

Religious Education Policy

Mission Statement

"We share in Christ's life so He can guide our thoughts, words and actions."

Introduction

Religious Education is the "core of the core curriculum" in a Catholic school (Pope St John Paul II). Placing RE at the core of the curriculum in Catholic schools helps the school to fulfil its mission to educate the whole person in discerning the meaning of their existence; it underpins the foundation of every subject and extends into the daily life and routines of the school. Through teaching, example, worship and shared Christian values we are helping to foster, in partnership with the family and parish, a living and personal faith in the children. Our school aims to develop all children to their full potential. Our school's character is formed by teaching our pupils to follow Christ's example, His Word in the Gospels and live out the Gospel Virtues. As a Catholic school we aim to do this by educating the whole person in our school community with an ethos animated by the Holy Spirit where faith is lived and shared. We seek to promote a shared Catholic vision of the nature and purpose of existence and the values of the human person.

Aims

1. To develop knowledge and understanding of the mystery of God, of the church and of the beliefs central to the Catholic faith.
2. To develop an awareness of the relationship between faith and how we live our lives.
3. To develop appropriate skills, acquire knowledge and organise it in order to make informed judgements.
4. To develop a strong home/school/parish partnership to prepare children on their faith journey and celebration of the sacraments.
5. To nurture and encourage the study and understanding of the scriptures and prayer life to enable our children to become reflective citizens.
6. To promote an intelligent appreciation and understanding of religious questions in general and a sympathetic acquaintance with other religious beliefs and practices, as part of a multicultural and multi-faith society.
7. Develop an sense of awe and wonder
8. To achieve high standards in all areas of RE with written work of a standard at least in line with English standards and expectations.

Religious Education

Religious Education permeates all aspects of school life which is seen in our daily life and relationships and seen in our prayer life and weekly liturgical services. All aspects of school life aim to give the children a sense of value and purpose in the eyes of God, themselves and others. All our R.E. teaching should be effective and meaningful it should, where possible, start from the child's own experience and relate to every day life and relationships.

R.E. is allocated 10% of curriculum time as required by the Bishops' Conference. Prayer, assemblies, hymn practice or any other form of Collective Worship is not included in this time. We celebrate a weekly Mass and this is the equivalent of half-an-hour of R.E. lesson teaching time. R.E. is taught during two lessons per week in all classes. A greater percentage of time may be allocated to R.E. at certain times of the year, such as Holy Week and through cross curricular opportunities. The Catholic RE scheme 'Living and Growing as the People of God', prepared by the Archdiocese of Birmingham, is followed throughout the school. By following this strategy, continuity and progression - which are intrinsic elements of the programme - are ensured, from

the planning to assessment. The scheme is intended to link in with other curricular areas and it is resourced by using Bibles, Sacramental programmes, Multicultural resources and other resources appropriate to the programme of study.

During set Religious Education lessons work is differentiated to suit the needs of all abilities. It is presented in a variety of ways, giving children the opportunity to develop and present their own ideas. We strive to make the activities we present to the children challenging and interesting. There are strong cross-curricular links particularly with Literacy/drama and ICT.

We aim for Key Stage 2 children to produce quality evidence for all lessons taught each week. This will include written work in lessons taught, however speaking and listening and reading God's word will take place in lessons, where appropriate, the evidence may simply be the recording of the date, the lesson's objective and a short annotation and/or photographs or recorded in the 'I wonder' class journals.

Feedback in RE

Work should be marked in accordance with the school marking policy and in relation to the learning intentions (not to an English focus that may not be adhered to in the completion of the activity). Key words must be corrected so that there is an expectation that standards in RE should and will be as high as in any other subject. Pupils are frequently referred to their Unit Marker for correct RE vocabulary. Comments should encourage children to reflect and analyse. Teachers are asked to provide challenge or consolidation in RE through next step questions or clarifying questions to ascertain knowledge and also gather assessment information for the more analytical aspects of the attainment descriptors (both verbally and recorded). We respond to prayer but we do not critique these very personal, shared outpourings from the children that express their faith journey (unless to challenge a factual inaccuracy).

Assessment, Recording and Reporting of RE

The assessment of individual pupils in RE is the responsibility of the class teacher, as it would be in any other curriculum area. Assessment is continuous through the units, through the strands and allows an overall judgement to be made about pupil performance. There are 4 recurring assessment strands in the RE strategy:

- The Liturgical Year
- Scripture
- The Sacraments
- Living as Christians

Each RE Unit has a Unit Marker that is completed at the start of the unit to show prior knowledge and again at the end of the unit to show what has been learned. This marker has all of the vocabulary likely to be needed during work on that unit. Markers allow "Wonder and Awe" questions to be formally recorded, as well as in the body of class teacher marking. Due to the large number of topics contained within the strategy, it is not possible to assess each child on each unit, every year. Therefore, a programme of assessments has been devised by the Diocese which all Catholic schools adhere to focusing on one of the 4 strands on a rolling programme over 4 years. As a result, comparisons across the whole school can be made; progression by year groups can be monitored and national comparisons can be made if necessary. We moderate standards in RE throughout the year and we track by ability or by individual pupils depending on the developmental needs in RE at the time. In moderation, we use the National Attainment Descriptors for RE, which evaluate three aspects across all units taught:

- Knowledge and Understanding (Learning About);
- Engagement and Response (Learning From); and
- Analysis and Evaluation.

