ST. STEPHEN'S CATHOLIC

PRIMARY SCHOOL

'Love like Jesus. Learn like Jesus. Live like Jesus.'

Religious Education Policy 2026-27

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Intent

The intent of our Religious Education curriculum is to create a Christian ethos of love, allowing each member of our school community to grow in their personal relationship with God and with each other. We aim to deliver a secure, caring and inclusive community in which the Gospel Spirit of love, care and mutual respect permeates every aspect of school life. Through the teaching of Religious Education lessons and Collective Worship, we aim to contribute to the Spiritual development of pupils and teach the children about the belief, values and way of life of Catholic Christianity and other faiths and encourage children to distinguish right from wrong and develop a personal sense of morality. We are fully supported by the Parish in preparing children for Eucharist and Reconciliation, and in the development of Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural education of all children.

We recognise that our pupils come from a range of backgrounds and face differing challenges, and we are committed to ensuring that the Gospel value of the innate dignity of every person is reflected in an RE curriculum and Collective Worship that is genuinely inclusive and accessible to all. Mindful that some families face barriers such as limited access to wider enrichment opportunities or additional social and emotional needs, we strive to remove obstacles to participation in the spiritual and communal life of our school, ensuring that every child, whatever their circumstances, feels equally valued, equally able to encounter God, and equally able to flourish as part of our school family.

In our teaching of Religious Education, we are always striving for excellence, reflecting the school's distinctive Catholic character and the Catholic Social Teaching principles. Through our Religious Education teaching and Collective Worship, we also prepare children for citizenship in today's diverse society and enable them to develop sensitivity to, and respect for others, equip the children with the knowledge, skills and understanding relating to fundamental Gospel and British Values, allowing each child to make a positive contribution to society in the 21st century.

At St. Stephen's we aim to nurture strong relationships built on respect and consideration between school, parents, Parish and the wider community. We promote and encourage faith to be a significant part in every person's life by continually working together in partnership, including home, school and Parish, following the values of the Gospel as a guide to living life to the full, and providing opportunities for pupils to make links with the local and wider community, e.g., distribution of harvest gifts, fundraising for CAFOD, St. Rocco's Hospice and other charities, thus working for the 'common good'.

Aims of our Mission Statement

To create a Christian ethos of love. Allowing each member of our school community to love and share the Good News through kindness, forgiveness and respect.

To achieve this, we:

- Maintain a secure, caring and inclusive community in which the Gospel Spirit of love, care and mutual respect permeates every aspect of school life
- Through the teaching of Religious Education lessons and Collective Worship, contribute to the Spiritual development of pupils and teach the children about the belief, values and way of life of Catholic Christianity and other faiths
- Help children distinguish right from wrong and develop a personal sense of morality
- Are supported by the Parish in preparing children for Eucharist and Reconciliation, and in the development of Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural education of all children

To establish a safe school community that encourages children to learn and thrive with pride in an inclusive and inspiring environment.

To achieve this, we:

- Deliver a curriculum which is rich, broad and balanced and provide an inclusive education based on high expectations for all
- Match teaching to the needs of the learners to ensure their learning is an enjoyable and challenging experience
- Equip the children with the knowledge, skills and understanding relating to fundamental British values, allowing each child to make a positive contribution to society in the 21st century.
- We will develop a strong partnership with parents by giving them useful information enabling them to support their children with their learning

To nurture strong relationships that encourage children to live and serve as members of a caring and supportive community.

To achieve this, we:

- Continually work together in partnership, including home, school and Parish
- Use the values of the Gospel as a guide to living life to the full
- Provide opportunities for pupils to make links with the local and wider community, e.g. distribution of harvest gifts, fundraising for CAFOD, St. Rocco's Hospice, thus working for the 'common good'.

Mission Statement aims and objectives are adapted and updated based on input from pupils and meetings with staff, governors, parents and parishioners.

Aims and Objectives of Religious Education

The Aim of Religious Education

In the life of faith at St. Stephen's Catholic Primary School, Religious Education plays a central and vital part. At the heart of Catholic Education lies 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 studied in Catholic Religious Education inspire and draw together every aspect of the life of within our Catholic school.

The aim of Religious Education in St. Stephen's encompasses all children from whatever background providing collaborative activities which respects and promotes the child's innate capacity for wonder, awe, reverence, imagination - for the spiritual.

