



Religious Education Policy



Our Mission Statement

'In the footsteps of Jesus, we strive to achieve excellence in everything we do'

Our Ethos Statement

At St Michael's our mission statement permeates through everything we do. The ethos within our school community is primarily based on us having a deep respect for others. We focus on the simple commandment Jesus gave us 'love one another as I have loved you.'

Together, we provide high quality, rounded education for all our students, so that they develop their full uniqueness and potential. Teaching the children about our Gospel values is at the heart of life here at St Michael's. Our curriculum values the importance of each and every person and promotes the dignity, self-esteem and full development of each person who is made in God's image and uniquely loved by God.



Aims

- To celebrate our Catholic faith and encourage children to be confident in their relationship with God.
- To provide a rich and balanced curriculum that enables all children to become religiously literate; to help them develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to think spiritually, ethically and theologically.
- To help children to be aware of the demands of religious commitment in their daily lives.
- To create a secure and caring environment in which learning and teaching can flourish and shared values of compassion, honesty, respect and justice can be nurtured and developed.
- To work in partnership with as well as contributing to the Parish Community.

Introduction

This policy is a statement of our aims, principles and strategies for the teaching and learning of Religious Education at St Michael's Catholic Primary School. St. Michael's School fully believes that Religious Education is the foundation of all our teaching and the entire educational process. The Christian Catholic beliefs and values inspire and unify every aspect of our school life. They are the basis and essential influence on our school curriculum.

Religious Education is linked to all our teaching and the key areas of the children's learning. This is because we see education as being God's work, and so education is religious, in that it concerns discovering the breadth and depth of God's creation and His creatures. Hence, whatever area of the curriculum children are studying they are actively learning about:

- the mysteries and wonders of God's creation
- the challenges and discoveries that are presented to them
- the uniqueness and dignity of individual people
- how they can enjoy God's world.

Provision of Religious Education

The Bishop's Conference of England and Wales stated in January 2000:

"In the life of faith of the Catholic School, religious education plays a central and vital part.

At the heart of Catholic education is depicted by the Christian vision of the human person. This vision is expressed and explored in religious education. Therefore, religious education is never simply one subject among many but the foundation of the entire educational process. The beliefs and values ... inspire and draw together every aspect of the life of a Catholic School. We are committed to classroom religious education because all pupils have the right to receive an overall religious education which will enable them, in the light of the faith of the Church, to engage with the deepest questions of life and find reasons for the hope that is within them (1 Peter 3:15)

We consider religious education to be the core subject in our school. We deliver it through the 'Come and See' programme approved by the Bishops of England and Wales.

Catholic schools are guided in all they do by an important and coherent vision of education. This vision is based on the truth revealed by God about ourselves, our life together in community and our ultimate destiny with God. This gives rise to an educational endeavour centred on the person of Jesus Christ, who is our Way, Truth and Life. 1

In January 2000, a National Symposium on 'Expectations of Religious Education in Catholic Schools' was hosted by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. The Bishops' issued a statement highlighting the following points.

What is Religious Education? (4)

- Religious education is about engaging with the deepest questions of life and finding reasons for the hope which is within them (1 Peter 3:15).
- It is about the Christian vision of the human person.
- It is the core subject which is central to the life of the Catholic school.
- Religious education is the systematic study:
 - Of the mystery of God, as discovered through the Bible and particularly through the life and teachings of Jesus Christ,
 - The teachings of the Church,
 - The lives of the saints,
 - The relationship between faith and life.

Expectations of Classroom Religious Education (7)

- Classroom religious education in a Catholic school is primarily educational.
- Excellence in religious education is achieved by:
 - Clarity of succinct religious learning objectives,
 - Key content,
 - By appropriate methodologies,
 - Rigour,
 - Richness of resources,
 - Achievement of identified outcomes,
 - Accurate methods of assessment.

