



# **St Mary and St Benedict Catholic Primary School**

## **Religious Education Policy**

May 2020

## **RATIONALE**

The vision of St Mary and St Benedict Catholic Primary School is to develop the spiritual, academic, social, moral and cultural growth of every child within a caring Catholic environment where life is centred on Christ's teachings, allowing each child to achieve their God-given potential.

## **POLICY STATEMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The Religious Education provided in St Mary and St Benedict School cannot be confined to teaching and learning specifically devoted to RE. We seek to ensure that the message, spirit and values of the Gospel permeate all aspects of school life. Through teaching, example, worship and shared Christian values, we are helping to further with the family and the parish the work of the awakening and fostering a living and personal faith in our pupils. It is to this end that we have agreed the following aims:

### **AIMS**

The Aims of Religious Education at St Mary and St Benedict School will include the following:

- To lead the children to a living and active faith by helping them to become aware of God's presence in their lives, to listen to Him and to respond to His invitation to enter into a personal relationship with Him through prayer.
- To develop a well formed conscience allowing the individual to make sound moral judgments in the light of personal commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ.
- In a changing world we want to help pupils to develop personal, spiritual and moral values, respect and tolerance for others and an understanding of interdependence between groups and nations.
- To promote an intelligent appreciation and understanding of religious questions in general and a sympathetic acquaintance with other religious beliefs and practices.
- To involve parents in the spiritual development of their child.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM**

The Religious Education programme followed by the school will use as its foundation the Curriculum Strategy for Religious Education in Catholic Primary Schools in the Archdiocese of Birmingham - 'Learning and Growing as the People of God'. This was produced by the Archdiocese of Birmingham to implement the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education. The aim of the scheme is:

- To help children to become aware of and reflect on their experiences of living in the world with others. (Life in Christ)
- To reveal to children some aspects of God's plan for our salvation. (Revelation)
- To help them to respond to God's love in their lives. (Life in Christ)
- To help them listen to and respond to God. (Celebration)
- To help them to see God's offer of salvation in the sacraments and respond to it. (Celebration)
- To show that every human person is made in the image of God and is called to reflect God's people. (Church)
- To help the children be aware that the church is global and multi-cultural, that love and service of God and others are universal human values and signs of God's Spirit in the world. (Church)

### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- All lessons will be planned following Learning and Growing as the People of God.
- Learning objectives, aims and targets are clearly defined and shared with pupils at the start of lessons or activities. This is then consistently reinforced throughout the lesson.

- Learning objectives are appropriate to the subject requirements of the curriculum and the skills to be developed. They focus on what the pupils will be able to know, understand and do. They are informed by assessment.
- Lessons will aim for faith development as well as academic achievement and provide opportunities for personal reflection.
- Lessons will be planned in phases to support non-Catholic staff.
  - Good use of ICT will be made.
- Creative teaching and learning strategies are used.
- Opportunities are provided for pupils to connect their learning from previous experiences.
  - A variety of teaching strategies and learning styles are used that are appropriate to the age and subject being taught to enable the pupils to meet the learning objectives effectively. Strategies identify a range of skills that promote discussion, investigation, collaboration and independent learning.
  - Differentiation is used to provide challenge for all pupils and abilities. It may be through:
    - o Information presented
    - o Support given
    - o Time allowed
    - o Tasks and questions set.
- There is an appropriate balance of whole class, small group, paired and individual activities.
- Concrete and practical experiences are provided whenever possible to help pupils' learning. This may be school based and led, provided by visitors to the school or as an educational visit.
- Pupils are encouraged to be independent learners.
- Teachers create a classroom climate that encourages and facilitates pupils' participation in the question/answer process. They ask a variety of open and closed questions that are appropriate to the task, and lead pupils to use their existing knowledge and experience in the development of new learning. All staff give status to pupils' responses by setting clear expectations that all will listen.

