

# *St. Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School*



## *Religious Education Policy*

<b>Date Agreed:</b>	November 2023	<b>Review Date:</b>	September 2024
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<b>Headteacher:</b>	Mrs E Poulteney	<b>Chair of Local Governing Body:</b>	Ms H Taylor
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## Introduction

The message of the Gospel is central to our school: it is essential to our view of education and underlies what we do. We recognise that the children in our care may be at different stages in their faith journey and we aim to help each child discover God through their life experiences, to come to know, love, and serve Him; to develop a personal relationship with God in their daily lives.

Our school Mission statement at St Thomas' is:



## SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT



At St Thomas' we are learning to follow Jesus, showing respect and consideration for ourselves and others. We all have the opportunity to learn and work to the best of our ability in a safe and loving environment.

- To place Christ at the centre of all we do
- To nurture and inspire everyone towards achieving their true potential, academically and personally
- To respect and value everyone

## St Thomas' Intent statement

At St. Thomas' we offer a rich and broad curriculum that develops the children's knowledge and skills, inspiring them through a journey of creativity, discovery and curiosity where everyone is equally respected and valued, equipping the children as independent, resilient, life-long learners.

## Purpose

A Catholic school has a very special purpose. We, at St Thomas', believe that through education each child must come to know that they are unique, endowed with special gifts, and loved by God. We believe that we can help each child to achieve their own true vocation in life. The organisation of the school, the curriculum, discipline and celebrations take place within this context. We aim to promote and develop an appreciation of and active participation in prayer and liturgy. This is recognised as a gradual process which takes account of the different stages of personal, social and religious growth of our pupils.

As a Catholic School, Religious Education is planned, taught, assessed and monitored with the same rigour as other core curriculum subjects.

## **Aims**

At St Thomas' we place great emphasis on our Religious Education (RE) programme and it is the central strand

running through the life of the school. We aim to:

- foster in each child a loving and trusting relationship with God and with Jesus His Son through the actions of the Holy Spirit
- bring each child to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the religious and spiritual dimensions of life
- bring each child to a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith and its relevance to everyday life
- deepen each child's personal faith, commitment and sense of awe and wonder
- encourage respect for the beliefs and feelings of others, including those of other faiths.

In order to facilitate the above our teaching involves:

- study of sacred writings and the historical and social context in which they were produced
- study of the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church
- study of the Saints in order to make the children aware of, and encourage them to benefit from, the example of great Christian figures
- applying a Catholic perspective to everyday life and the development of values, social awareness and a caring and Christian outlook
- participation in the liturgical life of the school
- forging links with the parish community

## **Organisation**

The 'Come and See' Religious Education programme is used throughout the school. Come and See is developed through three themes based on the documents of the Second Vatican Council, which are gradually explored each time at greater depths. They are Church, Sacrament and Christian living.

Care is taken that each topic is presented in a way which is suited to the age of the child involved. The course is arranged in such a way that the topics link directly with the church's year, the Liturgical calendar and the Religious Education Curriculum Directory 2012.

As a school we recognise that children are at differing stages in their faith journey and that their home based experience of their faith may vary widely. Whilst we believe that Christian education most properly begins in the home, and that we build on those early experiences, we also understand that each child comes to the course from an individual starting point and the teachers are sensitive to each child's individual needs.

At the beginning of the year, the RE team provides staff with a yearly overview. Furthermore, guidance notes for each topic are available and staff are encouraged to use these to support their teaching and learning.

## **Procedures/Practice**

Curriculum time allocation: In line with Bishops' Conference recommendations, at least 10% of curriculum time is allocated to Religious Education.

NB: In October 2012 'Come and See' was launched within the school and an age group specific book was purchased for each member of staff (some copies still exist). All staff have access to an electronic version of Come and See on the school system. We are currently continuing to follow 'Come and See' but have a timeline in place for the introduction of the RED.

### **Other Faiths**

In addition to understanding what the Church teaches about its relationship to other faiths, religions and worldviews, pupils are also expected to engage in discrete studies of other faiths, religions and worldviews. This is partly because of the Church's own commitment to dialogue, partly also because to love our neighbour is also to respect and esteem his or her culture and finally because to enter into dialogue is a means of learning how to live peaceably with difference.

As part of the 'Come and See' programme, themes and major festivals of other main religions are explored in our whole school world religions weeks.

Pupils will study Judaism and Hinduism.

### **Assessment and Evaluation**

We believe that each child's faith journey is uniquely personal and defies assessment. We do seek, however, to assess each child's knowledge and understanding of religious concepts. Religious Education will be taught with the same rigour as all academic subjects, with equal emphasis on the twin strands of knowledge and spirituality.

At St Thomas', assessments are made in line with the school assessment policy. Teachers use effective assessment for learning to ensure planning is based on prior attainment. Effective verbal feedback is used to move the pupils' learning on within lessons.

