

# St. Thomas Becket Catholic Primary School

## Religious Education Policy

Date	Review Date	Drawn up by	Committee Approving
Autumn 2021	Autumn 2023	Patricia Courcey	Curriculum

*'The outcome of excellent Religious Education is 'religiously literate and engaged young people who have the knowledge, understanding and skills - appropriate to their age and capacity - to reflect spiritually, and think ethically and theologically, and who are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.'* (Religious Education Curriculum Directory (3 - 19) for Catholic Schools and Colleges in England and Wales 2012)

### **Rationale**

At St. Thomas Becket Catholic Primary School we aim to provide an holistic education for all our pupils which seeks to form, as well as inform, our young people in preparation for adult life. We recognise the central role parents have in the religious education of their children and we aim to support them in this. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that "Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiving, respect, fidelity and disinterested service are the rule." (CCC 2223)

Therefore, Religious Education is central to the life of our school and is an integral part of the school curriculum. We believe that RE should expose the child to the wider family of God, linking together the school, the parish and the home. All children regardless of academic or physical ability should know of God's love of humanity.

*In promoting the love of Christ and love of our neighbour, we will endeavour to foster good interpersonal relationships between all members of the community. We reject all forms of prejudice and instead seek to include, strengthen and empower all serving the needs of all within our school community.*

(School Mission Statement)

## **Aims of Religious Education**

The main aims of religious education are to assist parents in the Christian formation of our young Catholics, and to help pupils to recognise and appreciate the spiritual and religious dimensions of life.

In addition we aim:

- To help the pupils develop a personal relationship with Jesus, and to experience the Good News of the Gospel.
- To foster the pupils sense of mystery, wonder delight and joy and a sense of ritual.
- To offer a committed presentation of the Catholic Faith
- To enable the pupils to grow in their awareness of what it means to be a member of the Church and to grow as such.
- To invite the pupils to respond freely to the grace of the revealing God
- To encourage our pupils to reflect on their lives and on society in the light of the Gospel.
- To support the parents and parish in creating a Christian community built on the experience of prayer and liturgy.
- To lead the pupils to a deeper knowledge and understanding of the Catholic tradition and the ways in which it seeks to express the significance of human life.
- To enable our pupils to move from an inherited faith to a personal faith.
- To develop in our pupils a sense of social justice.
- To consider moral issues, so helping pupils to form a sense of conscience in the light of the Church's teaching.
- To lead pupils to an awareness and respect of other religious traditions and cultures.

## **Planning for Religious Education**

At St. Thomas Becket School, we support parents as the first educators of their children. We aim that through our planned Religious Education curriculum and links to other areas (see policies on RSE; Anti-bullying; Safeguarding and SEND), we can help the children to develop spiritually, emotionally and socially and so support parents in this important mission. We keep parents up to date with the foci of learning through termly RE newsletters. Teachers plan lessons from 'Come and See' and refer to the Age Related Descriptors and End of Year Progress Descriptors.

Planning should contain three elements:

- Our Religious Education programme: 'Come and See'
- The Church's Liturgical Year
- Prayer and Worship
- Relationships and Sex Education

### **Come and See**

At St. Thomas Becket School our Religious Education programme is based on the expectations of Religious Education given in the RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM DIRECTORY FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.

The Come and See programme facilitates this. Staff aim to be creative in developing and teaching the activities through drama, art, music, and role play as well as making appropriate use of ICT.

Three topics per term are covered, each lasting four weeks.

The overall themes are as follow:

#### *Autumn Term*

- Domestic church
- Baptism/confirmation
- Advent/Christmas

#### *Spring Term*

- Local church
- Eucharist
- Lent/Easter

#### *Summer Term*

- Pentecost
- Reconciliation
- Universal Church

Within each Come and See topic there is the following format:

**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.

**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. 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.

**Respond:** Remember is the first part of this section. The children will respond by remembering and celebrating all that they have learnt. Rejoice is the second part of the section. There will be the opportunity to plan and take part in a celebration. Renew is the final aspect. The teacher helps each child to make an individual response, hold on to and make their own, what they have understood of the topic.

### **The Church's Year**

Although the Come and See programme takes into account the main festivals of the Church's Year, it is important that specific mention of these feasts is made so that the children become familiar with the structure of the Liturgical year.

