

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Religious Education Policy

Rationale

The purpose of religious education in all Catholic schools is to develop “religiously literate and engaged young people who have the knowledge, understanding and skills – appropriate to their age and capacity – to reflect spiritually, and think ethically and theologically, and who are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.”

Religious Education Curriculum directory for Catholic Schools (The Department of Catholic Education and Formation of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, 2012).

The intent of this policy for religious education is to guide school practice to achieve this goal. This policy will outline the approach to religious education including related issues such as collective worship, spiritual development and moral education.

Our Mission Statement



Our aims and objectives

“Religious education is never simply 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.”

Statement from the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales (May 2000)

At St Thomas More Catholic Primary School we aim to nurture every aspect of Catholic life and to provide individuals with opportunities to develop a personal relationship with God by creating:

- An environment that uses Jesus as a role model, thus demonstrating the Christian values of respect, trust, honesty and co-operation.
- A celebrating community, which uses prayer, assemblies, festivals, liturgies, positive discipline and worship.
- A sense of belonging to and participating in a community and the wider world.
- A real understanding and practise of the Catholic Faith.
- Opportunities to develop understanding, respect and appreciation of other faiths.
- Familiarity with religious language, symbols, signs and gestures of worship and prayer.
- A curriculum that develops the whole child, integrating physical and intellectual growth alongside moral, spiritual, emotional and physiological growth preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.

The Religious Education Curriculum

At St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, religious education is a core subject based on the expectations of religious education given in the Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools. “Its primary purpose is the step by step study of the mystery of Christ, the teaching of the Church and its application in daily life.”

Statement from the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England Wales, May 2000.

The RE Programme

The ‘The Way, the Truth, the Life’ programme forms the basis of our scheme of work and teaching.

In addition to the timetabled RE sessions and daily collective worship, St Thomas More Catholic Primary School celebrates Holy days, special feast days (including those of other faiths), regular class Masses or Liturgies, services of Reconciliation and whole school Masses. We also provide opportunities to integrate religious education with other curricular areas through enrichment weeks and a variety of teaching approaches, including use of Art and ICT.

Time allocation

The time allocation for specific religious education is 10% of the taught week in each key stage, in accordance with the guidelines from the Bishops of England and Wales (May 2000).

Planning

“Classroom RE will be a challenging educational engagement between the pupil, the teacher and the authentic subject material.”

Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, May 2000

RE is planned using a shared school topic pro-forma. These are completed by the class teachers, and submitted to the RE co-ordinator and the Headteacher at the beginning of each term. Planning includes additional resources and activities which are differentiated so that individuals may reach their full potential. Staff know to differentiate and adapt by religious understanding and not through literacy attainment.

Planning, Assessment and Recording

Teachers at St Thomas More Catholic Primary plan, assess and record for Religious Education in the same manner as they do for all other core curriculum areas. Assessment in Religious Education is used to identify difficulties and areas for future development; provide information on strengths, progress and achievements of pupils; and to inform future planning. Data is entered onto our tracking system Target Tracker.

The children are assessed throughout the year and teacher assessment is guided by the progress descriptors. Progress is submitted three times a year in line with other core subjects.

The marking of RE work is covered by the whole school marking policy, through which teachers give pupils regular feedback, both orally and through accurate marking, and encourage pupils to respond to the feedback. (See Marking & Feedback policy).

Cross-curricular links

As Religious Education is an integral part of school life, RE incorporates other curriculum areas. Aspects of PSHE, SMSC, Relationship & Health Education, spiritual development and moral education are catered for through the RE programme ‘Life to the Full Plus’.

Spiritual Development and Moral Education

Spiritual development is promoted through Religious Education and Collective Worship. Opportunities are provided in the curriculum for children to question rationally, explore, and reflect and search for answers. We encourage children to develop understanding through play and practical activities. Through the RE curriculum and links with PSHE, Relationship & Health Education, children have opportunities to develop their morality. Through social and cultural teaching, children foster respect,

understanding and appreciation of difference and diversity. Our behaviour policy reflects the teaching of Christ and the Church, thus encompassing moral values of self-respect, respect for others, honesty, fairness and co-operation (see behaviour policy). Our contributions to charities help to deepen moral issues such as caring for the earth, justice and peace.

Equal Opportunities

At St Thomas More Catholic Primary School we do not tolerate discrimination in any way. We strive to create an environment free of unfairness and prejudice. Both boys and girls serve Mass and everyone has the opportunity to take part in Masses, Liturgies and Assemblies regardless of their academic ability, race, gender, ethnicity or faith.

Collective Worship and Prayer

“For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them” Matthew 18:20. At St Thomas More we aim to make collective worship meaningful to the children. The daily acts of worship may take place in a variety of ways, for example in year groups or in class groups and key stage or whole school assemblies. They are encouraged to take an active part in assemblies either by acting, singing, leading prayers or through quiet reflection.