## **INCIDENTAL TEACHING**

This may arise through:

- Home situations being brought into the life of the school; e.g. births, marriage, sickness, bereavement and Sacramental provision.
  - Examples drawn from the life of the school; e.g. telling the truth, respect for each other's property, honesty, unselfishness, good manners, obedience, caring for others etc.
  - The extension of the school life into the community; through Harvest Festival gifts, raising money for caring projects, by giving their time to others, i.e. Carol concerts for Senior Citizens.
- The multicultural background of the children of the school.
  - An awareness that their friends in the class have different beliefs.
- Where appropriate different Churches and temples may be visited e.g. Coventry Cathedral, Mosque, Synagogue.
- Festivals - where appropriate - are integrated into the thematic learning situation e.g. Divali, Eid, Chinese New Year, Ramadan.
- The Values Education Programme that is followed throughout the school, introducing children to a value every month as agreed by our school community.

## **TIME**

At least ten percent contact time must be given to the teaching of Religious Education. This does not include holy times, assemblies, school masses or hymn practices.

## **RELIGIOUS PRACTICES (See Collective Worship Policy)**

These are followed in order that purpose and meaning may be experienced in prayer and worship as well as ensuring that the cherished religious traditions of the Catholic Church are upheld. These practices take the form of: DAILY PRAYER At St Mary and St Benedict School, all staff recognise the important role played by prayer as means of expressing and fostering faith. Children are taught daily prayers and also various prayers and responses of the Mass as appropriate to their age and stage of development. Each classroom has an RE display and children pray together with their teacher at the beginning and end of the day. Music is used to help create a quiet reflective atmosphere. Prayer altars in every classroom act as a focus for their prayers. A prayer is always said before lunchtime.

The teachers will:

- Help the children discover a variety of methods of prayer, both formal and informal, private and communal.
- To help the children to develop their understanding of reverence, intercession and reflection as the children progress up the school.
- To give the children the experience of a variety of structured prayer services suitably adapted for the age of the children.
- To encourage the children to share their own prayers and thoughts giving them time to meditate and think. This makes a good contribution to the spiritual and moral growth of the pupils.
- To lead quiet and thoughtful prayer times.

## **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP (see separate policy)**

At St Mary and St Benedict School, all pupils will take part in daily prayer and liturgy either in the hall or in their classrooms. The whole school joins together once a week for whole school assembly, and regularly for Masses.

## **CELEBRATION OF MASS**

As the Mass is the centre of liturgical worship in the Catholic Church the school believes it has an established place within the life of the school. Children are involved in the preparation and celebration of the liturgy i.e. the readings, offertory, altar servers, singing, prayer. Whole school masses are held at the beginning and end of term, and for Feast Days and Holy Days of Obligation. There are weekly key stage Masses in school during the seasons of Advent and Lent. Phases also celebrate Mass with parishioners at St Mary and St Benedict Church on a weekly rota basis on Tuesday mornings. The school holds an annual May Procession and Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament at the Feast of Corpus Christi as well as many other religious celebrations such as Lent and Advent.

St Mary and St Benedict also has strong links to the Unity cluster of Catholic schools and both staff and children participate in Masses and celebrations e.g. Mass for those who work in Catholic schools, Vocations Mass etc. Parents and parishioners are invited to all celebrations in school which reflect both their vital role in fostering their child's faith and our desire to maintain a good partnership with parents and the parish.

