

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:**

Catholic Life 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)

We see St. Thomas More School as having an integral role in fulfilling this command of Jesus, our Lord. The challenge that Christ sets us in the gospel is a goal we seek to attain within our school community. St. Thomas More, through its Mission Statement, Aims and Policies, seeks to realise the ideals of “true education”, firmly rooted in the Christian tradition. In partnership with home and community, we strive to nurture the religious instinct with which we believe all human beings are endowed, thereby helping each young person to reach his or her full human potential. Our staffing policy is consistent with these aims and acknowledges that everyone contributes in some way to the religious character of the School. Our aims fully respect the faith of Christians of other denominations, whose contribution to St. Thomas More is highly valued. They also respect members of other world faiths, affirming that “the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions.” (Vatican II, Nostra Aetate 3). Our aims have much in common with all people of goodwill who seek truth and justice.

Instrument of Governance

Our School Standards Committee (SSC) is comprised of up to eight members which includes the following:

- 6 Foundation Representatives who are practicing Catholics and are appointed by the Diocese. They are usually members of St Thomas More’s parish, often with direct links to the school.

- 2 Parent Representatives who are nominated and elected by the parents of the school.
- 1 Staff Representative who is nominated and elected by the staff of the school.
- Principal

The SSC meet regularly throughout the year to ensure that the religious nature of the school is to be in accordance with the rites, practices, discipline and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church. Each meeting begins with a prayer and the Catholic Life of the school is discussed. Members are invited to undertake training provided by the Diocese. There is a Link Governor for R.E. who provides support and challenge to staff to ensure the quality and provision of R.E. is of a high standard.

Mission

The school's mission is explicit in the Mission Statement which is rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ. This Mission Statement is clearly visible around the school environment and school website, prospectus and documentation. During induction for new staff, children and families, the mission of the school is clearly shared and explained. All children in school learn the Mission Statement by heart and are able to explain its meaning. This is achieved through each class completing a lesson on the Mission Statement at the beginning of each academic year.

Governance

The Senior Leadership team (SLT) are comprised of predominantly Catholic staff with the key members of staff in school being practising Catholics. The appointment of new staff is done so according to the Diocesan expectations and guidelines. All staff are inducted accordingly and made aware of the duty to adhere to the distinct Catholic nature of the school. Staff are given frequent opportunities for CPD and training and, where appropriate, members of the SSC. are invited to this training. The Link Governor for R.E. is actively involved in the moderation, evaluation and development of R.E. throughout the school. The Principal regularly informs the SSC of updates regarding the Catholic Life of the school through Principal reports. All staff are updated on the Catholic Life of the school through the Principal's weekly updates.

Leadership and Management

The Principal, Vice-Principal, Assistant Vice-Principal and RE Leader are practicing Catholic's and are supported by a Catholic SLT. Performance management targets for the Principal include one directly linked to Catholic Life. Catholic Life features in the performance management targets of all staff from SLT to support staff. There is a named leader for R.E. whose role is equal to that of other core subject leaders. CPD opportunities are offered to all staff and staff are regularly invited to attend training courses provided by the Archdiocese of Birmingham Education Department.

Partnership and Collaboration

The school has built and maintained successful working relationships with the parish, local and global communities.

a) Parish Community Links – We have very strong links with our Parish community and are supported by our Parish priest, Father Christopher. Our Parish Priest fulfils this by:

- Being the celebrant at our weekly school Masses.
- Working with children, parents and staff in preparing children for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, the Eucharist and Confirmation.
- KS2 children's services of Reconciliation.
- Where opportunities arise, explaining the rituals, symbols, prayers of the Church to the children.
- Joining us for various school assemblies and celebrations during the year.

We work with Parish groups such as the Legion of Mary and SVP groups throughout the year.

b) Local Community Links – We work closely with groups in our local community to fulfil our Catholic duty of reaching out to others. We raise money for local charities such as Father Hudson's Society and collect food for the Fireside Centre. We have links with local care homes and hospitals which children visit and communicate with throughout the year. We have strong links with local Primary and Secondary schools in our area through our involvement with the MAC. Staff and pupils meet regularly and participate in various events and meetings throughout the year.

c) Global community Links – We understand our duty as a Catholic school to serve the needs of others in our global community. We raise money for CAFOD annually who support vulnerable communities worldwide. We participate in the Operation Christmas Child initiative collecting shoe boxes of items to be sent to children around the world.

Religious Education

The whole of the education provision at St Thomas More is rooted in putting Christ at the centre of everything it does by integrating Gospel values and the teachings of the Catholic Church into every aspect of learning, teaching and totality of school life. A child's time at St Thomas More school will also be a journey of faith (Based on Christ at the Centre. A summary of why the church provides Catholic schools 2005)

We believe that the aim of Religious Education in St. Thomas More is to promote knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith, its relevance to the ultimate questions of life, and the skills required to engage in religious thinking.

The Religious Education scheme used within this school is the "Learning and Growing as the people of God" programme (which is recommended for use in all schools throughout the Birmingham Archdiocese.) This programme secures, as far as possible, continuity and progression from Nursery through to Year 6. Religious Education takes a prominent place in our school's curriculum and at least 10% of our teaching time is devoted to this subject.

Whole Curriculum

Through strategic planning, links to Religious Education and the Catholic nature of our school are evident in every lesson. By following the Core Curriculum planning, which was devised with colleagues across the MAC, we ensure that our faith permeates through every lesson. Spiritual, Moral, Social, Vocational and Cultural education is central to our curriculum and our PRE-Co-ordinator works closely with the RE Co-ordinator to ensure that the delivery of PRE is of a Catholic nature. We incorporate the teaching of British values and other religions throughout our curriculum.

