

Saint Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Christ is the centre of our school community where we live, love and learn together

Adopted September 2021

Reviewed Summer 2023

Signed by the Chair of Academy Committee: **Date:**

RE Policy

At the heart of the Church's very being is her mission to teach. Christ's own words to his disciples are addressed to his Church today.

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations;
baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look,
I am with you always; yes, to the end of time".

(Matthew 28: 18-20)

St Thomas More School aims to be a living, loving and sacramental community which is inspired by the life of Christ and the teachings of the Church.

The importance of sustaining and promoting our Catholic faith is central to our school's mission for the children in our care.

We aim to make prayer, worship and liturgy real educational experiences that contribute successfully to the development of faith of each individual child.

Our school will offer a high standard of Catholic education where children can grow in understanding and in the acquisition of skills, attitudes and values in all subject areas.

In delivering the curriculum we recognise the uniqueness of each child and respect the value, dignity and individuality of each one.

Within our school great emphasis is given to Religious Education through Liturgy and Collective Worship, the celebration of the Mass and preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, the

Eucharist and Confirmation. Every effort is made to live by and promote the teaching of Our Lord and his Church concerning faith and moral living. From the moment you enter the school, the school environment says loudly and clearly that we are a Catholic school.

We attach great importance to good relationships within the school community and recognise that the strong partnership, which exists between school, home and parish, must be nurtured if we are to grow and develop as a living and worshipping community and truly provide a Christ centred environment for the children in our care.

OUR AIMS IN TEACHING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

To guide our pupils to grow in knowledge, understanding and love of God through:

 Supporting and developing the primary task of parents who 'are the first teachers of their child in the ways of the faith'. (Rite of Baptism)

 Nurturing pupils' faith when it is present and to facilitate its emergence when it is not

 Preparing and involving pupils, parents, staff and governors in sacramental celebrations

 Providing a relevant curriculum and ensuring that good or better standards in teaching and learning are evident

 Encouraging pupils to be part of the parish community

 Teaching pupils how to pray

 The patronage of St Thomas More

 Promoting the spiritual, moral and vocational development of pupils in initiation of Jesus Christ

 Promoting an awareness of other cultures and religions, developing respect and consideration for others so that all pupils are prepared to live in a multi-cultural and multi-faith society.

HOW WE MEET OUR STATED AIMS

We work together to meet these aims through:

a) The Scheme of Work

b) Sacramental Education

c) Prayer and Collective Worship

d) Personal Witness

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN OUR SCHOOL

Religious Education in our school is an integral part of our ethos, aims and relationships, as Christian values permeate all aspects of the curriculum and all relationships.

"Religious Education is allocated 10% of Curriculum time as required by the Bishop's Conference."
This is in addition to daily prayer, the celebration of Mass and weekly assemblies.

Our primary aims for Religious Education lessons are to help our children to become religious and literate in their faith. There are numerous cross-curricular activities that deepen the children's understanding that stem from Religious Education lessons, such as drama, writing, ICT, art and music. Thus, our children have a diversity of experience that support their development and

understanding of their Catholic faith.

There are many opportunities for incidental teachings from daily life situations at home and at school that give rise to many varied teaching opportunities e.g., birth, death, illness, family problems, sharing and working together in the class and on the playground, living and working in a multi-faith society. By upholding Church traditions of prayer and worship for the pupils to grow in their faith and this is demonstrated through participating in the celebration of Mass and other acts of Collective Worship. They have the opportunity of retreat days for individual classes and whole school and being involved in fundraising events for various charities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SCHEME OF WORK

Our current plans for Religious Education are based on the Archdiocese of Birmingham curriculum strategy for Religious Education 'Learning and Growing as the People of God'.

This shows clear coverage of the four areas of study, namely Revelation, Church, Celebration and Life in Christ from the Curriculum Directory for Catholic schools, ensuring continuity and progression. It provides us with a framework to ensure that pupils' understanding of the Catholic faith and traditions grow commensurately with other subjects.

The Religious Education long term overview is planned by the RE Subject Leader. Medium term planning for each year group is collaboratively planned within each planning phase and with the support of the RE Subject Leader. Short term weekly planning is the responsibility of the class teacher. A range of resources are available to support the delivery of Religious Education in the classroom.

All learning outcomes for our children stem from the four areas of study: Revelation, Church, Celebration and Life in Christ as detailed in the Curriculum Directory for Catholic schools.

Within each term's planning, opportunities are provided to develop specific skills and attitudes and children are actively encouraged to investigate their faith with the same enthusiasm and rigour as other subjects.