## **PARENTS AND PARISH LINKS**

Many opportunities arise to strengthen the partnership between the school, parents and parish:

- Prayer bags are sent home to encourage parents and children to spend time to reflect and pray with each other and their family.
- 'The Wednesday Word' resource as endorsed and commended by Archbishop Bernard Longley and the Diocesan Education Service sent home every Wednesday to strengthen links by promoting the Catholic life of our school and Parish and encouraging it to be reflected at home

- Times for Masses during the Christmas/Easter season are advertised on the School Newsletter and on the school Twitter account
- School newsletters inform parents of services and Mass at Church and in school
- Parents and Parish invited to attend annual celebrations: e.g. beginning and end of a school year, Advent, Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Stations of the Cross etc
- Year groups share Mass with the parish in Church on Tuesday mornings based on a rota • Parents are invited to attend Masses in school and at Church
- Commitment Mass held for children in Year 3 and Year 6, their parents and family and the Parish to mark the start of their Sacramental preparation, which then involves Parent Meetings and Masses
- Children's service of the Sacraments of Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation
- Parish invited to pray for children receiving the sacraments through displays in Church
- School's newsletters and website which keeps parents informed and up to date with school matters
- Proactive partnership with health visitors, school nurse, education welfare officer, social services, police and other emergency services to support pupils and their families

## **HYMN PRACTICE**

Hymn practices are used as an opportunity to teach children new hymns to enhance quality of praise and worship in collective worship. Hymn practices also take place in preparation for:

- School masses and assemblies
- Feast days
- Carol services, Stations of the Cross and other special occasions

## **SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

Children are prepared for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Eucharist in Year 3. The Diocesan 'Learning and Growing as People of God' programme is followed. Preparation for these sacraments involves meetings and masses throughout the year. These are attended by parents, teachers and the parish priest. During preparation for these sacraments, parents are seen as a vital part of the teaching and are asked to take part alongside their children. Children are prepared for the Sacrament of Confirmation from the end of Year 5. Parents and families are invited to attend a series of meetings. The Year 6 Diocesan 'Learning and Growing as People of God' Programme is followed with parents encouraged to work with their children. Throughout the preparation great emphasis is placed on the children being responsible for the undertaking and commitment involved, to come to know the Holy Spirit better and to relate to Him as a real person who is alive in the life of the Church and in their own lives.

## **SCHOOL ORGANISATION / PLANNING**

Religious Education is taught throughout the school and we will aim to use a variety of styles to deliver the diocesan scheme to meet the needs of the children. In line with the recommendation of the Diocese and the wishes of the governors, we aim to have Catholic teachers presenting the scheme. We will therefore strive to accommodate this, wherever possible. However, it will be the responsibility of the Head Teacher and the RE Co-ordinator to assist any non-Catholic teachers in their teaching of Religious Education. The Diocesan curriculum strategy 'Learning and Growing as People of God' is the basis of all RE teachers' planning. This provides continuity and progression in each year group.

## **CURRICULUM INTEGRATION**

When a thematic approach is adopted, RE is effectively brought into other areas of the curriculum such as Literacy, Humanities, Art, Science etc. This will ensure that RE is encountered across the curriculum. Furthermore teachers will provide, where appropriate, opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their ICT Skills through RE.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The RE Leader will work in close consultation with the Head, Assistant Heads, Phase Leaders and the Parish Priest. The teachers responsible for Religious Education will be a source of inspiration to the whole school, leading by personal example with enthusiasm.

The RE Leader will:

- be familiar with each year group of ‘Learning and Growing as the People of God’
- be available to individual teachers for guidance and support and keep staff informed of current thinking in RE and any new materials / publications
- distribute relevant assessment proformas
- attend courses and encourage other members of staff to do so. Information gained from such courses should be shared with other staff
- arrange any inset training to meet needs of staff
- monitor the progress of the diocesan RE programme and assessment in line with the second edition of “Levels of Attainment in Religious Education” throughout the school through evaluating planning, assessments and where possible classroom observations
- be responsible for cataloguing materials and the management of the RE budget
- provide information and support Sacramental preparation and meetings with parents

The Class teacher:

- is responsible for daily collective acts of worship within the classroom
- is responsible for promoting home/school links via the prayer bag system and for updating the prayer bags to make them relevant to unit of work
- is responsible for seeking the opportunity to assess the children’s knowledge and understanding
- should seek to attend courses and inform the RE Leaders if they feel further development is needed
- responsible for delivering the programme of study ‘ Learning and Growing as the People of God’ to the class.