The outcome of excellent religious education is religiously literate and consciously 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 recognise the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.

(The Religious Education Directory for Catholic Schools 2023)

The following strategies and aims underpin the effective delivery of religious education in the Catholic school.

- To engage in a systematic study of the mystery of God, of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the teachings of the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold, the basis for them and the relationship between faith and life;
- To enable pupils continually to deepen their religious and theological understanding and be able to communicate this effectively
- To present an authentic vision of the Church's moral and social teaching to provide pupils with a sure guide for living and the tools to critically engage with contemporary culture and society;
- To give pupils an understanding of the religions and worldviews present in the world today and the skills to engage in respectful and fruitful dialogue with those whose worldviews differ from their own;
- To develop the critical faculties of pupils so to bring clarity to the relationship between faith and life, and between faith and culture;
- To stimulate pupils' imagination and provoke a desire for personal meaning as revealed in the truth of the Catholic faith;
- To enable pupils to relate the knowledge gained through religious education to their understanding of other subjects in the curriculum.

Objectives

In order to achieve our aim, we will utilise a Religious Education programme which:

- Will provide opportunities for celebration, prayer, and reflection in implicit and explicit ways.
- Will provide children with the language of religious experience - a 'literacy' in religious activities, places, stories, symbols and rituals, peoples and objects.
- Will present a 'systematic presentation of the Christian event, message and way of life', in ways appropriate to the age and stage of development of the child.
- Will require that the adults involved understand the underlying theological as well as educational principles.
- Will provide the adults with adequate preparation for teaching about other faiths in context with the delivery of the Religious Education Directory.
- Is as academically respectable as other curricular areas and utilises appropriate strategies from the National Curriculum.
- Respects the need for support for Religious Education Subject Leaders and for other CPD for staff.
- Respects the different pastoral needs and practices within our parish and supports the need for sacramental catechises.

The Religious Education Programme

To fulfil our aim and objectives we use the 'To Know You More Clearly' programme from the new Religious Education Directory prescribed by the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The aim of this programme is to draw pupils into a systematic study of the teachings of the Church. This is achieved through enabling all the children to explore the religious dimension of questions about life, dignity and purpose within the Catholic tradition. Links are made with universal experience, the pupils' own experience and how this links to the Catholic Social Teaching Principles. Links are also made with experience of other faith traditions. For all children the programme will raise questions and provide opportunities for reflecting on their own experience. It will help them explore the beliefs, values and way of life of the Catholic tradition and where appropriate, of other faith traditions.

For those from committed families, it will deepen and enrich their understanding and living of their faith. For Christians life and faith belong together and so the programme uses both universal language and Christian language.

To support our aims 10% of the length of the taught week for each Key Stage is devoted for the delivery of Religious Education.

Overview of Content

The programme of study for Religious Education in Catholic schools presented in 'To Know You More Clearly' has a framework with four structural elements:

1. Knowledge Lenses

2. Ways of Knowing

3. Expected Outcomes

4. Curriculum Branches

Knowledge lenses set out the object of study for pupils; they indicate what should be known by the end of each age-phase. They are referred to as lenses, since they are the areas that we are looking at and they divide the content of the programme of study into four systematic subsections for the study of Catholicism and two additional lenses for the study of religious and worldviews.

The study of Catholic religion lenses are:

- **Hear**
- **Believe**
- **Celebrate**
- **Live**

The study of other religious and worldview lenses are:

- **Dialogue**
- **Encounter**

Ways of Knowing set out the skills that pupils should be developing as they progress through their curriculum journey. Whenever we know something, we always know it in more than one way: we remember it, we critically assimilate it and we put it into practice. All three are ways of coming to know the things that are the object of our study. The **Ways of Knowing** are an evolution of the age-related standards in Religious Education.

The three **Ways of Knowing** are:

- **Understand** → head – see – what will I see and hear to help me understand?
- **Discern** → heart – judge – how will I discover more?
- **Respond** → hands – act – what can I do now?

Expected Outcomes are a synthesis of the content outlined in the **Knowledge Lenses** and the skills described in the **Ways of Knowing**. Each age-phase will have a prescribed set of outcomes that will indicate what pupils are expected to know, remember and be able to do, using the language of the Ways of Knowing and applying it to the discrete knowledge within each lens.

