines and inventions and to respect the skills needed to bring designs to fruition in each stage of their manufacture.

Information Technology

The teaching of IT is seen in all areas of the curriculum. The rapid development of information technology is another wonder of God's world, but it also leads to an opportunity to discuss with children how it can be best used for the good of mankind. The possibility of rapid communication with others around the world can be a source for good, but also can create moral dilemmas.

Education for Personal Relationships (SRE)

Education for personal relationships is an aspect of religious education, health education and science. Teachers answer questions at every level, at the age and stage of development of each child. Links with the HIA Topics through PSHCE are planned accordingly.

Role of the RE Leader

In keeping with the Diocesan Guidelines, the RE Leader's role is:

- To help improve the quality of the teaching and learning that the pupils will receive in RE
- To write and keep relevant documentation up to date
- To be involved in the process of assessment, recording and reporting
- To monitor the quality of teaching, the progression and continuity of RE throughout the School
- To offer support and advice to colleagues
- To provide resource requirements

- To liaise with the Diocesan RE Adviser and to attend co-ordinators meetings
- To report back to staff on any courses that have been attended
- To liaise with the Parish Priests in preparation for planned liturgies, celebrations and events
- To work in partnership with the Senior Leadership and Management Teams
- To prepare reports as required by the Head of school for the Governing Body