



## Catholic Life of the School

### Our School Vision

The vision of St Mary and St Benedict Catholic School is to develop our children's spiritual, social, moral and cultural growth within a caring Catholic environment where life is centred around Christ's teachings. We endeavour to do this with the support of parents, staff, governors and the whole parish community. We will provide a caring, supportive environment where each child's contribution is encouraged and accepted. We will provide a broad, rich and stimulating curriculum which will inspire each child to reach their full potential.



### Values and Ethos

We believe that everyone is made in the image and likeness of God and we value the equality of all, reject discrimination of any kind, and welcome the diversity of different cultures. At St Mary and St Benedict Catholic Primary School, the children have a variety of religious and spiritual experiences. The following is an overview of the Catholic life of our school.

### Sacramental Preparation

- **Reconciliation:** Year 3 receive the sacrament of Reconciliation in the Spring term, during the season of Lent. A meeting for parents is held at the beginning of the Spring Term, and a Mass of commitment. The children are prepared by their class teacher using the Diocesan RE strategy with some additional materials compiled by school. The sacrament takes place in church with the children and their families present. A short reflective service takes place before the children receive the sacrament on an individual basis from Fr Jimmy and other visiting priests if we have a large number of candidates. Following reception of the sacrament, the children and their families have some quiet moments of prayer. Parents are very much encouraged to go to confession on this occasion as role models of the faith for their children.
- **First Holy Communion:** Year 3 receive the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist in the month of May or June. The children are prepared by their teacher using the Diocesan RE strategy. Throughout the course of the year, there are evening meetings with parents as part of the preparation programme, and Sunday Masses. The children take part in a retreat and a Seder meal as part of their preparations. A celebration of thanksgiving for the sacrament takes place soon after, and children form part of the May procession in their Holy Communion outfits.
- **Confirmation:** Year 6 receive the sacrament of confirmation, dependent upon the times given to us by the Diocese but frequently in the autumn term. An enrolment Mass takes place in the Summer term whilst the children are in Year 5 – they start the programme of study whilst in Year 5. An evening meeting is held with parents as part of the preparation programme. Teaching is taken from the Diocesan RE strategy, with some additional materials. The children spend a day in retreat, and visit the cathedral of St Chad in Birmingham. The Sacrament of Confirmation always takes place in Church during a Mass enabling the

Parish community to witness this major celebration within our community. It is very well supported by the children's families, the parish and choir. Following the theme of Confirmation, the children are then asked to take on service within the Church, and form the Chaplaincy Group to support the leadership of worship and Catholic life at St Mary and St Benedict.

## Masses

As the Mass is the centre of the liturgical worship in the Catholic Church, it has an established place in the life of the school. A timetable for each term is planned by the Headteacher and parish priest to include commitment Masses, liturgical season celebrations and Parish links. The children are involved in planning and the celebration of Mass. Separate invitations are extended to family and friends to participate. Each class attends Mass in our parish church on a Tuesday morning on a rolling programme, and several Masses led by the children are held throughout the year, in school or Church:

- Start of academic year Mass, sometimes combined with whole school Mass for Our Lady's birthday dependent on term dates
- Welcome Mass for Reception children and their parents
- Sunday family Mass led by the candidates for Confirmation
- Confirmation Mass for Year 6, with a celebration Mass following
- Three Masses during Advent: EYFS/KS1, KS2 and Whole school
  
- Epiphany Mass at the start of the Spring Term
- Whole school Ash Wednesday Mass
- Year 3 commitment Mass for Reconciliation/First Holy Communion, followed by family Masses where the children have particular roles to play eg readings, offertory
- Three Masses during Lent: EYFS/KS1, KS2 and Whole school, then term ends with the Stations of the Cross
  
- Start of summer term Mass/ Easter Mass
- Confirmation commitment Mass for Year 5 (Pentecost)
- First Holy Communion Mass
- Whole school Corpus Christi Mass led by Year 3 in thanksgiving for their First Holy Communion
- Feast Day Mass on July 11<sup>th</sup> to celebrate St Benedict's Day
- Whole school Leavers' Mass on the final afternoon of term

## Prayer Services

Prayer services are held on a regular basis within classrooms as part of the children's Religious Education programme and collective worship. Children should be encouraged to prepare and lead the prayer service. Older children volunteer as Prayer Leaders in the Chaplaincy Team and lead prayer services in their own and other classrooms, and during Church seasons, eg leading the Rosary at lunchtimes during October and May, and the Stations of the Cross during Lent.

## Assemblies

Monday morning assemblies are usually liturgical in nature and are usually led by the Headteacher. Friday assemblies are Celebration assemblies but always begin and end with prayer and hymn singing, and

include readings and prayers of intercession. Parents are invited to all assemblies. Each class presents an assembly to parents, grandparents and friends at least twice a year based on a theme from their Religious Education programme or theme.

### **House Points System**

The school operates a house point system. Children are organised into four 'houses' named after inspirational Catholics; Tolkien, Raphael, Galileo and Vivaldi.

### **Rosary**

Children are encouraged to bring their Rosary beads to school especially during October and May.

### **Visits and Visitors**

Classes regularly visit the Parish church to support units of work, to reflect and pray and participate in Mass. We have also had visits from Missionaries, seminarians and Religious as part of our mission.

### **Special Celebrations**

Foundation Stage and KS1 perform Christmas plays in the school hall. These reflect the story of the Nativity. Parents, families and parishioners are invited. Key Stage Two are involved in the presentation of the passion, the death and the resurrection of Jesus through the Stations of the Cross liturgy. This is presented to the whole school and parents. It is a deeply moving and spiritual experience for all and is used as a teaching tool during Holy Week. Many parents and parishioners attend this, and say how meaningful it is, and comment upon the children's response and engagement.

Each year our Y6 children and staff attend a city vocations Mass. The school is represented on the city-wide planning group by two members of staff.

### **School Choir**

Hymn practice is held every week and has a high priority within the school curriculum. The choir sings in church and at school masses and assemblies. Year 6 pupils attend 'The Big Sing' every year with CJM and all other Catholic schools within the city, and a Unity mass with other feeder schools for Bishop Ullathorne.

### **Charities**

The school is very active in supporting charities. Each year during Lent the School Council consider which charities to support and organise events to raise money. Charities supported include the Good Shepherd Appeal, CAFOD and Wateraid. Pupils in Year 5 have formed a 'Mini Vinnies' group, and collected food for the local Food Bank, as well as carry out practical activities to help people. Staff identify causes in addition to this, and collect goods during the seasons of Advent and Lent.

### **Partner Secondary School**

We have very close links with Bishop Ullathorne Secondary School as we are one of its feeder schools.

- Regular meetings take place between the two schools and we have a particularly close association with its RE department. Staff from the RE department led training for our Chaplaincy Team, and past pupils support ongoing training.

- Year 3 children attend Bishop Ullathorne in the summer term to celebrate their First Holy Communion – this is a full day of fun with children from the other feeder schools and includes Mass in the afternoon.
- Year 4 children attend a Languages Day at Bishop Ullathorne also in the summer term
- Year 5 children attend a Humanities day at Bishop Ullathorne, culminating in the celebration of the Mass, shared with all the feeder schools.
- Close links have been established to foster vocations between the two schools and our pupils will visit Bishop Ullathorne as part of this programme.