To Know You More Clearly is delivered through six Curriculum Branches that correspond to the six half terms of a school year. The model curriculum is rooted in the salvation history and leads pupils on a journey in each year of schooling that gives a sequence to the learning. As they revisit each Branch in each year of school, they come to a deeper understanding of its significance for Catholic belief and practice, which allows them to make links between the narrative of salvation history.

Curriculum Branches

Autumn:

1. Creation and Covenant

2. Prophecy and Promise

Spring:

3. From Galilee to Jerusalem

4. From Desert to Garden

Summer:

5. To the Ends of the Earth

6. Dialogue and Encounter

Sacrament Themes

The Sacramental themes occur once in every season time and each theme gradually builds on the understanding of the previous theme.

Autumn:
Following on from an understanding of belonging to a family the theme of Baptism introduces the understanding of being initiated into belonging to the Christian Church during key stage 1. 'The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthen by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life.' At key stage 2 children will learn about the Sacrament of Confirmation, whereby the baptised are more perfectly bound to the church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit, the Sacrament of Ordination for the service of the Church and the Sacrament of Marriage, perfecting the human love of wife and husband.

Spring:
In the Spring time after learning about the local Church community, the Sacrament of the Eucharist is explored. This is the Sacrament of communion with Christ and the Church. This sacrament is at the heart of To Know You More Clearly since it is at the heart of Christ nourishing his people.

Summer:
The Sacrament of Reconciliation forms part of the work of the summer time when there an opportunity to learn about the joy and challenge of relationships and God's love and mercy celebrated in this sacrament. At key stage 2 children will learn about the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, which strengthens, forgives and unites the ailing person more closely to Christ.

Christian Living Themes

The Christian living themes occur in each season time and each theme gradually builds on the understanding of the previous theme.

Autumn:
The Advent/Christmas theme considers the gift of God's love in Jesus. Christmas and our preparation celebrate the wonderful gift of Jesus and offers the witness of loving as a way of life. 'The Word became flesh so that we might know God's love.'

Spring:
In the Spring season Lent and Easter are explored, Jesus' love for humankind knows no limit. Jesus offered his life and gave an example of giving as a way of life. 'Easter is not simply one feast among others, but the feast of feasts.' 'The Resurrection … remains at the very heart of the mystery of faith as something which transcends and surpasses history.'

Summer:
The study of the Ascension and Pentecost completes the Easter story and shows how the gift of the Holy Spirit strengthens the community and enables Christians to give witness to a life of joyful service. 'In this age of the Church, Christ now lives and acts in and with his Church, in a new way appropriate to this new age.'

Learning and Teaching Styles

In line with the rest of our school, we offer a broad and balanced curriculum alongside quality first teaching. Our whole curriculum has been designed and nurtured to give all learners the confidence to succeed and know that they are valued and included within our school and our delivery of Religious Education is no different. A variety of learning and teaching styles are utilised depending on the appropriateness of the subject matter, these will include whole class teaching, group and individual work. It is up to the individual teachers to make use of the most appropriate teaching styles which enable the needs of individual pupils to be met. Our learning is evidenced in a range of ways such as; written work, dancing, role play, artwork, singing and this can be evidenced through the children's books or on our Seesaw.

Planning

The Bishops require 10% of the taught time for Religious Education. This time does not include collective worship, sing and praise, assemblies etc. This time allocation needs to be distributed appropriately across the timetable to ensure quality time is given for effective teaching and learning throughout the week. The school leadership and management take responsibility for this.

Within each lesson there needs to be a balance between input, discussion and activity.

Religious Education Curriculum Overview

The Religious Education Directory sets out the programme for the year with each year group having their own Branch Planning and Overview.

Medium Term Planning (Branch Planning)

The overall responsibility for medium term planning lies with the Religious Education Subject Leader. It is essential for the understanding of the Branch that teachers reflect on the Notes for Teachers at the start. These are the same regardless of age group because they explore the theme which underpins the topic. Ideally this reflection is best done as a whole staff, or within year groups. At St Stephen's, we use the same planning document from EYFS to Year 6 that is adapted and has been implemented across Warrington Catholic Schools.