The Religious Education Curriculum Directory (2012) includes assessment tools for teachers such as, 'Age Group Statement Notes'. Come and See includes, 'End of Unit Expected outcomes'. Staff are also provided with Moderation Statements and Assessment Statements. Staff are expected to utilise these documents to support them in making judgements. Children are assessed as: Working towards (BARE), Working at (ARE), Working at Greater depth (AARE / s+).

We aim to meet each child's needs on their individual faith journey by:

- helping them to acquire knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs, practices and traditions
- helping them to perceive and respond to the challenge of the Gospels, living Christian lives as followers of Jesus
- nurturing and developing their existing faith

In the 'Come and See' programme assessment is covered by the Respond process. This involves;

- looking back in order to recognise and value what has gone on before
- holding on to the discovery of the 'now'
- looking forward to shape and make the future.

This involves planning, evaluation and recording. From Year 1 onwards children complete an end of topic

evaluation in their books. Reception completes whole class evaluations. In addition, all class teachers track progress and attainment using Target Tracker. Examples of work to support judgements made by the teachers are kept by the RE team. The children's evaluation questions are specifically tailored to the appropriate age range.

### **Extra-curricular activities**

School altar servers are trained by the parish and supported by a member of the RE team; and we are fortunate to have a small group of servers, both boys and girls, some of whom serve in our parish churches.

### **Links with the Parish**

There is a close and valued working relationship between the school and the parish that we serve. Our Parish priest visits the school on a regular basis in order to celebrate Mass. There is regular contact between school and church with discussion and consultation.

### **The Role of the RE team**

- To lead staff in the implementation of Religious Education as the focal point of the school's mission Statement.
- Ensure that life within the school reflects our living faith.
- Organise and lead INSET for staff development in the delivery of RE and other religious aspects of life at St. Thomas.
- In consultation with the Headteacher and staff, coordinate the development, monitoring and evaluation of the Religious Education Programme.
- Regularly monitor RE across the school through lesson observations, drop ins, book looks, pupil perceptions, learning environments and data analysis. Feeding back to staff and SLT on findings and actioning next steps.
- To keep abreast of new developments / initiatives and incentives in the teaching of Religious Education by attending in-service training which may be provided, nationally, within the Diocese, or by the Local Educational authority and disseminate accordingly.
- To review current policy, and in consultation with the Headteacher and staff, to ensure up-dating when necessary. Ensure effective development of whole school policy and practice.
- To organise the selection, ordering, cataloguing, and storing of appropriate resources throughout the school.
- To consider appropriate assessment criteria in consultation with the Headteacher and staff.
- To monitor, through regular contact with staff, the R.E throughout the school. This will ideally include working alongside teachers in the classroom. Provide 'expertise' to assist staff in the delivery of the curriculum.
- To maintain an R.E portfolio to assess continuity, differentiation and standards throughout the school. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of RE work across the school to ensure shared and good practice.

### **The role of the teacher is to**

Continually develop their own skills, knowledge and practices in response to the requirements of the RE Curriculum, identifying their own needs and notifying the RE Lead of any training needed.

Plan, prepare for and deliver high quality lessons matched to the Religious Education Curriculum Directory which will engage and enable all children to make progress.

Ensure the Catholic values and ethos of St. Thomas' school permeates every aspect of the school day.

## **Mastery in RE**

Effective mastery in RE encourages all children to think deeply about their own faith, personal values and beliefs, as well as those of others.

- Higher order questioning during lessons encourages children to reflect on the significance of the lesson content within their own lives.
- Children are encouraged to ask their own deep thinking questions and are encouraged to contribute to peer discussions and debates.
- Greater time is spent exploring and deepening understanding of key themes, ideas and Teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Children are encouraged to compare and contrast customs and beliefs of their own and other religions.
- Lesson outcomes are varied, so children can apply their learning in a variety of imaginative and thought-provoking ways.
- The use of high quality resources such as artefacts, texts, artwork and scripture are used effectively to stimulate curiosity and deepen thinking.
- Learning builds upon prior knowledge taught as children move through the school, with the flexibility to shape their own learning journey.

As a result, pupils have a deep understanding of their own actions, views and beliefs and of others from a range of cultures who may have different viewpoints to their own.

## **In-Service Training**

- Regular staff meetings - minimum one per half term
- Diocese and in house training for ECT's, Headteacher, RE Leads
- Provide support for Teaching Students and new members of staff in RE
- Participation in the C.C.R.S programme is encouraged and financially supported.

## **Resources**

Each member of staff has access to an electronic version of 'Come and See'.

In addition there is a vast range of support material available including the Religious Education Curriculum Directory, books, and artefacts to enhance the teaching of Catholicism and other faiths.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation of this Policy**

The policy will be regularly monitored and any necessary changes will be reported to the LGC.

## **Review**

September 2021

Updated March 2021 due to continued COVID 19 restrictions

Updated January 2023

Updated September 2023 and revisited November 2023