## **ASSESSMENT / RECORDING / REPORTING**

Owing to its nature Religious Education is difficult to evaluate because we cannot objectively judge a child’s relationship with God with regard to their faith. Each class teacher has access to the relevant assessment proforma for each unit of ‘Learning and Growing as the People of God’ on the shared school network. In line with Diocesan guidance, one of the strands of the Curriculum Strategy is selected as a focus for assessment and monitoring each academic year. Teachers complete end of unit assessments based on a variety of evidence e.g. pupil work; pupil interviews; informal activities.

- Each class will be assessed at the end of units selected by the RE. Leaders for assessment
- Each child will be assessed based on a simple traffic light system for each unit on assessment grid in pupils’ books.
- Completed teacher assessment sheets should be given to the RE Leaders
- Pupil voice interviews will be carried out by the RE Leaders

- Base-line assessment will be carried out when children enter Nursery and Reception.

Observation of children's behaviour plays a major part in the evaluator procedure, e.g. changes of moral behaviour, good or bad are monitored. Conduct within and outside school is encouraged to be of a caring, helpful, selfless nature. Conduct in Church is encouraged to be one of dignity and respect. In the end of year reports to parents, teachers will specify and comment on the child's knowledge and understanding of the faith but moral behaviour will also be included in the general comment section. Each child has an RE exercise book which is discussed and marked regularly by the class teacher. R.E. written work should be marked in accordance with the marking policy but with a focus on the religious nature of work. Special emphasis must be made on the spelling of key words 'God', 'Jesus' ensuring the correct use of capital letters. Recording of children's work takes many forms - pictorial, written, wall display, assemblies etc. Where possible RE tasks will be linked to literacy tasks to ensure that children are completing a variety of tasks within RE. Each child's progress in Religious Education is reported to parents in the form of the annual report to parents.

## **RESOURCES AND DISPLAY**

Religious Education resources are controlled and provided by the RE Leaders in consultation with colleagues. All staff are invited to make suggestions for purchases. Assembly books, other religious reference books and visual aids are stored in our centralised RE resource area. Age appropriate Bibles, religious artefacts, statues and any relevant reference, prayer and story books have been distributed throughout the Key Stages. Vestments and vessels for Mass are located in the RE resource area. All resources are reviewed annually to ensure replacements are made when necessary. In order to highlight the importance of Religious Education and the Catholic Ethos of the school, displays of a religious nature should be evident in each classroom throughout the year. An RE / prayer focus area forms an essential part of the classroom. This area should have appropriate liturgical colour, a crucifix and a candle. Statues, artefacts and posters should be prominently displayed wherever possible and changed on a regular basis. The hall boards will be linked to the Liturgical calendar or Values and Virtues - each phase is responsible for a hall board.

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES / SPECIAL NEEDS**

The fair and equal treatment of all individuals is central to our school mission statement. All children are given equal access to the Religious Education curriculum developing their knowledge and understanding. A variety of teaching and learning strategies are employed to try to meet all children's different needs. Lessons and activities from the Strategy should be planned and differentiated sufficiently to allow children to work at their own Religious Education ability level, including extending the most able.

## **CONCLUSION**

We believe that this school, as a Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided School, has a two-fold responsibility in relation to Religious Education: a) It has a duty to the Church, parents and children to impart the truths of faith and the demands the faith makes on individual members of the Church. b) It has a responsibility to the wider community to develop in its pupils; sound moral judgement, respect for others, and a sense of social responsibility, to enable them to become rounded members of a multicultural society. This policy will be reviewed every two years.

Next review Autumn 2022.

This policy has been approved and adopted by staff and Governors

Signed ..... (Chair of Governors) Date .....

Signed ..... (Headteacher) Date .....