Assemblies and Hymn Practice

Collective worship takes place on a daily basis. On Monday we have whole school assembly led by the Headteacher. Alternate Tuesday is hymn practice led by RE Lead/church parishioner/collective worship. Wednesday is the infant assembly and Thursday is the junior assembly, led by the class teachers. On the day when there is no assembly for infants and juniors, a reflection takes place in the class. Our Friday assembly celebrates the children’s hard work, good behaviour and achievements both in and out of school, accompanied by photographs of a class at work and at play together. On occasion, special visitors are invited in to lead assemblies – e.g., CAFOD representatives, guest speakers relating to enrichment weeks etc.

Masses and Liturgies

Mass is an important part of our school community worship. The staff prepare the children for this occasion by encouraging them to think of themes, lead the readings, hymns, bidding prayers and offertory. At St Thomas More Catholic Primary School we celebrate Mass at the beginning of each term, Holy Days, other major feast days, our patron saint’s day and end of each school year. These are planned by the class teacher with the RE Co-ordinator and given to the Parish Priest in advance of the Mass. All year groups are involved in Liturgies, led by the children and involving the parish priest, to which parents are invited to play an active part. The class teachers support the children in the preparation of these Masses and Liturgies.

Prayer

“Our relationship with Jesus, our life of prayer, is the back-bone of our life of faith. As his disciples, each of us is called to know him better, to make more and more space for him in our hearts, to enter everyday into intimate conversation with him.”

Statement from Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, ‘A Catholic Guide to Prayer and Spirituality’, 2014

Prayer is an important part of daily life in our school. Children are encouraged to pray in their own words and for their own intentions throughout the day. Each class has a religious focal area to be used for reflections and during the RE lesson.

Traditional Catholic prayers are taught in specific key stages in accordance with the ‘The Way, the Truth, the Life’ programme. Children pray at certain times of the day: morning, before/after lunch and at the end of the day. The quiet area is also available for quiet reflection and prayer. Additional prayer sessions are led during Advent and Lent, as well as for current affairs.

Home, School, Parish

“The partnership between home, parish and school is the best setting for the formation of maturing Catholic young people”.

Statement from Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, May 2000

Parental Role

Parents understand on entry of their child, that they must support the Catholic ethos of the school. All children attend assemblies and take part in RE lessons, and they are assessed equally. We recognise that parents are the first educators of their children.

“We believe that families are schools of deepest humanity, where virtue is learned and parents are the first teachers in the ways of faith.”

Statement from Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, ‘The Call, the Journey and the Mission,’ 2014

We support parents in developing children’s faith. We work alongside them, assisting them on their faith journey and supporting them as they work with their children. Due to their key role, we regularly invite parents to join us for Collective Worship – Liturgies and Masses. At the beginning of term 1, 3 and 5 parents receive a newsletter informing them of the topics to be covered for the coming weeks, and of events in the Liturgical year.

Community

Our links with the Parish are mainly through the Mass. The Parish Priest is where possible, involved in Liturgies in school, and the junior Masses are held in the St Simon Stock Church with the Parish Priest. The Parish Priest also delivers the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the church to those children who wish to participate during Lent and Advent. The children will also visit the parish church to examine it in more detail regarding its symbolism when applicable to fit in with the various aspects of the ‘The Way, the Truth, the Life’. Children learn about certain Sacraments at different times in accordance with the ‘The

Way, the Truth, the Life' programme. First Holy Communion, though wholly parish based is supported in school with teaching staff attending the actual ceremonies.

The RE leader creates a Weekly Faith Bulletin that aims to support families in their faith journey. It comprises of the Gospel reading for each Sunday, links to enable families to pray and worship together and activities to do together at linked to the Gospels.

We encourage the children to participate in charitable events for organisations such as CAFOD, The Cabrini Society, Demelza House, The Good Shepherd Appeal, Children in Need, Sports Relief, Evelina which is a cause close to the children's hearts as it was this charity that supported a terminally ill pupil in our school.

Children learn about the wider community through the study of other world faiths such as Judaism and Islam. Children look at other faiths and explore and discover the similarities with their own.

Responsibility

Co-ordination of Religious Education is the responsibility of the religious education co-ordinator, under the direction of the Headteacher.

Monitoring

The monitoring of Religious Education is the responsibility of the co-ordinator. RE planning and assessment evidence is submitted to the co-ordinator. Book monitoring and lesson observations take place throughout the year with the co-ordinator feeding back to the staff, Headteacher and the Governors – at curriculum reviews.

Resources

Each class teacher has a copy of the 'The Way, the Truth, the Life' as well as login details for the web - based resources such as CAFOD and 'Life to the Full Plus'. There are also other resources including other faith artefact boxes, assembly ideas, Bibles, liturgical posters, copies of 'God's Story', 'Church's Story' and other relevant resources, which are located in the RE resource cupboard and in classrooms.

Reviewed: September 2024

Next Review Date: September 2026