



St Thomas More Catholic First School

Learning, loving and living together with Christ

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

This Religious Education Policy has been approved and adopted by the Governing Body on _____ and will be reviewed in December 2020.

Signed by Chair of Governors:

Signed by Head Teacher:

The role of Religious Education at St Thomas More

Religious Education has a very high priority in the life of our school. As a Catholic school, Jesus Christ remains central to every aspect of school life. Our pupils are educated in the beliefs and devotional practices of the Catholic Church.

Aims and purposes of Religious Education

- To develop an awareness and understanding of the presence of God in each individual child's life and to encourage a personal response to that presence
- To allow each child to develop their conscience and make sound moral judgements based on commitment to following Christ
- To enable each child to learn and develop their full potential according to their abilities and adopt attitudes of care and respect for each other
- To promote the sacramental life of Christian families and to encourage parents to take an active part in the preparation of their children for the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion
- To foster school-parish links to ensure that our children remain exposed and committed to the Catholic faith beyond the realms of the school curriculum

Learning and Teaching

The Catholic RE scheme '*Learning 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 Foundation Stage, through to Year 4. The subject leader scrutinises the planning and assessment and conducts lesson observations and book scrutinies to ensure that the scheme is closely adhered to.

This scheme is supplemented by work on the Saints and stories from the Old and New Testaments.

RE lessons should be distinct and identifiably different from other subject lessons, in that they should always start with a prayer.

Classroom Organisation

The Crucifix is displayed prominently in each classroom and in central areas of the school. Within each classroom there is a prayer table and RE focus, which children are encouraged to use during collective worship and for their own personal and spiritual reflections. The prayer table is always draped with a cloth depicting the current liturgical colour. Each classroom is expected to have at least one RE display which reflects either the current topic being taught, or the liturgical time of year.

Collective worship and the development of prayer life/spirituality

Children are encouraged to develop their individual prayer life through daily participation in morning prayers, grace before and after meals and evening prayer.

At appropriate stages, each class experiences prayerful reflections, including silent contemplation, 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 throughout the Strategy. Each class teacher has a copy of the prayers that their class are expected to learn in a flip book on their prayer table and the RE Co-ordinator monitors that these prayers are taught.

Each child is also given the opportunity for sharing their personal intentions within class and whole school assemblies so that family situations, illness, thanksgiving and individual concerns can be expressed and supported.

There are two weekly whole-school assemblies, the first of which focuses on relevant readings and Gospels linked to the Prayer Theme for the week. The second assembly focuses on Bible stories from the Old and New Testament and is led by regular visitors to the school (Open the Book). In addition, there is a bi-weekly awards assembly celebrating the achievements and successes of our children's God-given talents which happens on weeks where there is no Mass.

There are weekly Key Stage assemblies, which are delivered by class teachers, focusing on the Virtues and Values theme for the half term. These assemblies aim to involve children practically and spirituality in following the footsteps of Christ Jesus. There are also weekly class assemblies which are informed by the 'Pray Together' book by Patricia Ange.

In accordance with Diocesan guidelines we have introduced half termly 'Virtues and Values'.

Our children also participate in fortnightly Masses or Services, held at the school, which are always supported by family members and parishioners. The children themselves are actively involved through altar serving, reading, offertory and music. Class Masses are held for each class at least twice per year where the children from that class plan and lead the liturgy.

The Rosary is prayed weekly, in commemoration of Our Blessed Mother, Mary. The Rosary sessions are led by the members of the Liturgy Group.

Sacramental Preparation

The Strategy outlines specific preparations for the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. These are delivered in class as an integral part of the RE curriculum, ensuring that all of our children have a sound knowledge and understanding of the significance of the Sacraments to Catholicism.

In addition, there is a structured programme for the children who are preparing to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion.

Parental Involvement in Sacramental Preparation

Every effort is made to ensure the vital links between home, school and the parish community are established and sustained. The parents are invited to attend meetings with the Chaplain, Head Teacher and RE Co-ordinator. For these sacraments, it is seen as vital that the parents attend the meetings, Commitment Masses and the actual celebrations with their child.

Throughout the school year, parents are invited to attend Masses and Services. They are asked to support the nurturing of the faith of their children by encouraging prayers at home, attending weekly Sunday Mass and listening to and talking with their child.

Multi-Cultural Aspects and Race Equality

Whilst all pupils are expected to participate in RE lessons, parents have the right to withdraw their children, although this is strongly discouraged. All pupils are encouraged to show respect and acknowledgement for the beliefs of others through open discussion and shared experiences. We recognise the need to familiarise the children with other Christian traditions and non-Christian faiths and to encourage the children to foster attitudes of tolerance, respect and understanding for beliefs and traditions of other faiths. While remaining true to their Christian faith, the children are encouraged to acknowledge with respect the truth and value of other faith traditions and to establish good relationships with members of other faiths without prejudice. The children are also encouraged to recognise and value the international and multicultural nature of the Catholic Church.

