



**SS Peter and Paul Catholic
Primary School**

Religious Education Policy

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1. General Requirements

The DES circular 3/88 stated that Religious Education 'has equal standing in relation to the core and foundation subjects within a school's curriculum. In SS Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School Religious Education counts for ten per cent of the total curriculum time, as recommended by the Diocesan Director of Education.

Moreover, it is seen as the foundation of the child's whole school experience, not only in the taught curriculum.

2. Ethos and Values

As a Catholic School, Religious Education is a very important part of our curriculum. However, the R.E. lessons, for which we use the Curriculum Strategy for Catholic Primary Schools in the Archdiocese of Birmingham, are just a part of what we offer.

We believe our faith influences what happens within the school, our work, our play and our relationships with each other and the wider community.

To this end we foster a very caring approach by supporting each other, by working closely with the Parish and with our parents. The children attend Mass regularly. Mass is celebrated in Church, each class prepares and leads Mass. The School gathers together for collective worship three times a week and there is also opportunity for class prayers.

Children are prepared for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and their First Holy Communion when they are in Year 3 and Confirmation takes place on an annual basis for pupils in Year 6.

Above all we encourage everyone to live our mission statement;

'With Jesus as our guide, we learn, pray and live together in a safe and happy way.'

We aim, with the support of parents, to nurture each child to fulfil their true potential through dedicated teaching, opportunities which allow the children to excel, enjoy and be excited by their learning, showing a mutual respect for all and a deepening knowledge of the love and presence of God.

We live out the virtues and values of the Archdiocese of Birmingham (see Appendix 1

3. Main Educational Aims

- To develop an awareness of God's presence in an individual's life and elicit a response to that presence; to offer the child an opportunity to reflect on this experience and strengthen this awareness.
- To help foster and develop a well formed conscience allowing the individual to make sound moral judgements in the light of their personal commitment to God.
- To enable children to develop their physical, moral and intellectual qualities harmoniously in order to become responsible, caring members of their community and the wider world.
- To support and develop the primary task of parents who 'are the first teachers of their child in the ways of the faith' (Rite of Baptism).
- To develop the skills required to examine and reflect on religious belief and practice, including those from other faiths and cultures.
- To develop a sense of wonder and awe.

4. Religious Education Strategy

In SS Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School we base our long term overview and detailed short term planning on the Birmingham Archdiocese Curriculum Strategy for Religious Education in Catholic Primary Schools: 'Learning and Growing as the People of God'. This shows clear coverage of the four areas of study: Revelation, Church, Celebration and Life in Christ from the Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools, ensuring continuity and progression.

We welcome the clear expectations, detailed guidance and, most importantly, the great range of challenging activities, which allows our teachers to meet the needs of the children in our care.

We have taken great care not to select from the strategy and rework a Programme of Study, as this would be to lose the richness of the material and limit teachers to teaching in a style that may not allow them to fully engage the children in their particular Year Group.

The Diocesan Strategy is supplemented with a variety of quality resources. It is a priority to provide appropriate Bibles throughout the school.

- A wide range of ICT resources are available and are used not only in class lessons, but also in Key Stage and Whole School Assemblies and Collective Worship.
Teachers have copies of these, which they may utilise in their teaching, especially with reference to feast days.

To make best use of the strategy materials we feel it is important that the pupils are encouraged to reflect, to make choices and to use their creative talents.

Teachers are encouraged to use their curriculum strengths in delivering the Religious Education programme and to devise tasks which are stimulating, challenging and differentiated, where appropriate.

5. Evaluation, Assessment and Recording

'Although its (R.E) educational focus will be formed and enhanced by the vitality of faith, the criteria by which the subject is assessed are educational.'
[*Statement on Religious Education in Catholic Schools* the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales 2000].

We cannot measure commitment or personal faith. We cannot assess the child's relationship with God. Therefore our assessment of Religious Education is based on what pupils know, understand or can do with reference to the two key Attainment Targets in R.E: *Learning about Religion* and *Learning from Religion*.

