

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL



Religious Education Guidelines

Mission Statement

St. Mary's school community follows the teachings of Jesus Christ, working together to develop the whole child, in a spiritual, moral, academic, physical, social and emotional way, within a caring and supportive environment.

Ethos

We recognise that there is a challenge in creating an enriching environment for all those involved at every level of school life. We take our lead and inspiration from Christ with regard to the Gospel values: the belief that all human beings are uniquely created and loved by God and worthy of respect. This challenge manifests itself in the way that we treat and value:

- Our relationships with each other and the wider community;
- Our respect for one another;
- Our welcome to and interest in all those who visit our school;
- Discipline inspired by forgiveness, healing and reconciliation;
- Our school environment.

Through rising to this challenge we aim to create an awareness of a sense of belonging to and being part of the life of St Mary's.

The Aims of our School

We will endeavour to create a Catholic Ethos in our school, which reflects the Gospel values, through the love, care and respect we show to each other and to all who come to our school. We will teach the beliefs, traditions and practices of the Catholic Faith.

Love, Listen and Learn

Through the prayer and worship in school we will try to be a living community of people celebrating their love for God and one another.

We believe the quality of the curriculum, with Religious Education at its core, is of prime importance and will focus on the development of the whole child. We will at all times try to make provision for children with special needs, so that all members of our school community achieve their potential.

We will help the children to develop an awareness of and respect for other religions and cultural backgrounds, as we believe this to be an essential preparation for adult life.

We believe that good communication between governors, staff, parents and children is important for the well-being of our school, and we will work in partnership with the wider community especially the home and parish in developing each child's potential.

Aims for each child at St Mary's CPS

- ◆ Whilst at St Mary's School I will learn about being a Christian, I will experience the beliefs, traditions and practices of the Catholic Faith.
- ◆ I will achieve as much as I possibly can in each area of the National Curriculum.
- ◆ I will know how to learn and enjoy learning and will view work in a positive and conscientious manner.
- ◆ I will co-operate and communicate with others effectively, independently and in a group and try to win and lose graciously.
- ◆ I will tolerate and respect the religious beliefs, views and values of others, understand the need for good behaviour and moderate my behaviour accordingly. I will respect the belongings and property of others.
- ◆ If I have a problem I know I can find someone who will discuss it with me.
- ◆ I will try to learn from mistakes and accept there is always room for improvement.

I will share a sense of responsibility for my school, parish, local community and the wider environment.

Aims of Religious Education

Through the Religious Education at St Mary's, we aim to lead children to a deeper, more living, active and personal faith. This means that we want to help them to meet God, to form a personal relationship with Him, and to respond to Him through prayer, worship and by living as members of our parish/school.

Love, Listen and Learn

To lead children to a living faith we will help them to relate faith to life and to develop a Christian vision of the world and of their lives. This means that we must explore with them their experience of the world and interpret it in the light of faith as a sign of the presence of God and as a place where they are called to follow God's ways in accordance with the teaching and example of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We plan to achieve these aims through our RE programme, the 'Resource Framework for Religious Education in Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Westminster (In God's Name)', in which the 'Religious Education Curriculum Directory' is central to teaching RE. This framework is an exemplar resource that models the linear teaching of content according to the Attainment Levels.

Objectives

To lead the children to a knowledge of Christ through:

- The 'Resource Framework for Religious Education in Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Westminster' programme
- Access to the Old and New Testament
- The celebration of the Sacraments
- Prayer

Thus enabling the child to grow in the love and imitation of Christ.

To educate the whole child by means of a structured programme permeated by Gospel values, thus helping the child to become a fully integrated person in society.

To teach the doctrines, traditions and principles of the Catholic Faith through:

- The 'Resource Framework for Religious Education in Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Westminster' programme
- Lives of Saints and exemplary lives of modern day people
- Through the celebration of the sacraments and liturgy in order to build a Catholic community where the fullness of Christ's Gospel is lived.

To develop a way of living, which incorporates principles of good social and moral behaviour through the study of the Commandments and the Beatitudes, thus enabling the child to be sensitive to his/her own needs and the needs of others at home and abroad in addition to respecting nature and the environment.

To foster and deepen the prayer life of each child through:

- Assemblies
- School Masses
- Class Prayers
- Liturgical celebrations of events and achievements so that the child develops his/her own personal relationship with God.

Love, Listen and Learn

To provide an atmosphere where the uniqueness and individuality of each child is respected and where he/she is encouraged to reach his/her full potential within the Catholic ethos of the school community so that the child becomes a fully integrated person.

To help members of the school community to develop spiritually through mutual respect, sensitivity to the needs of others and through prayer and celebrations of shared values in order to nurture and strengthen the school family.

To foster home school parish links through:

- Oral and written communication
- Shared worship
- Open evenings, sports days, concerts, outings and visits to Church and the elderly.