In addition to Diocesan Curriculum Strategy, pupils:

- complete research into the life of their Class Saint during the academic year
- research the life of St. Thomas More as part of a whole school focus on the celebration of his feast day 22nd June.
- research the life of their class saint and a Marian Devotion as part of a whole school focus at the beginning of each academic year and during May respectively.
- across the school Reception to Year 6 follow a PRE-Programme rooted in the ideal of Christ called 'Ten Ten'.
- Years 5 and 6 follow the Diocesan approved scheme 'Ten Ten' and 'Paradise Street as part of the school's delivery of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE).

 take part in ‘Multi-Faith Week’. During this week, the whole school community takes part in a range of workshops, visits to places of worship and celebrations to learn more about our own faith and other religions.
 take part in workshops and initiatives around the Principle of Catholic Social Teaching, including CAFOD and Laudato Si Week.

‘MULTI-FAITH’ WEEK

In Foundation Stage and Year 1, the children explore the Catholic Church of St. Thomas More. The children explore a Christian place of worship and compare it to our own.
In Year 2 and Key Stage Two, each year group focuses on learning about different world faiths.
Year 2 – Hinduism
Year 3 – Buddhism
Year 4 – Judaism
Year 5 – Islam
Year 6 – Sikhism

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious Education teaching will be delivered through a variety of teaching methods.
We aim to provide a balance between:
 Exposition by the teacher
 Class discussion
 Group discussion
 Individual research
 Personal reflection

For Religious Education teaching to be effective teachers need to:
 Have a secure knowledge and understanding of the faith, of religious education and of the programme in use
 Set high expectations which challenge pupils and deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding
 Plan effectively, with lessons having clear religious learning objectives which are shared with the pupils, and meeting the learning needs of all pupils
 Incorporate prayer into the lesson in a meaningful way
 Use teaching methods and strategies which match learning objectives and the needs of all pupils
 Manage pupils well and achieve high standards of behaviour
 Use time and resources, including ICT, efficiently and effectively
 Assess pupils’ work thoroughly and constructively and use assessments to inform teaching and show pupils how to improve their work
 Set homework to extend or reinforce the work done in lessons
 Use resources to have a positive impact upon the quality of pupils’ learning and the standards which they achieve

When teaching is effective pupils will;

- Show interest in their work;
- Sustain concentration;
- Think and learn for themselves;
- Work at an appropriate pace;
- Understand what they are doing;
- Develop ideas;
- Acquire knowledge.

We consider differentiation in RE to be important in planning, extension activities for the higher-attaining pupils are necessary and pupils with SEND are supported where appropriate, in all activities.

Excellence in Religious Education is celebrated in display, performance and the dramatisation of spiritual events and stories. Each term a 'Whole School Target' will focus on 'Catholic Life and RE' and certificates will be awarded regularly.

In Foundation Stage, RE is taught for two hours as a discrete subject alongside the six areas of learning and development in the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum.
In Key Stage One, two hours of Religious Education are taught each week.
In Key Stage Two, two and a half hours.
Where possible, one religious education lesson will take place in the morning.

LINKS WITH OTHER CURRICULUM AREAS INCLUDING ICT

The English Curriculum is used alongside Religious Education lessons to enhance learning and develop skills. Each term, pupils in Year 1 Spring and Summer Term will complete 1 piece of extended RE work. In Years 2-6, pupils will complete a minimum of 2 pieces of extended RE work each term.

Teachers aim to plan a minimum of one RE/ICT cross-curricular lesson per-term for pupils.

Children in Sacramental year groups complete their Sacramental Preparation Book (Year 3) and a Saint Project alongside Confirmation Workshops (Year 6).

Each Year Group participates in an Annual RE Inspire Workshop based on a theme that is linked to the Strategy e.g., Easter Gardens in Year 2. Parents are invited to come into school and support their child. These are very popular with both children and members of their family.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

BAPTISM

The vast majority of our pupils of Roman Catholic families have been baptised before being admitted to the school. Occasionally a family does request Baptism and the school helps with their preparation. (We arrange for the pupils preparing for First Holy Communion to role-play a Baptismal Ceremony to help them understand the significance of belonging to God through Baptism).

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

We involve the whole faith community, children, their parents and family, parishioners and the parish priest in the programme of preparation for this Sacrament. Parents are invited to meet with the priest, Principal and the Year 3 teachers and are given the outline of the programme.

They are invited to work with the school and parish in preparing their child, particularly ensuring that the pupils build up their relationship with Jesus by regular family prayer and attendance at weekly Mass. Other meetings are held throughout the year.