Differentiation

Children with special educational needs, whether they are children with learning difficulties or children who are able and talented in RE, will be presented with tasks to suit their ability. Differentiation for these children may be in the amount of support offered by the teacher and/or assistant or tasks with varying levels of difficulty, including tasks and reflections which will extend the more-able children's spirituality or knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the topic being covered. Children with a natural aptitude for RE are highlighted on the 'more-able and talented' register and support intervention is put in place for specific children who may enter our school from a non-faith background once they are assessed against the baseline in RE.

Assessment and Recording of RE

The Subject leader has compiled assessment sheets for each of the year groups, from Reception to Year 4, based on the Strategy assessment criteria for each unit of work. The assessment sheets detail the differentiated requirements for each topic, based on the "*Must, Should, Could*" layered target principles. The children's names are highlighted in the colour that best fits their overall performance in each unit of work. A copy of each assessment is also passed on to the RE leader who reviews each unit, in order to inform future foci.

In the Foundation Stage, teachers conduct a Baseline Assessment at the beginning of the academic year. Attainment can then be tracked at the end of the year.

St Thomas More levels children's attainment in RE. Through the 4 strands of the RE Strategy, the RE leader collects evidence for a subject portfolio on the attainment of children in all year groups, on a 4-year programme. Staff receive regular training and support on how to level pupil's work against the attainment targets through staff meetings.

From January 2018, teachers will assess a focus child in each year group against the Age Related Standards (ARE) as defined by the Diocese. These assessments will be recorded for one piece of work for each unit and take the form of an assessment sheet which will be kept in the back of the child's book.

Resources

General teaching resources including assembly books, artworks, posters, music and videos are available in school. Key Stage 2 classes have access to Bibles in the Year 4 classroom. The Subject Leader retains all other resources, such as Sacramental Preparation resources, and copies of whole school Masses and Services.

Information and Communication Technology

ICT will be used wherever appropriate and as facilities allow. It is our intention to present the Catholic faith in a stimulating and yet reverent way and thus demonstrate its relevance to contemporary life by using modern technology as and where appropriate.

Health and Safety

Candles and Matches: Candles, when used for collective acts of worship and RE lessons, must be kept well out of the way of children. Matches should also be stored in a safe place, out of the reach of children and not accessible to them.

The role of the Subject Leader

- To liaise with the Parish Priest, Chaplain, Deacon and other key parishioners regarding Masses, services, Sacraments and other significant events within the church calendar, where the school is involved
- To ensure the celebration of the Church's Liturgical Year is upheld in school
- To provide teaching and support staff with the specific knowledge and understanding of the Catholic Faith in order to ensure accurate and confident delivery of the doctrine
- To monitor and evaluate the subject closely, through classroom environment and lesson observations, book scans, planning trawls and pupil interviews
- To consult with staff on the planning and delivery of the units of work when necessary, providing guidance and support to ensure quality learning and teaching
- To train staff in the effective assessment of RE
- To monitor the quality of opportunities and activities provided for the children and the levels of achievement attained in relation to national standards and similar Catholic schools
- To plan and timetable assemblies, hymn practices, Masses and services on a termly basis
- To provide parents with information for their child's sacramental preparations
- To order and allocate resources to classes and the central resource area within budgetary restrictions
- To highlight key areas of learning and experience through the policy document, action planning and the units of work
- To check resources, materials and equipment regularly for needs arising and ensure permanent resources are respected and returned, to ensure easy access for all staff

Ways forward (see Action Plan for further details)

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually.

APPENDIX 1

PRAYERS TO BE TAUGHT

Key Stage 1:

- The Sign of the Cross
- Our Father
- Hail Mary
- Glory Be
- Grace before and after meals
- Sign of the Peace
- Parts of the Gloria
- Phrases from the Psalms
- Morning and Night Prayers
- Simple Act of Contrition
- Blessings
- Prayers for special occasions
- Simple examination of conscience

Key Stage 2:

As above and with the addition of:

- Apostles Creed
- Confiteor
- The Rosary
- Eternal Rest
- Penitential Rites
- Lord Have Mercy
- The Gloria
- Nicene Creed
- Eucharistic Prayers
- Holy, Holy
- Lamb of God
- Rite of Dismissal
- Act of Charity
- Act of Contrition
- Prayers to the Holy Spirit
- Angelus
- Magnificat

APPENDIX 2

Annual Collective Worship Themes

Autumn Term:

- Old Testament stories including Creation, Noah's Ark, Joseph, Daniel
- Jewish tradition of prayer, synagogues and Jewish artefacts
- Autumn Festivals
- Diwali
- Christmas

Spring Term:

- Chinese New Year
- New Testament Stories
- Spring Festivals
- Lent
- Jewish Passover
- Easter

Summer Term:

- St George's Day
- New Testament Stories
- Ascension
- Pentecost
- First Holy Communion
- St Thomas More Feast Day