School Programme for RE

Through the programme, which we provide, we aim to lead children from the point in their spiritual development to which they have been brought by parents and others, when they begin at our school. We will do this through lessons which take account of the children's religious and educational needs and which have clearly set out learning intentions and objectives as set out in the 'Resource Framework for Religious Education in Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Westminster'. This framework is an exemplar resource that models the linear teaching of content according to the Attainment Levels.

We provide opportunities for prayer, reflection and celebration, including those which lead from teaching the 'Resource Framework' units, those which are part of our daily routines and other forms of prayer, and also those which arise during the liturgical year.

Through the RE Programme children will learn the traditions, beliefs and practices of our Catholic faith, as well as about Christian living.

Children will be taught about the faiths of other groups in our community as links arise within the RE Programme.

- Children across the school will be taught about the Jewish and Islamic faiths from a Christian perspective. This will be taught in separate units, taking account of the recommendations about time set out in 'The Framework for Religious Education in the Diocese of Westminster'.

Through the Resource Framework for Religious Education in Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Westminster we provide children with a systematic presentation of the Christian message and way of life at a level, which is appropriate to their stage of development.

In the daily life of our school, we want to show children and each other a way of living in the world according to the Christian 'Way'. We will try to share our vision

of what it means in practice to live according to the Gospel values of love, respect, forgiveness and concern for others. Teachers and non-teaching staff, therefore and other adults who come to the school, including the Parish Priest, play a significant role in the way they support, extend and clarify the children's experience of faith and in their attitudes and reactions to situations and events.

RE Teaching

We use the 'Resource Framework for Religious Education in Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Westminster' programme through which two units are taught each term. The same unit is taught across the whole school, including the Early Years (Reception and Nursery) at the same time, although at different levels.

Units are cross-referenced at the planning stage with the levels of attainment and opportunities set out in the 'Religious Education Curriculum Directory'. For each of the units of the 'Resource Framework for Religious Education in Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Westminster' programme, there are particular aims, clear learning intentions and a selection of learning experiences, and at shared planning meetings, these are transferred onto planning sheets in preparation for teaching.

There is a 'focus' display for the current RE topic or related to the Liturgical Year in each classroom. There is always an RE focus in the School's foyer and halls.

Teaching Organisation, Planning and Evaluation

Each topic is planned to last for approximately a half-term. Planning of RE teaching takes place collaboratively, to ensure progression and continuity. The focus of the unit for the half-term ahead is shared by the RE Subject Leader, as well as aspects of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory which are to be covered and relevant references to the Catechism of the Catholic Church are highlighted. Each teacher is also given dates of Saints' Days and other feasts as part of the term's list of dates. A summary of each teacher's planning for the term is then recorded onto planning sheets.

This framework is an exemplar resource that models the linear teaching of content according to the Attainment Levels. Teachers are expected to engage with the suggestions this resource contains, make choices and adapt and apply the activities to suit the needs of the pupils.

In determining the content to teach teachers must first decide on the Strand and Attainment level they wish to achieve and choose teaching and learning activities that will teach the content required for achievement of the level. When time is limited, the guiding principle is, as it is with all good education, less content, taught more richly and deeply. Quantity should never supersede quality.

This framework is formatted to allow teachers to annotate teaching, including changes made for differentiation, as they work through the material.

Assessment of the children's learning is informed by marking children's work, by talking to them and by observing their responses during lessons. Each teacher also

completes an End of Unit Record sheet measuring individual children's attainment against the National Levels of Attainment.

Links with the Parish

The Parish Priest comes to school to celebrate Mass with classes, especially during Lent. He also leads Key Stage Masses, Assemblies and other services in school, and supports the teaching of the 'Resource Framework' units by on occasions giving class talks relevant to the unit and showing religious artefacts. The Parish Priest plans the diary of events for the year in advance with the RE Subject Leader, including whole-school and class Masses, Benediction, Assemblies and other events. This programme is updated on a half-termly and weekly basis through discussion between the Parish Priest and Subject Leader. Children from Years 5 and 6 serve at morning Mass in the Church, and junior classes have the opportunity to attend the 9.30 Mass in Church in the autumn and summer terms. Some of the Thursday Parish Masses are celebrated in the School Hall rather than in Church – the Parish Priest and the RE Subject Leader plan these in advance.

Exposition (where children are given the opportunity for quiet personal prayer) and Benediction are also in school / church when all / junior (as appropriate) classes attend.

Sacramental preparation has been parish based since 1992 and the RE teaching in school supports the preparation, which takes place in the Parish Hall. A 'prayer partner' in the parish adopts the children who are preparing for their First Holy Communion and First Reconciliation.

Because the parish church is easily accessible from the school, classes with their teacher can visit the church for prayer as well to provide first-hand experience of the artefacts within church as part of teaching RE.

Links with home

The vital part that parents play as their children's first educators is continued through homework and the units that through which RE will be taught are explained to parents in the information letter that the headteacher sends out at the beginning of each half-term. Opportunities are provided throughout the 'Resource Framework' and through the weekly family sharing of the 'Wednesday Word' for children to discuss issues which are personal to each family and through which parents can become involved and continue their support for the child's religious education.