**Autumn Term:** Harvest, Holy Rosary, All Saints, Holy Souls, The Feast of Christ the King, Advent, Christmas.

**Spring Term:** Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Easter.

**Summer Term:** Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity, Corpus Christi, St. Peter and Paul, Our Lady.

### **Other Faiths**

At St. Thomas Becket, we aim to develop the children's knowledge of other faiths and a willingness to empathise with people who hold beliefs that are different to our own. The main faiths we cover are Judaism, in the Autumn term, and Islam in the summer term.

### **Assessment**

Assessment in Come and See is related to the concepts, skills and attitudes developed through the exploration of themes. Assessment establishes what the pupils know, understand and can do. Children are

mainly judged on their Knowledge and Understanding, which refers to their learning about religion, and on Engagement and Response, which refers to their learning from religion. Assessment is on-going, using age related descriptors for each year group. Each term there is a dedicated staff meeting to moderate the children's work and a folder is kept of the moderated pieces to ensure consistency of judgement.

## **Collective Worship and Prayer**

Prayer and Worship are a fundamental part of our school life. It is important that we develop in the children an appreciation of, and active participation in prayer, worship and liturgy.

Celebration of the Eucharist is the high point of Catholic worship, and therefore during the year the children will participate in whole school and class masses. In addition, they will take part in other forms of liturgical experience e.g. the celebration of work at the end of the Come and See topic, opportunities for reflection, class prayers, assemblies and class liturgies.

## **Prayer**

Prayer reflects a personal relationship with God. God is someone we talk to and listen to, not just speak about.

Prayer can be both formal and informal. Spontaneous prayer has an important place in the spiritual life of the children and should use the everyday language of praising, thanking, asking, and saying sorry. Children are encouraged to express their thanks and petitions in a variety of ways using a range of different media during collective worship and assemblies. There are prayer boxes in classes and a school prayer book which children regularly contribute to.

It is important for children to be familiar with our rich heritage of traditional prayers. In sharing formal prayer with children it is important to reflect upon the words used and decide how much we might need to explore the meaning behind them.

In addition to the Lord's prayer, the following prayers are the basic requirements of all Catholics and are best known from memory.

- The sign of the cross
- The Glory be

- The Hail Mary
- The Apostle's Creed
- The Act of Sorrow
- Grace before and after meals.
- The Rosary
- The responses of the Mass

## **Worship**

We aim:

- To join the work of the home and the parish in developing the spirituality of the children.
- To bring the children to a fuller understanding of our main act of worship- the Mass
- To develop the concept of worship as a central element of our school life
- To lead the children to a “full, conscious and active participation in the liturgical celebration demanded by the very nature of the Liturgy”.  
(Vatican 2)

These aims are achieved by:

- Careful preparation of and involvement in class, year, School Masses
- Preparation of Class Assemblies and Corporate Acts of Worship
- Attention to devout and reflective prayer
- Development of classroom worship and the establishment of a focal point for prayer
- Supporting the parish programmes of Reconciliation and First Eucharist

## **Class Based Worship**

Display is an important part of sharing and celebrating our Religious Education. Each classroom has an RE display board and a central focal point for prayer. These reflect the current Liturgical theme. The focal point benefits from quality rather than quantity. The objects that should be displayed might include a Bible, pictures, icons, statues, rosaries, holy water, prayer books or candles. Other things that might be

displayed could be symbols of the seasons- red poppy, autumn leaves, shamrock, etc. All artefacts should be relevant to the topic/ theme and suitable for the liturgical season. The themes on the focal point are changed on a regular basis as is the altar cloth which reflects the liturgical season.

The Respond part of the Come and See programme takes the form of a class worship/celebration session. The children take an active part in arranging this celebration by choosing pieces of work to show, prayers to be said, readings from the Bible and hymns to be sung based on the topic they have just studied.

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At the start of each academic year staff are given a timetable showing the class assemblies and Masses for the year. They also receive a timetable showing school assemblies, Key Stage assemblies and Class Collective Worship.

A corporate act of worship will be held in class on the days that classes do not attend assembly but spontaneous prayer is encouraged for times of family, national or world joy and grief.