Each pupil has a Religious Education exercise book where work is recorded. It can be used to provide information, on the knowledge, understanding and responses of the pupils to the learning process.

The children's work is marked in accordance with the whole school marking policy of acknowledging effort and achievement through positive teacher comments. Also, next steps can be identified as well as probing questions linked to Attainment target two. Suggestions for raising achievement in subsequent tasks may also be made together with reference to the religious objective of the lesson and its significance in their lives.

Assessment of work in R.E is in agreement with the whole school Assessment Policy and complies with Diocesan Guidelines.

R.E. assessment is now based on the diocesan traffic light system for each end of unit expectations.

Methods of assessment may include:

- Observation
- Discussion

- Work sampling
- Questioning

We carry out a baseline assessment on entry to school which enables us to determine how best to serve the needs of the children in our teaching of R.E. and to judge progress through the Foundation Stage and beyond.

In addition we carry out moderation of R.E on a regular basis.

This involves each year group teacher providing samples of work, which are levelled against the RE levels of attainment. These samples are shared and levels agreed by other staff members. These examples of moderated work have been collated to build a portfolio of work examples for staff to refer to.

The focus for such moderation meetings is established at a staff meeting well in advance.

Parents are kept informed of their child's progress and development at formal parents' evenings in the autumn and spring terms.

Written reports are sent out to parents at the end of the summer term, which detail the children's progress in R.E.

Prayer

Prayer, worship and liturgical celebrations are central to our Catholic tradition. It is of prime importance however, that sound educational and pastoral principles determine the ways these are experienced in the school community. Children are helped to discover varieties and methods of prayer, traditional and informal, private and communal.

'It is the task of the school ... to promote and develop an appreciation of and a more active participation in prayer, worship and liturgy. This must be recognised as a gradual process which takes account of the age and stages of personal, social and religious development of the pupils.'

(Evaluating the Distinctive Nature of a Catholic School)

Through prayer we aim to help the children develop a personal relationship with God. To enable this to take place we need to create a prayerful atmosphere and appreciate the value of artefacts in helping to channel the child's mind to prayer.

(e.g. crucifixes, prayer candles in the classroom and prominently displayed throughout the school; liturgical colours in cloths for prayer focal points)

Each day begins and ends in prayer, reinforcing its centrality and importance.

Grace is said before meals.

See also Appendix 2, Guidelines on Prayer

Reflection

- During Advent there is an advent wreath in the school hall. The whole school assembles to reflect upon a scripture reading in preparation for the second coming and the birth of Christ.
- During Lent the focus of prayer is on self-reflection, penance and forgiveness. Y5/6 lead a full school presentation of the stations of the cross around school. Y4/5 lead a whole school Passion service in church.
- Particular focus is given to the Holy Rosary during the months of May and October. On a voluntary basis pupils, led by a member of staff, have the opportunity to reflect upon the Rosary during the lunch period or in class.

Hymn Practice

Each week hymn practice takes place in preparation for Masses, prayer services and assemblies as appropriate. All classes take part with reception class joining us from Autumn half term two.

Assemblies

The principal aim of our assemblies is worship and the active involvement of pupils is essential in order that they are engaged in a real act of worship. Playing of music on entry helps to create a positive atmosphere, teachers use appropriate visual stimuli to add further interest and children are encouraged to participate through questioning and discussion. Singing is an enriching element in worship which our children really enjoy. Assemblies may be said to be 'educational' in the sense of leading the children to a greater awareness of their faith and the world around them.

All pupils take part in a daily act of worship which takes the form of class prayers or Whole School assemblies.

Themes for assemblies, linked to the liturgical year, key focuses within the school, parish or wider world and a rota assigning a particular teacher to lead each assembly; are devised in advance by the head teacher.

Suggestions for resource materials are also provided.

The head teacher or deputy head teacher normally lead the weekly whole school celebration assembly.