Special Educational Needs

As the school Mission Statement makes clear, we will make provision for children with Special Educational Needs and as part of our distinctive task as a Catholic school we will emphasise the positive and identify and celebrate the gifts which all pupils have. We are aware that children who are experiencing difficulties in one curriculum area may be extremely competent in others, and we will take pains not to lower our expectations in a generalised way.

The school's procedure for identifying and making provision for children who have difficulties in learning and behaviour are described in a separate document.

Prayer and Worship

One of the primary aims of religious education is to help children to develop a personal relationship with God, and this relationship is expressed in dialogue ie prayer. We will teach children an attitude or sense of prayer, by encouraging an awareness of God's presence, an attitude of listening and talking to Him.

We will prepare children for personal prayer, and for common prayer at home, in school and in church. We will teach children the value of personal prayer by encouraging them to pray by themselves in the morning and the evening.

We will teach children to formal prayers (see appendix) which we will say at the start and end of each school day, and before and after lunchtime. In class we will take the opportunity, as special moments and occasions arise for praising and thanking God for his goodness and love, for asking for his help, or when there is particular success, joy, good news, death or tragedy which is especially relevant to the class.

During the year the children will have many opportunities to participate in liturgical and sacramental celebrations. A decade of the Rosary is prayed every day after school during the months of October and May by parents and children. At midday in the juniors each class stops work and prays 'The Angelus'.

Prayer will also be part of the celebration at the end of each unit. Within each unit there will be opportunities for response in prayer together, as well as in stillness and silence.

Assemblies take place each day in school unless the children attend Mass in Church. Monday's Assembly often focuses on the theme of the Sunday Gospel Reading, Infants and juniors have separate assemblies on Tuesdays / Thursdays led by teachers, Friday's Assembly is an opportunity to celebrate good work, behaviour and to praise achievements, both in and out of school. Hymns for forthcoming celebrations are taught and practised during hymn practices. Each class celebrates a class assembly in class each Tuesday / Thursday – these are on occasions planned and led by children. Feast days are highlighted in Assemblies.

The parish priest celebrates Mass in Church with the whole school at the start and at the end of each term, as well as on special holydays and feasts. The parish priest celebrates Mass in school with smaller groups, when the theme for Mass will usually be the current RE unit or liturgical theme. During the season of Lent, each class will contribute to a Mass in the School Hall.

Children in Years 4, 5 and 6 have the opportunity to have the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent and Advent as part of the Parish community – children are prepared and times are highlighted by staff in school. In May, at a special assembly in the school hall / Church led by Year 6, the children process in honour of Mary and

crown Our Lady's statue with flowers. The children also contribute to the Parish procession and Crowning of Our Lady. The children of Year 3 and 4 dress up and dramatise the liturgy on Palm Sunday, enacting the part of the crowd and taking part in the reading of The Passion. Year 6 children dramatise the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday and children contribute to a Sunday Mass roughly once per half-term.

The Language of Religious Experience

Through the 'Resource Framework' we will teach the children the stories, symbols and rituals, and about the activities and traditions of which our religious experience is composed.

Other Faiths

As part of the different units in the 'Resource Framework', we aim to give children an awareness of and respect for other faiths as appropriate and we want them to appreciate the reverence shown by people of other faiths for holy places, holy people and holy books. Visitors to the school who are members of other faith traditions may be invited to talk about their faith to children and Years 5 and 6 may make visits to other places of worship.

Children across the school are taught about the Jewish and Islamic faiths from a Christian perspective. Not less than 5% and not more than 10% of RE Curriculum time is devoted to this (as set out in 'The Framework for Religious Education in the Diocese of Westminster').

Christian Living

We will help children to appreciate the significance of Christian beliefs and practices for everyday life. We will teach children that the experience of daily living, of respecting and caring for others, of squabbling, healing and forgiving is a fundamental part of Christian living. We will deepen and support the work of parents, and create and sustain an atmosphere in school of love and respect, sympathy and forgiveness, in which children's self-confidence and self-acceptance will grow and develop, and increase their capacity to relate to others and to God.

Resources

Each teacher has a class Bible as well as access to other RE reference books. These cover Assemblies, Masses, Saints, Doctrinal information, religious stories etc.

Other Faith Photo packs and artefacts are also available to aid teaching. The school library offers a selection of RE books for children's and teachers' reference.

There are statues in each classroom and in the hall, corridor and foyer and shared sets of Bibles in the junior classrooms.

A selection of Resource books as well as Other Faith Photo packs and artefacts are kept in the staffroom.

Love, Listen and Learn

Each class has some RE books as part of the class library.

Education in Personal Relationships (Sex Education)

The school's policy on teaching RSE is set out in a separate document.

This policy was reviewed in July 2023.

M Creed
RE Subject Leader