The objective of religious education requires: (10)

- Analysis and reflection and critical appreciation of sources,
- Marked progression through the different stages of education,
- The unequivocal support of the management of every Catholic school,
- 10% of the length of the taught week for each Key Stage of education,
- The encouragement of investigation and reflection,
- Development of appropriate skills and attitudes which allows for a free, informed response to God's call in everyday life,
- The use of skills in other areas of the curriculum.

Allocation

In line with the recommendations of the diocese we devote 10% of the teaching week to Religious Education. This time is not in conjunction with any other subject or act of worship.

Foundation Stage / Key Stage 1 - 2 ¼ hours per week.

Key Stage 2 - 2 ½ hours per week.

10 hours each year is allocated to study Judaism and another world religion.

This excludes whole school and key stage assemblies, daily prayer, Mass and other forms of worship.

Religious Education Curriculum

Our Religious Education programme is delivered through Come and See. It is provided so that it is appropriate to the age and developmental stage of each child. The class teacher will ensure differentiation according to each child's ability and with the support of the differentiated tasks suggested in Come and See. This will be evident in the planning and evaluation.

Come and See is developed through themes based on the Second Vatican Council documents.

A whole school approach is taken with the overall themes as set out below. Each Year Group then has its own title and focus within this theme. All Come and See topics apart from those exploring other world religions will last four weeks.

Autumn Term

Domestic church - Family

Baptism/Confirmation - Belonging

Advent/Christmas - Loving

Spring Term

Local church - Community

Eucharist - Relating

Lent/Easter - Giving

Summer Term

Pentecost - Serving

Reconciliation - Inter-relating

Universal Church - World

Each unit in the Come and See Programme is linked by an overall theme and each teaching sequence has three parts -

EXPLORE - The teacher helps the children to begin to look at and focus on the experience within their own lives – concerning themselves, their relationships and their world. In this way the children are led to a deeper understanding, clearer vision and the discovery of significance and value of the experiential events of everyday life.

This will involve:

- Exploring experiences through story, music, drama, dance, art, etc.
- Investigation
- Story telling
- Consideration of the big questions
- Discussion
- Becoming aware of the questions raised
- Reflecting on significance of these experiences

Religious Education learns from evangelisation and catechesis that learning and growth involve active participation and response. For this reason, personal experience plays a significant part in the exploration, discovery and assimilation of the saving truth of God's revelation.

Religious Education Curriculum Directory 2012

EXPLORE - will take one week of Religious Education time to complete.

REVEAL - Reveal is the heart of the process. The teacher and the children together discover the Christian understanding of the mystery of the Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They explore the mystery of human life as revealed in the person, life and gospel of Jesus Christ Christians. It will involve learning about Scripture, the teaching of the Church, prayers, rites, psalms, hymns and other expressions of Christian faith and the lives of outstanding Christians.

The process of delivery will involve:

- meeting new knowledge of religious education;
- developing an understanding of this new knowledge;
- reflecting on the wonder of the mystery;
- gathering information and collecting facts connected with this knowledge;
- researching, collating and classifying;
- becoming aware of the questions raised;
- working with problems and grappling with puzzling experiences;
- exploring experiences through story, music, drama, dance, art;
- exploring what leads to understanding and meaning;
- asking questions and discussing;
- exploring in creative and practical ways through drama, writing, poetry, song, dance, music, ICT and service of others;
- making links between Christian understanding and the shared life experience;
- valuing life experience;
- acknowledging and respecting difference(s);
- being open to new perspectives.

REVEAL will take two weeks of Religious Education time to complete.

RESPOND

Remember is the first part of this section. The children will respond by remembering and celebrating all that they have learnt. This new understanding will enable them to make a personal response in their daily lives. This part begins by reflecting on what the children wonder about. This is followed by providing the opportunity for the children to remember what they have understood and learnt.

This may be done through:

- creating a quiet, prayerful atmosphere for reflection
- looking at and thinking about the work done
- drawing attention to different aspects of this work
- sharing thoughts and feelings.

Rejoice is the second part of the section. There will be the opportunity to plan and take part in a celebration. It will be essential to involve the children in the choice of material to be used in the celebration.