It is quite acceptable for teachers to commend and celebrate pupils' achievements and behaviour during assemblies, as this is relevant and motivating. At whole school assemblies pupils are presented with merit certificates and any

other awards obtained in or out of school. There is also a weekly 'Angel of the Week' award where children being living examples of our Mission Statement are recognised. Children can also recommend other children for this award by writing a letter stating the reasons why to the head teacher.

Sacramental Preparation

Coming to understand the Sacraments is a complex interaction of a great variety of experiences and celebrations participated in by the children during their school years.

We are fully involved with the preparation of pupils in Y3 for the first reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion.

Preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is kept distinct from subsequent preparation for Holy Communion.

Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation takes place in Y6.

Although much of the work is undertaken in school, the preparation of the children for these sacraments is the shared responsibility of the school, the parents and the parish.

Photographs of all children being prepared for the sacraments are displayed in the parish church and parishioners are invited to pray for the children when they are presented to the Parish in Mass as part of their sacramental preparation.

All children of SS Peter and Paul and Holy Cross parish, whether in school or not, are included in the preparatory celebrations and fully participate in the services on the actual day of reception.

We hope by our preparation of the children for these sacraments to enable them to become fully active members of the parish and diocesan communities.

See Appendix 3 for details of the Sacramental Preparation Programmes.

6. Staff of Other Faiths and Religious Education

The contribution made by staff of other faiths to the life and ethos of SS Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School is highly valued.

Where a teacher is of a different faith or tradition, another member of staff who is a practising Catholic will take a key role in the support of the non-catholic teacher when teaching RE in the classroom.

The class teacher would carry out the daily acts of collective worship with the children.

These teachers are encouraged to attend suitable courses and training programmes offered by the Catholic Partnership and the diocese, in order to deepen their awareness of the Catholic faith of the children in their care.

7. Information and Communication Technology

Children should be given opportunities to develop and apply their ICT skills in Religious Education. There are many such opportunities offered in the Curriculum Strategy and resources are updated regularly to further enhance the pupils' experience of this cross-curricular link.

Occasional samples of work are kept by the R.E Co-ordinator for reference.

8. Special Educational Needs

Each teacher is responsible for meeting the needs of specific pupils who have Special Educational Needs. Support may be provided where appropriate and available in line with the Special Educational Needs Policy.

Resources to support teachers are available in the R.E resource area.

9. Equal Opportunities

Each child is fully incorporated into the life of our school, treated equally with fairness and justice. Language and symbols used in the teaching of R.E are appropriate and meaningful for each age group.

10. EAL

We employ a Polish speaking teaching assistant to support our growing Polish community. It allows our Polish children to fully access the sacramental preparation and curriculum learning to gain a fuller understanding of the teachings of their faith.

Adopted by the Catholic Life Committee: APRIL 2019

Review date : APRIL 2021

Appendix 1

Virtues and Values

Pupils at SS Peter and Paul school are growing to be . . .

Faith-filled, strengthened by Christ who is at the centre of everything we do and be **hopeful** for our future.

Attentive in learning and life and **discerning** about the choices we make and the effects we may have on the members of our school community

Grateful for our own gifts and for the gift of other people, to be **generous** with our gifts as we grow in the love of Christ.

Compassionate, by showing value and respect for all people; **loving** by our actions and forgiving words that encourage all to maximise their talents and abilities.

Eloquent and **truthful** in what we say of ourselves, recognising the God given dignity of each member of our school community.

Learners in our rich, broad curriculum that has a wealth of opportunities for all, allowing ourselves to be nurtured as self-motivated independent learners who search for wisdom and excellence.

Curious about everything; and **active** in our engagement with the world, changing what we can for the better.

Intentional in the way we live and use the gifts of the earth, guided by our conscience; and **prophetic** in the example we set to others.

Appendix 2 Guidelines on Prayer

Methods of Prayer

Pupils are helped and encouraged to discover various methods of prayer including:

- Formal and informal
- Private and communal
- Silent prayer
- Spontaneous prayer
- Prayer through gesture

All these have their place in the prayer life of the school.

Elements of Prayer

Listen to the Word of God

Use a short passage of scripture from the Bible.