Staff identify when pupils evidence these aspects in their work (written and oral) and annotate a working version of this grid through the year (in the pupils' RE book). This helps support wider judgements about the performance of the child in their RE development.

RE Baseline

All pupils in Foundation complete an RE baseline when they start (updated in line with the new attainment descriptors for RE). This task is repeated again at the end of Foundation to show a raw measurement of progress from their initial start point.

Differentiation

Children's individual requirements will be met through differentiation of work and outcome of planned activities. Children who are identified as having special needs will be given support at all available opportunities. Teachers are aware of areas where sensitivity is required due to individual circumstances. Staff at Holy Cross are aware of and plan for different learning styles using quality first teaching strategies. Children with natural aptitude for RE are identified and appropriate challenge is added to their study of faith to increase enjoyment and stretch their analytical opportunities.

Jesuit Virtues (Catholic Pupil Profile)

Each half term, the children develop their understanding of two new virtues and strive to apply these to their everyday lives through word and deed.

- Grateful for their own gifts, for the gift of other people, and for the blessings of each day; and generous with their gifts, becoming men and women for others
- Attentive to their experience and to their vocation; and discerning about the choices they make and the effects of those choices
- Compassionate towards others, near and far, especially the less fortunate; and loving by their just actions and forgiving words
- Faith-filled in their beliefs and hopeful for the future
- Eloquent and truthful in what they say of themselves, the relations between people, and the world
- Learned, finding God in all things; and wise in the ways they use their learning for the common good
- Curious about everything; and active in their engagement with the world, changing what they can for the better
- 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.

Collective Worship

To live our faith worship is seen as central to our life at Holy Cross School, seen in the weekly celebration of Mass, with the first Thursday in church and the following three in our school hall, celebrated by our parish priest. The theme, readings and hymns follow the Ordo and are prepared by the individual teacher (and class), in consultation with the R.E leader who has discussed them with the parish priest prior to the start of term. Children plan and write the weekly bidding prayers. Masses are on a rota for Key Stage Two with Year 2 leading Masses by the end of the academic year. At present the weekly collective worship is as follows:-

- The children have daily collective worship either in class or in the school hall.
- Mondays, we gather together as a school to celebrate the Gospel Assembly in the school hall led by the Executive Principal or the Head of School
- Tuesdays, we gather together as a Key Stage for extended time of prayer led by the children
- Wednesdays, we gather together in the school hall to celebrate Songs of Praise

- On Fridays, we gather together in the school hall to celebrate our Gifts from God assembly.
- Each class celebrates a class lead assembly for the rest of the school and for parents once a year.

We have Collective Worship so that we can deepen our relationship with God together and individually. Through the many forms this worship takes, we grow in spiritual, moral and liturgical understanding. We allow ourselves to grow in understanding of our living faith tradition and then develop a sense of wonder and inspiration in the person of Christ. It is through Collective Worship that we share each other's faith experiences and learn the skills of prayer and reflection:

- The children are provided with a variety of prayer experiences and are encouraged to pray thoughtfully and with respect;
- Children are encouraged to develop their individual prayer life through daily participation in morning prayers, grace before and after meals and evening prayer. They also have opportunities to participate in prayer during whole school assemblies;
- At appropriate stages, each class experiences prayerful reflections, including silent contemplation, and short prayer services and assemblies based on topics covered in the strategy. Formal Prayers, appropriate to the age and maturity of the year group, are taught through the Strategy. Each class teacher a copy of the prayers that their class are expected to learn in each year;
- Each child is also given the opportunity for sharing their personal intentions within class so that family situations, illness, thanksgiving and individual concerns can be expressed and supported;
- There are a number of children who have voluntarily trained as altar servers and they serve regularly at school Masses
- Each class takes part in daily Christian Meditation from Early Years to Year 6.

Understanding the Liturgical Calendar

We ensure that pupils are aware of the Liturgical Calendar and key events in the Church. The symbolism of colours is made clear from the earliest days in our school: purple for penance (seen during advent and Lent), red for the Holy Spirit and martyrdom (seen at Pentecost), white, gold for important feasts and Easter, green for the ordinary times of the year, blue is associated with Mary. Some months of the year have special foci. October is the month of the Rosary, November is the month when the Holy Souls (the deceased) are prayed for, May is the month when Mary is especially remembered and June is the month of the Sacred Heart when we remember especially the great love Jesus has for us.