Renew - the teacher helps each child to make an individual response, to hold on to and make their own, what they have understood of the topic. In this part the children will think about how they can apply their learning to their lives.

There is a reminder that the teacher will undertake an evaluation which will inform future teaching and learning and include assessment for learning.

RESPOND will take one week of Religious Education time to complete.

LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGIES:

Religious Education is taught in line with our Teaching and Learning Policy. Within their planning, teachers will ensure there are opportunities for the development of the child through:

INVESTIGATION – The ability to find and record information, and ask relevant questions.

INTERPRETATION - The ability to recognise metaphors and symbols when studying religion, and the ability to explain significance.

COMMUNICATION – To develop an ability to describe and explain religious ideas and practices, in line with their own personal views and feelings about religion, in a variety of ways.

CRITICAL THINKING – The ability to compare and contrast ideas and practices, and explain their own views and opinions.

EMPATHY and REFLECTION – To develop an ability to empathise with other religious beliefs, and to participate in community prayer and celebration.

EVALUATION – The ability to distinguish between rules and principles, opinions and beliefs, and to make reasoned judgements and responsible choices.

Assessment and Recording

The assessment of Religious Education at our school is designed to assist our children's learning and to enable them to strive for a feeling of confidence and success in their understanding of the Catholic faith.

Progress is monitored through discussion, questioning, posing problems and giving opportunities to present their knowledge to others in a variety of ways, e.g. class assemblies. Assessment takes place after each topic, as per Diocesan guidelines, to identify progress and attainment and to assess the developing understanding of our pupils. The purpose of assessment, recording and reporting is to ensure effective learning, to celebrate growth and achievement and enable further progress and development. Assessment, recording and reporting are related to overall Religious Education aims and objectives, and the specific learning intentions of themes and topics.

Formal assessment takes place in one theme each term and informs a record of attainment level for each kept by each class teacher. (Bishop's Conference. Levels of Attainment in Religious Education.) A formal reporting to parents takes place at the end of each school year.

Marking

In line with the school's marking policy, marking of children's religious work should always be positive and supportive to encourage the child in his/her faith journey.

Prayer and Reflection

An essential part of the Catholic ethos of the school is the prayer life. The most important aspect of prayer for children is that they realise it is their way of communicating with God. Children are encouraged to pray in different ways according to their age and personal development. Children are introduced to a variety of different ways of praying:

- quiet reflection / meditation
- praying together
- writing own prayers
- prayers through music
- learning traditional Christian / Catholic prayers.
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Staff are encouraged to pray with children, and to be an example for them. Through prayer, we endeavour to develop our relationship with God.

All classes have a prayer area which has displays of children's work. This area changes with the liturgical year. Class prayers are established throughout the school and each teacher uses prayers appropriate to age and ability of the class. Candles, pictures and objects are also used as a focus for prayer. Children take part in whole school assemblies where children and staff join together to pray. Children are encouraged to pray their own prayers. When there is no whole school assembly, classes will have daily acts of worship including pupil-led liturgy. Personal and formal prayer reflect events in the Come and See Topic and Liturgical calendar.

Some of the opportunities for prayer and liturgical celebrations include:

- Liturgical Celebrations
- End of topic class liturgies
- Termly Class Mass
- Twice termly Whole School Mass
- Holy Days of Obligation masses
- Y6 Leavers' Mass
- Deanery Leavers' Mass - Bosco Transition Day
- Weekly Whole School Liturgy
- Services of Reconciliation During Advent and Lent
- Daily Class worship (KS1/2 weekdays when there is no whole school worship.)
- Achievement/Celebration
- Termly Class-led assembly

Religious Education in Personal/Social Development

Our PHSCE policy aims to develop each child's positive self image. It integrates with the RE programme and promotes self respect and respect and consideration for others. Sex education is dealt with separately and sensitively. Sex Education in our Sex and Relationship Policy is concerned with the recognition and understanding of their physical changes and development. We focus on the importance of loving and caring relationships and fostering positive attitudes towards other people, the world around us and God.

