

Religious Education Policy

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School



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Religious Education Policy

Philosophy

Religious education is the "*core of the core curriculum*" in a Catholic school (Pope St John Paul II). Placing religious education at the core of the curriculum helps the school to fulfill its mission to educate the whole person in discerning the meaning of their existence

A Catholic education is "focused on integral formation of its students and at the same time prepares them for full participation in civic life. It forms the Catholic student as 'both human and a person of faith, the protagonist of culture and the subject of religion'. It teaches subjects with methods proper to them and at the same time imbues the whole curriculum with a Christian outlook. It is established for Catholic students and at the same time draws others to its doors. In short, the Catholic school reflects the apparent paradox of the incarnation that is resolved in Christ: it is both fully Catholic and really a school. Religious education in a Catholic school also bears witness to the same mystery: it is both fully religious and genuinely educational." (To Know You More Clearly, Religious Education Directory p.9).

The aims of Religious Education in Catholic schools

- 1) To engage in a systematic study of the mystery 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
- 2) To enable pupils continually to deepen their religious and theological understanding and be able to communicate this effectively
- 3) To present an authentic vision of the Church's moral and social teaching to provide pupils with a sure guide for living and the tools to critically engage with contemporary culture and society
- 4) To give pupils an understanding of the religions and worldviews present in the world today and the skills to engage in respectful and fruitful dialogue with those whose worldviews differ from their own
- 5) To develop the critical faculties of pupils so to bring clarity to the relationship between faith and life, and between faith and culture
- 6) To stimulate pupils' imagination and provoke a desire for personal meaning as revealed in the truth of the Catholic faith
- 7) To enable pupils to relate the knowledge gained through religious education to their understanding of other subjects in the curriculum

The outcome of excellent religious education is religiously literate and consciously 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 recognise the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. (To Know You More Clearly, Religious Education Directory)

Our Aims and objectives for Religious Education

We aim to live out our Mission Statement by working in partnership with parents, carers and parish communities to provide a happy and secure Christian environment in which the children will develop spiritually, intellectually, socially, physically and emotionally through promoting:

- a knowledge and understanding of Catholic faith and life
- a knowledge and understanding of our response to the mystery of life, its dignity and its purpose as directed by our faith
- the development of a personal relationship with God
- a knowledge and understanding of religious language, symbols and styles of worship and prayer
- opportunities whereby children can experience and explore their spiritual nature
- an appreciation of the faith tradition of others

Our objectives in teaching Religious Education are:

- 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
- the development of the appropriate skills, for example, the 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 multicultural, multi-faith society

The Importance of the Role of Parents in Religious Education

Our school community recognises the central role parents have in the religious education of their children. The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales re-iterated in their statement on Religious Education in Catholic Schools (2000): "The first educators in the faith are parents."

In recognition of this, we strive to maintain a faithful partnership with parents, communicating clearly both the curriculum and the wider spiritual opportunities offered to families and warmly inviting parents to share their knowledge and experiences with the school community.

Our school works closely in partnership with the home and Parishes of St Patrick's (Woolston) and The Annunciation (Netley), to which many of our children belong. The General Directory for Catechesis confirms, "This partnership between home and parish is enhanced by the role of the Catholic school in which the educational mission of the Church finds a particular and important expression." Religious Education in a Catholic school encompasses the whole educational mission of the Church and is not confined to timetabled Religious Education lessons.

The Curriculum

At St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, religious education is primarily based on the Religious Education Directory (RED) "To Know You More Clearly". In line with the Bishop's directive, the RE curriculum is taught through a Diocesan approved resource called 'The Vine and the Branches'.

Our teaching incorporates children's experiences, personal feelings, questions and responses to life. The children's studies are supplemented with work linked to the events that take place during the liturgical year. Teachers are expected and supported to plan and teach lessons that are interesting, motivating and challenging through the use of creative tasks and a question-rich curriculum. Teachers are encouraged to use a range of I.T. to support this, including Power Point or SMART presentations, visual media, and a variety of relevant websites.

In recognition of the importance of religious education in our school, we devote 10% of the teaching week to religious education lessons. In Key Stage One this is 2 hours 15 minutes and in Key Stage Two this is 2 hours and 30 minutes, not including Collective Worship. In Early Years, the timetable and learning style is more flexible, but teaching of Religious Education is prioritised to give children the opportunity to engage fully with the curriculum.