The themes of our whole school assemblies are based on the liturgical year, reflect themes in Come and See, deal with moral issues, or celebrate Bible stories. On Friday's, the assembly is led by a particular class and parents are warmly invited to attend. Each term there is an opportunity for the whole school to share in the celebration of the mass. We also rejoice with the First Holy Communicants and parents of Year 6 Leavers' each year. Key Stage 2 classes have the opportunity to join in with a week day parish mass to which parents are invited. Children lead the readings, bidding prayers and offertory procession at these masses. Suitable Para liturgical services are held to celebrate particular times of the year: Harvest; Advent; Christmas; Lent (Penitential services for Year 4-6) and Easter.

### **Links with Home, School and Parish**

In Year Three the children receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist. During this year the parents are invited to attend a programme of meetings at the parish church, to support them in their responsibility for the faith development of their child. The school choir sings at the Year 3

Communion masses as a sign of the partnership between the home, school and parish.

At the beginning of each term all parents receive an R.E. Newsletter. This informs them of the topics to be covered and gives suggestions of things parents might do at home to support the teaching within school.

Parents can find out about their child's progress in Religious Education at the three parents evenings that take place over the course of the school year. The religious and spiritual progress of each child is reported on in their school report at the end of each academic year.

The clergy play an important role within our school community. Our parish priest comes into school on a regular basis as a celebrant for our whole school, key stage and class masses. He also has a programme of visits where he regularly talks to individual classes about the R.E. topic being studied at the time. This is also an opportunity to consider the 'big' questions.

### **Spiritual Development**

Opportunities to support the spiritual development of our pupils permeate the whole curriculum. The children are given opportunities in every area of the curriculum to question, think, reflect and wonder. Anything that will put children in touch with their imagination and with awe and wonder will encourage spiritual growth. This can be developed through story, which can comfort, challenge and affirm our beliefs, and through Scripture which develops a child's personal relationship with God.

A sense of awe and wonder is developed through encouraging the children to take pride in themselves and others and appreciating that we are all creations of God made in his image and likeness. The children are encouraged to have an enquiring mind, become independent thinkers and learners and to think about others ahead of themselves.

### **Moral Development**

Children in our school are encouraged to reflect on their actions and the actions of others. Through the Religious Education programme and across the curriculum in areas such as PHSE and RSE, the children can find moral values and moral dilemmas which can develop their growing awareness of moral questions and moral choices. The formation of moral conscience involves teaching children to understand the

difference between good and evil, right and wrong, which contribute to the children's moral development. They are taught to appreciate God's gifts in themselves, in others and in creation. They will begin to understand how people can strengthen or damage their relationships with one another through the choices they make.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Co-ordinator for Religious Education to monitor plans
- Co-ordinator/SLT to observe teaching in line with school policy on class observations
- 'Book Look' allows a close scrutiny of work and marking to be carried out on samples of RE books and portfolios from every class. Individual feedback is given to staff
- RE Link Governor to be kept informed of progress
- Class teachers to keep an RE portfolio to capture examples of good practice which may not be captured in books across the year. They also form an integral part of RE assessment.
- Focal areas (prayer tables) are monitored by the RE co-ordinator. Photographs are kept as a record. These are occasionally copied and given to staff in order for them to carry out a self-evaluation of their display, or samples shared with whole staff as an example of good practice.

### **Moderation**

Each term a staff meeting is dedicated to the moderation of RE samples of work. Teachers work across year groups and key phases to moderate the work. The RE co-ordinator collects work samples that have been judged against the age related descriptors to form a portfolio of work which is evidence of continuity and progression in RE across the school and ensures greater reliability of teacher assessment.

### **Relationship and Sex Education**

At St. Thomas Becket School the RSE programme we follow is called 'Life to the Full'. Endorsed by the Diocese of Southwark, it is a web based programme for Relationships, Sex and Health education for Catholic primary schools and fulfils the statutory curriculum for RSE. Teachers will be expected to teach RSE in accordance with the Catholic ethos of the school.

The programme includes teaching about personal health, physical and emotional well-being, strong emotions, private parts of the body, personal relationships, family structures, trusted adults, growing bodies, puberty, periods, life cycles, the dangers of social media, where babies come from, understanding the common good and living in the wider world.

Every lesson is grounded in Catholic faith and values-linking these to a wide range of practical life situations.

(School Policies linked to the teaching of Religious Education at St. Thomas Becket include RSE; PHSE; Teaching and Learning; Marking; SEND)