Short Term Planning (individual lessons)

Short term planning is the responsibility of the class teacher. The teachers will use the planning model agreed by the school in conjunction with the diocese, however they will adapt this based on the needs of their cohort.

Foundation Stage Approach

Through engaging, practical, integrated activities, children can learn more about themselves, other people and the world around them and develop their religious knowledge, skills and understanding. Religious Education makes an active contribution to the areas of learning outlined in the curriculum for foundation phase but has a particular and important contribution to:

- Personal, social and emotional development
- Communication and language
- Literacy
- Understanding the world
- Art and design

Throughout the programme for Foundation Stage, the process will be divided as follows:

• Whole class core input: teacher led

• Adult directed group activities: teacher or assistants work with groups of children

• Continuous provision: child centred learning across the areas of learning in the foundation stage

Adjustments to the Curriculum

As with all other areas of the curriculum the purpose of making adjustments in Religious Education is:

• To enable children to succeed in the set task or activity and to challenge them to take the next step in learning;

• To challenge children to be self-motivated and to take responsibility for their own learning;

• To enable children to recognise and celebrate their achievement;

Children learn in different ways, so as with other subjects, it is necessary to provide a range of learning activities using a variety of media. In each topic there are attainment level indicators, attainment level summaries and symbols showing the possible ability required by the activity.

Additional Learning Needs and/or Disabilities

It is essential to take into account all children with a variety of additional learning needs and plan accordingly. The following approaches take into account a wide range of special needs:

• Providing opportunities to eat or taste, to look at, to smell, to touch, to listen to and to and engage with (a multisensory approach).

• Providing a variety of materials, toys, food, interactive objects which engage children's curiosity and involves them in sharing and taking turns (motivational stimuli).

• Music – songs to sing, music to move to and especially songs with sign language and action songs. Music is often an effective way of marking the start and finish of a session and creating a sense of celebration or reflection/stillness.

• Sign language and text accompanied by symbols or illustrations are essential tools to support understanding of the spoken and written word (Widgit Online is often used to support learning).

• Using a variety of media to animate a story and bring a theme to life, for example, objects named in the story or key to the theme, the use of puppets or role play.

• Reassurance and predictability are especially important. A familiar structure for each session builds confidence and if a change is planned it is important to let children know. Some children may benefit from a visual schedule to guide them through the sequence of activities.

To Know You More Clearly aims to provide meaningful and appropriate religious education experiences for all children, taking account of different needs, abilities and learning styles. This includes children with learning disabilities working within the P Scales who may be accessing religious education in the context of Catholic special schools, parish schools or through outreach and support to LA special schools.

Teaching Other Faiths/Religions

Why?

• Understanding and respecting each other.

• Appreciating the ray of truth and holiness in other faiths, which gives us all hope.

• A desire to search together for meaning and sharing in a common humanity

• Learning to live with our neighbours.

When?

• Through the delivery of Branch 6 in Summer 2 (Dialogue and Encounter)

• Individual classes may choose to celebrate other key religious events throughout the year such as Chinese New Year, Diwali, Ramadan.

• Judaism is taught in Year 1, Year 2, Year 3 and Year 5

• Islam is taught in Year 3 and Year 4

• Dharmic beliefs and ways of life are explored within Year 6

How?

• Learning intentions are outlined in the Religious Education Directory Pupils can also learn from a member of the faith community, make a visit to a place of worship, watch a video, use ICT and books.

Assessment and Evaluation

"In accordance with the Catholic Schools' belief in upholding the dignity and value of each individual, any method used to assess the performance of pupils must respect the individual's worth."

Currently, as schools are still transitioning to the To Know You More Clearly programme from the Religious Education Directory, assessment guidance is yet to be published. However, here at St Stephen's, assessment involves:

• Informal assessment, general observation and photographic evidence of children engaged in classroom discussions, tasks and learning activities

• Observation and photographic evidence of contributions made to classroom displays,

• Marking of more formal written work in line with our Marking and Feedback Policy

• An end of Branch Assessment Key, created by class teachers, monitored by the Subject Leader, that provides the children with an opportunity to summarise their key learning and reflections in response to the Branch studied. This is in line with the rest of our end of unit assessments across the curriculum.

(As we develop our implementation of the Religious Education Directory, we will review our assessment process.)