World Faith Exploration

At Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, it is important that the children have an appreciation of other faiths in different cultures. Each class has a different faith group focus so that over the time spent at Holy Cross, all faiths will have been explored by all classes. Through the nurturing arms of Catholicism, we ensure that children know and understand that everyone's faith journey is their own and not all people believe what we do. We strive to support the notion that British Values are the core Gospel Values that scaffold our faith and that only through true tolerance and respect are we living examples of our own faith. Each year group learns about aspects of different faiths and celebrations, helping to further develop aspects of the children's citizenship skills and understanding.

The Sacraments – Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation

Celebrating the sacraments are wonderful school and parish celebrations which is given significant time and involvement of the whole school community. It is seen as an opportunity for parents and families to rekindle and strengthen their own faith journey.

All the sacraments have the Home/School/Parish partnership at the centre of the programme of preparation. The sacramental programmes involve parents, staff, priest and parishioners working together with activities including parish Masses and prayer partners, as well as meetings in school with parents to learn about the work covered in class lead by staff and how they may support their child at home. Also our parish priest leads beautiful reflections to support our parents to in their understanding and personal faith journey. We are fortunate to have a very active PTA who readily support our celebration with lovely refreshments at these events

Our parish priest joins our children in class in their sacramental preparations to support their understanding and reinforces our parish involvement. He also joins the bishop who visits our school annually to talk to our Confirmandi in Year 6 and go on a school tour.

Year 3 children prepare for the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist by following the R.E. scheme of work from the Archdiocese, *Learning and Growing as the People of God*. All units contribute to the preparation of the two sacraments. The majority of the sacramental preparation programme is covered in Units B for Reconciliation and Unit J for Holy Communion: 'The Eucharist is a Thanksgiving to God'. Year 3 have a prayer bag to take home to share with their family in their preparations for the sacraments.

Children preparing for the sacrament of Confirmation also follow the Archdiocese scheme of work. Each unit contributes to the children's preparation for Confirmation although two units focus specifically on the sacrament. These units are covered to fit in with the timing of the celebration. They are: Unit E Baptism and Confirmation Celebrations and Unit J Pentecost. Other materials are used to support the children's preparation such as the 'Gifted in the Spirit' scheme. Year 6 complete a project they research for the chosen saint and as for Year 3 have a prayer bag to take home and share with their family in the preparation for the sacrament.

All children in Years 4, 5 and Year 6 celebrate Reconciliation with the parish priest in school during Advent to prepare for Christmas and during Lent for Easter preparations.

Monitoring, evaluation and review

The curriculum is monitored by the RE leader and SLT is informed to secure standards:

- Monitoring of teacher planning
- Scrutiny of books and assessments
- Lesson observations
- Moderation of work
- Sharing of good practice.

Equal Opportunities and Practice

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School aims to provide all pupils with equal opportunities. They should have equal access and opportunities within the curriculum, both formal and informal, so that when leaving our school, they have the widest possible options available to them, educationally, socially and vocationally.

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School supports equal opportunities by countering stereotypes and prejudice, reducing the effects of sexual, racial and social discrimination, while at the same time

acknowledging the cultural and educational needs of our pupils. Equality of opportunity for all children is essential, whatever their age, ability, gender, race or background. The RE outcomes are analysed to see how well each group does in terms of progress to identify any group with a concern. This is then monitored and staff made aware if areas of focus if needed.

As a staff we will remain aware of, and provide equal opportunities for all our pupils in Religious Education. We will take into account cultural background, gender and Special Needs, both in our teaching attitudes and in the published materials we use with our pupils.

Resources and display

- The front entrance promotes our mission statement and has a mosaic to promote our mission made by our children.
- All hall displays always have an R.E. focus.
- Our school mission is on display in all areas and rooms of the school and is known by our children being referred to often.
- The Religious Education subject leader in conjunction with the whole staff audits religious education resources regularly. They are stored in the storage area adjacent to the staffroom and in the R.E. leader's classroom.
- At least one display board in each classroom is assigned to religious education and children's work is displayed together with other relevant materials. In addition, each class has a display board in the school hall for Religious Education displays as it is a core subject and is considered of paramount importance.
- Each classroom has a prayer focus area that is changed regularly to reflect the liturgical year.
- The Catholic School Pupil Profile is prominent around school for staff and children to reference
- The front of school and school library carries a significant number of relevant storybooks and prayer books.

The role of the governing body, Head of School and Executive Principal

The role of the governing body is to monitor and give strategic direction to the school improvement plan. The subject leader meets regularly with the link governor for Religious Education to inform them about religious education standards and school mission/liturgical life of the school.

The Executive Principal has ultimate responsibility for the teaching of R.E within the school. They must monitor and ensure that there are strategies and guidelines in place for planning and teaching the subject. The Executive Principal set annual performance targets for teachers that include at least one Catholic Life target. The head ensures she consults with staff and they receive the appropriate training to teach R.E.

This policy is monitored and will be reviewed every two years, or before if necessary.

Ratified by Governors Spring 2022.