Partnership with Parents

We believe that parents are the primary educators of their children in the Faith and we seek to support them. We warmly invite parents and carers to become actively involved in the religious life of the school by:

- Newsletters outlining the RE topics and suggesting how they can support and help their children at home in their understanding of the topics.
- Attending class assemblies
- Attending achievement evenings to celebrate individual, class and whole school achievements
- Attending carol services, Christmas plays, the Easter Service and the celebrations honouring Mary in May.
- Attending school Masses
- Teaching their children formal prayers and supporting them at Sunday Masses
- Encouraging their children to participate and give generously to appeals through the year for charities and Appeals supported by the school.
- Children are invited and encouraged to take part in Reconciliation and Holy Communion preparation from age 8 (Year 3) with parents making a commitment to the Parish preparation Programme.
- Every child receives a Home, school diary from Redemption Publications which has a weekly gospel reflection and some activities for the children to complete.

Partnership with the Church

Preparation for receiving the Sacraments takes place within the Parish. Staff are encouraged to attend Parish celebrations and take active part in Achievement evenings and whole school Masses. The Parish Priest visits the school regularly. Class Masses take place on a termly basis on a rota system. Children visit the Church for other liturgical activities.

Links are strengthened on a Diocesan level by participation at:

- Headteacher conferences
- Deanery Head Teachers' meetings
- R.E. subject leader Conferences and courses
- Liaison with other primary schools RE subject leaders at network meetings
- Liaison with Secondary Schools St Bonaventure's and St Angela's.
- Partnership with Governors
- Liaison with Headteacher in planning and implementation of RE curriculum
- Governors invited to attend school events, Masses and Parents evenings.
- RE link governor liaising with school and staff

Inclusion

We aim to provide for all children so that they achieve as highly as they can in Religious Education according to their individual abilities. We will identify which pupils or groups of pupils are under-achieving and take steps to improve their attainment. Gifted children will be identified and suitable learning challenges provided.

Equal Opportunities

The teaching of R.E. makes a particular contribution to the school's policy on equality of opportunity in that it deals specifically with the values and beliefs of other races and cultures, encouraging tolerance, understanding and respect. It teaches about people's rights to be treated fairly and provides children with opportunities to reflect upon human capacity for kindness, unselfishness and sympathy for the feelings of others.

Leadership of Religious Education

Religious Education is the responsibility of the R.E. subject leader and the Headteacher (spiritual coordinator). The main task of the co-ordinator is to:

- support and encourage the class teachers and to lead INSET in RE as appropriate.
- keep abreast of the continuing changes and new foci in RE by attending training and reporting back to the Head Teacher and staff.
- order in conjunction with the staff and the school scheme of work the necessary resources to enable RE to be taught effectively.
- liaise with the Head Teacher who will report back annually to the school governors.
- monitor RE work throughout the whole school, in conjunction with the staff and SLT.

- take the lead in policy development and scheme of work to ensure continuity and progression.
- ensure the policy and programmes are implemented as agreed through the monitoring of plans and lessons.
- support staff to assess pupils' progress in RE.
- recommend targets for whole school development when appropriate.

Teaching Staff

All teachers at St. Michael's School are either Roman Catholics or are sympathetic to the teaching of the Catholic faith which permeates all aspects of our school life. Through example, commitment and teaching, the children are encouraged to develop a loving and trusting relationship with God, an experience which it is hoped will influence their attitudes to life and their relationship with other people. All teaching staff have the responsibility of teaching Religious Education to the children in their class.

All staff are encouraged to regularly attend relevant courses. Our CPD co-ordinator provides information on courses and teachers give feedback to staff at staff meetings. Our diocesan advisor is invited to contribute to our staff development and her help and advice sought about policy and practice.

Parish Priest

The parish priest, who is also a governor of the school, has responsibility for the pastoral care of the school community. The parish priest promotes the spiritual life of the 'school church'. He leads the celebration of liturgies and whole school and class masses. In addition, the parish priest visits the school on a weekly basis to discuss the topics being studied with each class in their R.E. lessons.