The Religious Education Directory has a clear framework for learning:

- Four Knowledge Lenses (Hear, Believe, Live and Celebrate indicate what should be known by the end of each age phase)
- Ways of Knowing (Understand, Discern and Respond are the skills through which children progress and develop their thinking during the curriculum journey)
- Expected Outcomes (which set out for each year group what pupils should be able to know, remember and do)
- Curriculum Branches (these divide the model curriculum into half-term units of study which repeat annually, giving a spiral curriculum which allows children to build progressively on the prior knowledge and develop their understanding year by year)
 - The curriculum branches are:

Autumn 1	Creation and Covenant
Autumn 2	Prophecy and Promise
Spring 1	Galilee to Jerusalem
Spring 2	Desert to Garden
Summer 1	To the Ends of the Earth
Summer 2	Dialogue and Encounter

There is an additional week of study at the beginning of the school year set aside for children to learn about and reflect on our school mission statement.

The curriculum is firmly founded on building children's knowledge and understanding of Scripture, while providing opportunities to make connections to other faiths and cultures, as well as to their daily lives.

RE in the classroom and beyond

At St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, the teaching of religious education is designed to be as varied and creative as possible, to help children to engage fully with the ideas explored, to ask wondering questions and to lead their own learning in discerning their response.

Learning within the classroom may include:

- Whole class discussion and teaching
- Group discussion and feedback
- Drama and role play
- Independent research
- Exploration through music and art
- Godly Play
- External speakers and workshops

Learning in religious education cannot always be recorded and does not begin or end in the classroom. Learning from religious education will also flow into other curriculum as Religious Education should inspire and unify every aspect of school life and give shape to the whole curriculum. We aim to give children the opportunity to connect their formal learning with their wider understanding through regular opportunities to reflect and respond.

Learning beyond the classroom may include:

- Following the example of a role model in daily life at home or in school
- Participation in charitable activity and fundraising
- Inspiration through reflection in prayer and liturgy
- Conversations with clergy or parishioners in school
- Response to catechesis in the parish (e.g for Reconciliation or First Holy Communion)
- Engagement with programmes based on Catholic social teaching (e.g. Mini-Vinnies)

We work closely with parents and with our local Parish to support children's progress in understanding and developing on their curriculum and faith journey.

Other World Views

Catholic education seeks to form pupils who are well prepared to play a positive role in society and to follow Jesus' teaching to "love your neighbour". We therefore embrace learning about other world views with "a willingness... to try to understand better the religion of one's neighbours, and to experience something of their religious life and culture." (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales)

The Religious Education Directory includes a branch called 'Dialogue and Encounter' which focuses specifically on exploring other world views and recognizing the connections with the Catholic faith. Opportunities for dialogue and encounter are sought throughout the academic year and especially focus on broadening pupils' experiences and on real-life encounters with those of other faiths or none, to enable connections and develop understanding. Examples may include:

- Opportunities for families in our community to share their faith and experience
- Conversations with invited visitors about their beliefs and experiences
- Q&A with faith leaders online or in person
- Visits to places of worship
- Guided exploration of artefacts from other faiths
- Independent reading, research and discussion

Feedback, Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Verbal feedback is given in Religious Education as the primary way to support children's progress and to challenge their thinking. Assessing what children know and understand is done through a variety of ways, for example:

- through questioning of individual or groups
- through gathering of evidence from the full range of work produced by pupils in the normal everyday teaching and learning process
- staff records and observations
- pupils' written work
- discussions, proposals and conclusions
- artwork
- comments or commentaries by pupils
- evaluation of dance, drama or movement
- photographs and videos
- records of pupils' responses in class

At the end of each half term, children in Key Stages One and Two complete a summative assessment task, which may take a variety of designs, to allow staff to see how children are progressing both in their knowledge and understanding and skills.

All assessment follows diocesan and national guidelines, assessing against the expected outcomes for each branch in the Religious Education Directory. Pupil attainment is recorded regularly using the pupil discussion templates and progress is tracked by the RE Lead.

The RE Lead moderates outcomes in Religious Education both internally and, when appropriate, with local Catholic schools, to ensure consistency of expectations with other schools in the diocese.

Monitoring and Evaluating

The RE Lead monitors Religious Education in line with other core curriculum subjects. Monitoring is conducted regularly and outcomes may inform further training at staff meetings or actions for the subject action plan. Self-evaluation of Religious Education is the responsibility of the Headteacher, the RE Lead and Governors, with further input from all teachers of religious education, from families and from pupils. This process ensures a culture of continuous improvement, so that teaching and learning in Religious Education remains the best it can be.

Staff Formation

All staff support the Catholic ethos of our school and strive to develop children's progress and understanding in matters of faith. There are opportunities for all staff to engage in personal prayer and reflection which may support their professional role.

All teachers involved in planning and delivering Religious Education lessons have regular support, training and guidance on the delivery of the RE curriculum. The RE Lead collaborates with other local schools to share best practice more widely.