RECONCILIATION

This Sacrament is celebrated before First Holy Communion. We use Rite II, inviting parents and family to participate in the Sacrament if they are able or at least to approach the priest for a blessing. Pupils are helped to be aware of God's love and a sense of belonging to Him and His family through Baptism. They are aware of sometimes making wrong choices, learning right from wrong and examination of conscience.

- They learn about saying sorry – Act of Contrition/Sorry Prayer
- They come to know God's forgiveness – Absolution
- They know of the need to make resolution – Penance
- Are encouraged to do better in future – Purpose of Amendment
- Confidentiality and the seal of the confession are stressed.

Opportunity for the Celebration of Reconciliation is offered to each Key Stage Two class during Advent and Lent using Rite II.

CONFIRMATION

Pupils in Year Six who are baptised and have made their First Holy Communion are invited to prepare to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Parents are invited to meet and encouraged to support the candidates. During a Class Mass held close to the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, the candidates submit their formal certificate of request for the Sacrament to Father Christopher. Links between Baptism and Confirmation are made. Emphasis on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and their relevance to the practical situations of life are also made. The pupils are helped to become witnesses of the Gospel and active members of the Church. The candidates come to preparation sessions held in the Parish after a Vigil Mass on a Saturday or Sunday Morning.

SACRAMENTAL BOOKLETS

The pupils complete activities in preparation for their Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation. These tasks are crucial in the children's sacramental preparation and are a vital link between school, parish and home. The completed booklets and projects are offered during the offertory procession at the special Mass when the children celebrate the Sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

We join the pupils on the spiritual quest we all have, to recognise God in all the circumstances of our lives and to help them respond to that invitation/meeting. By encouraging their belief in God, as revealed in Jesus and that He is the author of life, beauty, goodness and truth, we support and help the pupils promote a proper care of self and one another. Care and respect for the created world is also encouraged.

The primary aim of our school therefore is to foster and nourish the personal relationship of every individual with God.

To do this successfully we need to;

- Foster a habit of prayer and spiritual awareness within the school
- Encourage a sense of God's presence that will permeate the life of the school
- Encourage active involvement in the sacramental life of the Church as appropriate for individuals
- Foster links with Home and Parish so that pupils receive consistent encouragement in their spiritual development from the significant adults in their lives
- Develop all possible experiences that will touch and enrich the human spirit

An appreciative and sensitive handling of appropriate literature, poetry, art and music, should lead pupils beyond the concrete and practical to an awareness of things of the spirit. Anything that nurtures the child's natural sense of awe and wonder is to be welcomed. This awareness should then be directed towards the One who has created all and enables Humankind to participate in His work of creation.

In helping to promote the pupils' innate sense of their relationship with God, their sense of wonder and awe, we will start and finish each day with prayer.

The children in Year 3 and Year 5 have the opportunity to go on a retreat day Harvington Hall (Year 3) and Alton Castle (Year 5). The pupils in Year 5 go on a residential visit to Alton Castle and the Diocesan Youth Retreat Centre. This gives the children an opportunity to develop their relationship with God and each other in a different environment.

PRAYER

We encourage the pupils to take part and experience many different forms of prayer.

PERSONAL PRIVATE PRAYER

There is a time in each corporate act of worship where the children are encouraged to talk to Jesus in their own words. This is sometimes introduced into the class prayers offering opportunities for a quiet time of prayer. Pupils are encouraged to know they can pray at any time or in any place.

INFORMAL COMMUNAL PRAYER

Pupils are encouraged to share informal prayers in class prayer time. The teacher encourages prayers that are relevant e.g., thanksgiving prayers, concerns for others, prayers for guidance and protection.

We encourage the pupils to be spontaneous, not feeling embarrassed or awkward to pray aloud. Staff are sensitive to the feelings of pupils. It is also possible to offer up a prayer to Jesus; to listen to the prayers in our hearts that have not been spoken.

Children are encouraged to take an active part in organising and leading Prayer Services. Pupils from our GIFT Ambassadors organise and lead regular Lunchtime Prayer Services for younger pupils and staff. We also have a range of interactive 'prayer stations' around school for the children to pause and pray during break and lunchtimes.

FORMAL COMMUNAL PRAYER

Pupils are taught set prayers.