Liturgy and Celebration

These are important moments in the life of St. Michael's School. Our masses will reflect the liturgical year and other notable occasions such as our start of the school year, First Holy Communion celebration and our leavers' mass. On holy days of obligation, we celebrate mass with the parish community in the Church. All children, irrespective of their church affiliation, are involved with the celebration. Masses encourage participation in the preparation of the Hall, music, processions, gestures, readings and prayers.

Once a year each class leads an assembly to which their parents are invited. Assemblies are occasions for celebrating the children's work and are experiences of worship when all the children are actively involved. The theme of the assembly is based on the class topic or on the liturgical year. Class assemblies generally last about twenty minutes and may contain prayers, Bible stories, modern stories with a biblical message, children's prose and poetry, drama, music, dancing and singing.

Discipline and Relationships

We believe that children learn best when they are safe and happy. Good relationships between staff and children are paramount. We encourage open, honest discussion with children. (Please see School Behaviour and Equal Opportunities Policies). Particular care is taken when teaching R.E. to ensure that there is consistency between teaching and practice.

Spiritual and Moral Development

The religious character of our school is seen as giving shape to every aspect of school life, and especially the spiritual and moral development of our children.

Spiritual development is understood as the development of all those aspects which enable us to appreciate goodness, beauty and truth. Through our teaching, we enable children to reflect on their experiences of life. Through their awareness and understanding of themselves, they recognise God's action in their lives. In addition, pupils are taught about the importance of the mission of the Church. Helping children to make their moral decisions is a crucial part of the formation of a moral conscience. Through our teaching, we aim to help children to have an understanding of the Gospel of Jesus and through self-awareness enable them to come to good moral judgements. Our Behaviour Policy is based on love and respect for the individual.

Multi-Cultural and Multi-Faith

St. Michael's is a Catholic school and therefore by the very religion that causes its existence, it must be a school that encourages tolerance, respect and care for all people, regardless of colour, race or creed. Whilst Religious Education at St Michael's is specifically of the Christian Roman Catholic tradition, we welcome input from other faiths and denominations. We appreciate how the beliefs and values of other faith communities can enrich our own spiritual existence.

Environment

It is our intention that the environment of our school reflects our mission statement and that we are providing a caring, well ordered and stimulating environment that reflects our Christian beliefs. Work is displayed in a variety of ways throughout the school. Each classroom has an R.E. area with a display board and prayer area, where the children's mission statement is displayed. The display board will reflect the colour theme of the liturgical year. There is a Religious Education display board at the front entrance to the school, outside the Reception classroom and boards displayed in the school represent topics covered in the Early Years, Key Stage One and Key Stage Two during the year. Bibles, candles, artefacts and pictures are all used to enhance and present our Catholic faith.

Resources

Resources, books, posters and pictures are stored in the resources area in the loft. The school library also has a variety of religious books

Musical instruments are in the cupboards in our specialist music room.

The mass box and altar cloths are stored in the Year 3/6 corridor cupboard.

A class set of Bibles in each KS2 class.

A copy of the Catechism is available in every classroom for reference (YouCat)

Coloured cloths for the prayer table covering the liturgical calendar.

Health & Safety

The school's Health and Safety Policy applies to all aspects of R.E. teaching. Staff should note that when using candles it is important that children must never be left alone with lit candles or allowed to light them or blow them out unsupervised. Incense and scented candles add greatly to a quiet meditative environment, but it must be remembered that children with asthma may find this uncomfortable.

Special Needs

The R.E. curriculum, as with other areas of the curriculum, is differentiated to meet the needs of our children through our planning.

In the classroom we intend:

- to provide a happy, caring environment so all children achieve their potential
- that plans should indicate a variety of learning styles for all children
- that children's work should show a variety of recording to suit all abilities that teaching focuses on learning outcomes
- to build on the child's strengths to allow maximum participation in all activities

to allow children grow spiritually and develop a strong sense of the value of God's world.