Liturgy and Prayer

Our school is a worshipping community. We provide the opportunity for the community to celebrate, pray, reflect and share together within God's family.

a) Personal prayer

From the Foundation stage, the understanding of prayer as an open dialogue with God is discussed and developed with the children. Each classroom has a focal point for prayer. Children are given regular opportunities, appropriate to their age, to experience reflective, contemplative and/or silent prayer.

b) Corporate prayer

Our children have frequent opportunities, in class and in assemblies, to share formal and informal prayers. Prayers are said together at the beginning and end of each school day and before meals. During Liturgical Seasons and Holy Days of Obligation, children join in with prayers such as, The Walk with Me and the Rosary. Children are encouraged to compose their own prayers to be shared by all at Mass, in assemblies and in the classroom. Opportunities that arise within lessons, discussion or current affairs, are used as foci for the children's prayer e.g., prayers for people involved in disasters within our world.

Children learn the established prayers of the church as appropriate to their age and development aided by their class prayer book. This gives them access to the rich prayer tradition of the church.

Every staff meeting, briefing, phase meeting and SLT meeting begins with a prayer.

The parish 'Legion of Mary' come into school, one lunch time per week to pray the Rosary with KS2 children in our prayer room.

Assemblies and Collective Worship

- Pupils have the opportunity to attend a weekly Mass either in person as part of their class or via live stream web link.
- There are regular Whole School Masses which is led by individual year groups or GIFT Ambassadors. Whole School Masses take place on Holy Days of Obligation.
- Hymn Practice takes place weekly for children in Year 2 upwards. Reception and Year 1 join together for Hymn Practice at an age-appropriate level. * Our School Choir also continue the singing of hymns after school led by our Music Lead.

- Weekly Mission Assembly led by Principal or Vice Principal.
- Class Collective Worship led by class teachers and/or pupils.
- Weekly God's Assembly (KS1 and KS2 separately) either in person led by a member of the SLT or via web link led by Principal. During this assembly, individuals are selected as pupil of the week. Children are recommended for a variety of reasons e.g., sharing with others/ achievements in sport/effort shown in all areas of the curriculum. The House Cup is presented to the House with the most House Points. KS2 parents are invited to attend in person and all parents are invited to join in with the live stream. *

*Individual days and arrangements are subject to change due to changes in parish/school circumstances.

Promotion of Culture of Vocation

Staff and pupils are reminded of their vocation and encouraged to reflect upon the call of God in their lives through various events and activities. Members of our parish community along with people from charities and organisations are invited into school to discuss their role in the Church. We hold a vocations week in school to ensure that children are exposed to a range of vocations. Through prayer sessions and collective worship, we pray for vocations to the priesthood and for the seminarians in our diocese. Pupils are encouraged to apply for various roles in school which help them to fulfil their vocations. These include: Head Boy, Girl and Deputies, School Councillor, Eco-Warrior, Liturgy GIFT Ambassador and Mini Vinnie.

Chaplaincy

Our parish priest, Father Christopher, is a regular visitor to our school and supports us in the following ways:

- Being the celebrant at our weekly school Masses.
- Working with children, parents and staff in preparing children for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, the Eucharist, and Confirmation.
- KS2 children's services of Reconciliation.
- Where opportunities arise, explaining the rituals, symbols, prayers of the Church to the children.
- Joining us for various school assemblies and celebrations during the year.

Pupils and staff have the opportunity to contribute to Masses through writing Bidding Prayers, reading at Mass, taking part in the Offertory Procession, leading class prayer services and collective worship.

Pastoral Care, Support and Guidance

We see Home/School/Parish liaison as vital so that co-operation, between each, may be mutually enriching and beneficial to the development of our children. We build links by:

- Inviting families and parishioners to all liturgical celebrations e.g., school/class masses, sacramental liturgies.

- Encouraging and helping parents to work with us in preparing their children for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, the Eucharist and Confirmation.
- Meeting with parents on parents evening to discuss their child's development.
- Organising Inspire workshops on a variety of topics.
- Teachers being available most afternoons, after 3.15pm, for parents to speak to them concerning their child.
- An induction programme for new children and parents to the school.
- Supporting vulnerable families through food parcels.
- Providing counselling and sessions for vulnerable pupils.
- Involvement of pathfinders workers.
- Breakfast club for disadvantaged pupils.
- My Concern is used as a safeguarding tool to report concerns about pupils.

Charitable Outreach

As a school we work with a range of charities throughout the year raising money for local, national and global causes. Pupils often initiate fund-raising opportunities, and we raise money for charities which support the intentions of our families. The Mini Vinnie group work in school alongside the St Vincent De Paul (SVP) group to support the local community. Code of Conduct All staff, pupils and parents are required to follow the school code of conduct which is based explicitly on the teachings of the Catholic Church. This is laid out in our home school agreement, parent code of conduct and staff code of conduct.

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School Buildings and Physical Signs

Every effort is made to provide a spiritually uplifting and aesthetically pleasing environment within the School. All classrooms, teaching rooms and offices have a crucifix. Classrooms have religious displays and prayer tables which reflect the current Liturgical season. There are displays in the entrance hall and around the school which reflect the Catholic nature of our school. A variety of stained-glass windows, statues, plaques and permanent displays demonstrate our Catholic ethos.