Guidelines from the Diocese outlining which prayers should be taught in year groups are followed. Each area has a specific area devoted to RE; this area forms a focal point for prayer and display. The theme of the prayer focus relates to the season of the Liturgical Year. The area has a cloth reflecting the current Liturgical Year or a Feast Day. The objects on the prayer include pictures, keywords of the current unit of work, icons, statues, Bibles, prayers, Saint Work, Crucifix, Rosary Beads, candles etc..

We strive to maintain and develop the school as a worshipping community, involving families and parishioners when appropriate.

Our worship and liturgy are to be celebrations:

- Where God is experienced as a reality in our lives deepening our friendship with Jesus
- Where the Gospel is translated into daily life and action
- Which reflect the life of our school and its mission.

Pupils participate in:

- Daily classroom-based prayers/acts of worship
- Twice weekly whole school Assembly; themes flowing from the religious programme, Church calendar and the Sunday Gospel
- Hymn preparation
- Whole school Masses

- Beginning and end of each term Masses
- School feast day and significant occasions

- On Holy Days of Obligation
- Penitential Services Rite 2 each class in Advent and Lent
- Stations of the Cross in Lent
- Harvest Festival
- Visiting the Church to acquaint pupils with the features, altar, font, lectern, confessional etc.
- Eucharistic Festival in Church

PRAYER WITH FAMILIES

Sets of Prayer Bags have been created linked to the different liturgical seasons throughout the Church's year. Children in each class have the opportunity to take a Prayer Bag home and gather with their family in prayer.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT

We teach morality in light of our Catholic beliefs. Morality flows from the faith as a response to God's gracious work of creation. Religious education is, therefore, an essential foundation for moral education in the school.

Pupils learn about Catholic morality both by being taught what the Church teaches and by the attitude and actions of their teachers. Teachers in Catholic Schools regard their work as a vocation. They present the love and wisdom of God to their pupils by the way that they live as well as by what they say. They seek their task and privilege as that of passing on the living Christ to their pupils.
We can help pupils to develop morally through the love and message of Jesus. This message is summed up in the word "love" and is at the heart of the Gospel. Love is not an empty concept but rather it is a challenging way of life.

Jesus shows us the way to love through the commandments, the Beatitudes, the Cardinal virtues of courage, self-control, wisdom and justice and the Theological virtues of faith, hope and love and responsibility. As a school, we follow a set of values and virtues, which the children study and act out throughout their lives.

Morality is not presented simply as a set of rules or arbitrary commands, but as a call to personal growth in the light of our nature as images of God. By being responsible and by choosing rightly, we believe that each person grows into the kind of person he/she is intended to be, through his/her own free acts. We make ourselves into certain kinds of persons through what we choose. We believe that the good choices we make gradually transform us into people fit for heaven.

The school plays an important part in moral development. We try to deal consistently with situations. Encouragement and praise is positive reinforcement when good and moral actions are evident in the pupils.

An atmosphere of love, respect for others, sympathy and forgiveness contribute to the children's self-confidence and self-acceptance and develops their capacity to relate to others and God.

School discipline and rules, and the way in which they are enforced, aims to be in keeping with the Catholic understanding that one should hate the sin and love the sinner.

Throughout the school, pupils are helped to develop the moral qualities of self-discipline, perseverance, determination, patience, fair play and consideration for others. We emphasise the importance of truth and trustworthiness.

As the pupils get older, they are given increasing opportunities for independent learning in situations where they have to be trusted. This enables them to discover the consequences of their choices for themselves and others and to realise that they are responsible for their own actions.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Pupils are encouraged to examine their responsibilities and influences not only on the school community but also in their families, the parish community and the local and wider community. They are encouraged to use their skills, talents and gifts, whatever they are, for the good of others.

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Cultural diversity is welcomed and positively fostered in our school. Teachers show that they value the special talents and achievements of pupils from ethnic minorities and ensure that their expectations of these pupils are the same for other pupils in their care. This is based on the example of Jesus who took active measures to break down, or transcend, the religious and cultural barriers so deeply entrenched between the Jews and the Samaritans.

Cultural development is not just to be developed within RE teaching as it involves the whole curriculum as well as the “hidden curriculum”, staff and governor attitudes and the ethos of the school.

In the Summer Term each year, the school runs ‘Multi-Faith Week’. During this week, the whole school community takes part in a range of workshops, visits to places of worship and celebrations to learn more about our own faith and other religions.

The school is continuing to expand its wide range of resources for RE including examples of art and a range of artefacts from different parts of the world and different periods in history.

VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In developing a cultural vocation in our school, we are encouraging the pupils to have a growing appreciation of their own roles and responsibilities in relation to others and the Church. The pupils are made aware of how Jesus’ call to follow him relates to them as individuals. They recognise the way in which the Saints, people of the Bible and others respond to their vocation and see it as an inspiration in their own lives. They know whatever they feel called to do is a vocation, which calls them to a life of holiness and that the Holy Spirit is working within them and in their lives. Great pupil-leadership is present throughout school and we welcome visitors to discuss their vocational journey with the children.

MONITORING OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Religious Education leader will be responsible for systematically reviewing samples of pupils' work across the age and ability range. This takes place during each term with other members of the Senior Leadership Team and the Link-Governor. Planning is also monitored.

Lesson observations and RE Learning Walks are undertaken across the terms. All outcomes from the monitoring will be discussed and targets set in order to raise standards.

ASSESSMENT, RECORDING AND REPORTING

Teachers regularly use a range of methods to inform them of children's understanding and to inform weekly planning. These methods include discussion, questions, marking and observation.

Marking pupils' work in an encouraging way but also to extend learning is an important part of our school procedures.

Unit Assessments:

Each year, teachers assess units from one area of the Curriculum: Sacraments, Liturgical Year, Scripture or Living as Christians. This is a cyclical process and is made explicit by the RE Leader at the beginning of the academic year. This is a recommendation by the Diocese and ensures that a timetable of monitoring that covers each aspect of the curriculum is planned for and carried out. This assessment information is used by teachers in order to feed into future planning and groupings of children. It is used by the leader at timetabled monitoring points throughout the year in conjunction with pupil conferencing, planning trawls, evidence trawls and professional conversations with staff and observation of teaching in order to support the monitoring and evaluation of both content and pitch.

Age Related Expectations in Religious Education in Catholic Schools and Colleges:

These guidelines are also used by staff in order to support the progression of RE throughout the school. Regular staff meetings (whole staff/small group/one to one) are held in order to share attainment of pupils. This allows staff to evaluate their own teaching and identify priorities within their own classroom and supports the leader in monitoring and evaluation of pitch and progression. This feeds into the identification of priorities to be actioned. Three children, per class have been chosen to be assessed, specifically, via these guidelines. This will be an ongoing process across a phase and evidence will be collated to make judgements for progress and outcomes.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The fair and equal treatment of all individuals irrelevant of race, creed, disability or gender, are integral to the Gospels' Revelations and the Church's message and is central to our school mission statement.

All children are given equal access to the Religious Education curriculum, promoting their understanding to their full potential. A variety of teaching and learning strategies are employed to try to meet all children's differing needs e.g., whole class, group, pair and individual work, also

investigative, closed and open-ended activities.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

At St Thomas More School we aim to look at way of further developing the theological and professional expertise of all our teachers. Our staff attend the Religious Education INSET that is organised by Birmingham Catholic Partnership. We access the termly Diocesan Training for RE subject leaders.

HOMEWORK

Homework is used to support Religious Education through tasks such as:-

- the writing of prayers
- investigative work
- completing work towards the Reconciliation, Communion and Confirmation booklets
- Using Prayer Bags with families

GOVERNING BODY

The RE Subject Leader reports back regularly to the whole Governing Body. Governors are also invited to join with other members of the whole school community in the celebration of a Commitment Mass at the beginning of the academic year and attend INSET Days relating to the Catholic Life of the School. One member of the Governing Body has the role of RE Link Governor and meets regularly with the Principal and RE Subject Leader. The RE Link Governor is involved in the monitoring of pupils' work and lesson observations. The RE Link Governor also takes part in Class Prayer Services and works with class teachers to offer support in delivering some elements of the 'Learning and Growing as the People of God' which are linked to groups within our parish community.

LINKS WITH PARENTS

Celebrations and events related to the Catholic Life of our school are shared in school newsletters and published on the school website. Parents and families are regularly invited to join the school community in celebrations, Inspire Workshops and fundraising activities.

Parents of children in Sacramental year groups are also invited to Sacramental Meetings and Commitment Masses as part of the Sacramental Preparation Programme. Parents and families also support the school in being able to offer an extensive range of educational visits to various places of worship.

Children in each class also have the opportunity to take home a Prayer Bag, which is linked to the Church's Year; promoting opportunities for children and their families to talk and pray together.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Candles

- Matches are kept in a safe place away from the children's reach
- Candles are lit by an adult or a child under adult supervision
- Candles are extinguished under adult supervision

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

The RE Subject Leader and Principal will monitor the implementation of the policy. All staff will be involved in evaluating the effectiveness of this policy in helping to improve standards of teaching and learning. This evaluation will inform the process for reviewing this policy.