By familiarising the children with *Gospel* stories we enable them to build up a picture of Jesus as he was in the flesh, to develop a loving relationship with him so that they may come to know the risen Christ. Listening with eyes closed helps them to be with Jesus, saying his name in their hearts and experiencing the peace of his presence.

Praise God

Introduce a line from a Psalm or a Eucharistic Prayer. Some simple Psalms and traditional prayers appropriate to the children's age should be included. Children should be made aware of phrases which may be used meaningfully and effectively.

'Hail Mary', 'Our Father', 'The Lord is my Shepherd'

Meditation

A quiet time for reflection is valuable for children (and adults) of all ages. [posters, music, PowerPoint images and guided meditation books are available]

Intercession

Pupils may suggest their own prayers or teachers may initiate ideas.

Thanks

Prayers of thanksgiving

Sorrow or Contrition

Expressing sorrow for some fault or failing. Considering how we have failed to respond to Jesus. Silently expressing sorrow for wrongdoings in their own words. Formal prayer introduced in Year 3 as part of sacramental preparation.

Spontaneous Prayer

Prayers of adoration, intercession and petition.

Formal Prayers

See separate guidelines

Daily class prayer should not be overlong and may contain only one or two of the above elements.

Development of Prayer

In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage One the initial focus is on praying to God the Father who made us and looks after us. Children gradually become more aware of Jesus and begin to build a relationship through prayer.

All children learn gestures; sign of the cross, holding hands, joining hands: so that action becomes a prayer in itself.

As pupils progress through school they learn to be still and quiet at prayer times. They will be able to maintain this attitude for longer periods and will also learn the more traditional forms of prayer.

We build on the children's own experiences, developing and extending them. We help them to discover that the love of God calls for a response.

In Key Stage Two special times should be provided for individual or private prayer where the children have the opportunity to pray in silence.

All children are offered the opportunity of praying in church before the Blessed Sacrament during our parish day of Exposition.

By the end of Year 6 all pupils should be familiar with the experience of praying on their own. Pupils should be taught to write their own prayers from an early age.

Formal and Traditional Prayers

Children must be enabled to become active members of our worshipping community, which is the Church, and they should be familiar with many of the prayers of the Catholic Church. Formal prayers should be taught to classes in accordance with Diocesan Guidelines and the children therefore need to learn traditional prayer formulae.

It is important that the language of our formal prayers should be explained to children in a meaningful way. They should be encouraged to understand why we say the prayer and what the prayer is about.

e.g. The Rosary in October, Prayers for the Dead in November, Stations of the Cross in Lent, Marian Prayers in May.

Prayer Services

Children should experience simple structured prayer services in class from time to time. These may be led by the teacher or our Parish Priest. The end of a unit of work is often a fruitful time to hold such a service.

Prayer across the Curriculum

Prayer should not be restricted only to set times. Opportunities will frequently arise for children to thank God or to ask God for his help, guidance and protection. They should be encouraged to share in the joys and sorrows of other children.

Appendix 3

Sacramental Preparation

We follow the Birmingham Archdiocese Curriculum: 'Learning and Growing as the People of God'.

Reconciliation

For Reconciliation preparation, the children explore human choices through the parables of Jesus, they understand that we have the freedom to make choices. We develop the children's understanding of the difference between a good and a bad choice and the consequences these bring. Children understand that Christ's forgiveness is celebrated in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

First Holy Communion

For preparation for the sacrament of First Holy Communion, we teach the sequence of the Liturgy of the Eucharist and discuss the different words and actions associated with parts of the Mass. Children realise that the Mass is a celebration of thanksgiving for the death and resurrection of Christ who is present in the form of bread and wine.

Confirmation

When preparing for the sacrament of Confirmation, we discuss growing up on our "Journey of Life" We are thinking about our future and deciding what sort of people we want to be. We investigate what being a member of the Church really means for us. We focus on Pentecost when the Holy Spirit appeared to the apostles and we investigate the links between Baptism and Confirmation.