Information Technology

All classes have access to laptops and other computing equipment which will be used to enhance R.E. teaching and learning.

Review

The school undertakes an annual review of Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school with input from the governing body, staff, parents, pupils and our diocesan adviser. Outcomes are used to plan training and development needs for the upcoming year and prioritise actions in the following school development cycle.

Sacramental Preparation

Through our R.E. scheme, knowledge of all the sacraments is established, with special emphasis upon Baptism, Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation. Years 5 & 6 also learn about the Sacrament of the Sick and Holy Orders. The children are prepared through the parish for the Sacrament of First Holy Communion from Year 3. The course of preparation is carried out in the

parish and the school works in close consultation and partnership with the priests and catechists. In this way we hope to achieve true partnership between school, family and parish, with the children celebrating their First Communion in their local churches.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is also led in the parish. Like the Sacrament of Communion, the preparation for Reconciliation starts at the beginning of the child's school life. It begins with the child's first experiences; teachers and helpers work towards a loving, caring and forgiving atmosphere in school. Pupils in Years 4-6 have the opportunity to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation in school during Lent.

Eucharist

The school encourages all children to take part in Eucharist celebrations, within the school community and within the parish. Special roles are given to particular school years in these celebrations, and all children are asked to take part in hymns, prayers and readings. However, we lay special emphasis on:

- Welcoming, at the start of the year/term/ week and at the start of celebrations.
- Recognition of the Eucharist as sharing, of giving thanks for gifts, especially bread and wine as gifts of the earth.
- Recognising that we are a community, of the past and present, and that as members of that community we need to take care of each other.
- Developing, through celebrations of the liturgical seasons, the need to accept responsibility for sin and put matters right: the recognition of special meals shared by Jesus with his friends, knowing that he gave his life for us.
- Going forth to follow Jesus at the end of the celebration and the end of the year.

Reconciliation

We encourage our children in celebrating this sacrament by emphasising the following aspects of our R.E. syllabus:

- Taking responsibility - in school for younger pupils, for the school environment, for their own behaviour.
- Developing awareness that their actions affect others - their rights are others' responsibilities.
- Through stories of famous people/saints to recognise that through repentance and forgiveness lives can be changed.
- The celebration of repentance and reconciliation in services in Advent and Lent and at the start of every Mass.
- The idea of new starts / new life at Easter.
- That Jesus is with us every day as we move on in our lives and in our faith.
- We are a worshipping community; all our children take part in that worship. We are a part of the worshipping community that is the parish.

- We encourage parishioners to take part in the life of the school, to join us for assemblies, mass, to visit on open days, to volunteer their services to help with art / craft / literacy. We work to develop our links with the parish so that children can be fully involved in the life of the parish primarily in sacramental preparation and celebration.

Collective Worship

We acknowledge the legal requirement that there must be a daily act of worship for all pupils. (This can take place at any time during the school day and can be either a single act of worship for all pupils, or separate acts of worship in school groups).

The act of worship is distinct from R.E. lessons. It forms an integral part of school life and is central to the Catholic tradition. In this voluntary aided Catholic School, responsibility for arranging collective worship rests with the governing body after consultation with the Headteacher.

Those responsible will ensure that acts of worship are in accordance with the school's instrument of governance and consistent with the rites and practices of the Catholic Church.

As a Catholic school we hope that parents will be fully supportive of our approach to collective worship as part of living out our mission statement. However, we recognise that parents have the right to withdraw their children from collective worship and in such circumstances appropriate supervision arrangements will be made.

Collective worship is celebrated in a variety of ways including: whole school worship; class worship; worship through hymns; class mass or liturgy; whole school masses during the year, including holy days of obligation during term time.

Collective worship in our school community provides opportunities to:
deepen our relationship with God; grow in spiritual, moral and liturgical understanding; grow in understanding of our living faith tradition; develop a sense of wonder and inspiration in the person of Christ; reflect upon our own individual faith journeys; develop the skills of prayer.

Signed by: _____

The chair of governors

Date: _____

Signed by: _____

Head Teacher

Date: _____