

# Religious Education policy



St. Thomas More's Catholic Primary School

Approved by the Governing Body

Spring 2026

Next Review:

Spring 2028

# Our Mission Statement

*As we walk together with Jesus we love, live and learn*

## **The purpose of religious education: fully religious and genuinely educational**

Religious education is religious by virtue of its intent to serve the missionary mandate of the school. The Catholic school is a community of faith, and religious education is where that faith seeks understanding, where pupils learn to love God with all their minds, where they learn to 'know their creed so well that they can give an account of it'. (St John Henry Newman)

In an atmosphere of faith, religious education is the engine room of the missionary dynamic of the Catholic school as a whole. Religious education is religious also because its central subject matter is 'the comprehensive and systematic study of the mystery of God, of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, the teachings of his Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold, the basis for them and the relationship between faith and life'. (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 2000)

At the heart of Catholic education lies the Christian vision of the human person. This vision is expressed and explored in religious education, which recognises the human person as one 'created in "the image and likeness" of God... unfaithful to God in original sin, but redeemed by Christ... [and] destined to eternal life'.

Religious education is religious because it is the bond of the whole curriculum. It is in faithful and engaging religious education that a student can gradually appreciate other subjects as separate disciplines but find their rationale and unity within a Catholic religious vision of reality. 'Therefore, religious education is never simply one subject among many, but the foundation of the entire educational process.'

RED, 2023

## **Religious education as the heart of the curriculum**

Religious education is the core of the core curriculum and is to be the source and summit of the whole curriculum.

Religious education is an academic discipline with the same systematic demands and rigour as other disciplines.

Religious education is to be delivered within a broad and balanced curriculum, where it informs every aspect of the curriculum. Every other subject is to be informed by religious education and have a strong relationship with it.

In each year of compulsory schooling, religious education is to be taught for at least 10% curriculum time within each repeating cycle of the regular school timetable.

*RED, 2023*

## **Compliance with the Religious Education Directory**

The Religious Education Directory includes the programmes of study approved by the Bishops' Conference for the various age groups. The competence for approving these programmes of study is currently exercised by the Department of Education and Formation, but the Bishops' Conference can delegate this function to another department, commission, or committee of the Conference.

Catholic schools are required to comply with the Religious Education Directory (full compliance is expected in primary schools from September 2026).

*RED, 2023*

## **Implications of the primacy of religious education in the curriculum**

Religious education is to be properly organised, coordinated, taught, and resourced.

In primary schools there is to be a Coordinator of Religious Education who is to have at least parity in status and remuneration with those of any other curriculum area.

RED, 2023

### **The importance of the Religious Educator**

Holding all these threads together, is the religious educator. The vocation of teacher is a high calling in the Church: 'God has appointed in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers' (1 Cor 12:28). In any school, the engagement of the teacher with the young at their critical formative period should evoke a sense of privilege and awe. If Catholic schools are places of human formation, the task of the teacher cannot be underestimated since it takes the human to form the human. Time and again, the Church proclaims the irreplaceability of the teacher at the heart of education. They are essential to a school's success. It has become almost a truism that students listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if they do listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*

In the context of Catholic schools where many teachers of religious education are not Catholics, there is a need to articulate what authentic witness requires in this context. Authenticity requires first that teachers should be able to witness to what they teach. For this reason, in a Catholic context, it remains desirable, as far as possible, that teachers of religious education should be committed Catholics. Where religious education is taught by a person who bears witness to their belief, they can bring the lived dimension of a life in Christ into their classroom community. This leads to the second kind of authenticity that is required: a genuine expertise in the subject of religious education.

The teacher's role is to lead out (ex-ducare) and accompany their students on an intellectual journey. The theological literacy of teachers should not be limited to the religious education classroom if the vision of Catholic schools as places of human formation is to be realised. Across various dioceses, the teaching of religious education, particularly in the primary sector, may at times

be undertaken by colleagues who are not Catholic. Developing their skill set must form a critical part of the professional development of the school and be embedded through reflection on the ecclesial and pastoral values of the school's mission. While our schools cannot demand unthinking assent to the Catholic faith from staff, they should maximise access to resources and events that facilitate appropriate levels of theological literacy.

Finally, in the context of classrooms that are facilitating intercultural dialogue, a third kind of authenticity is necessary. Religious education teachers need to become guardians of dialogue. As schools become 'ever more multicultural', teachers are tasked with 'helping people with different experiences to relate to each other... [to] act as mediators between such people'. For this reason, they need 'to offer shared perspectives, while respecting the individual nature of different people's development and world visions'.

If religious education classrooms are to become safe spaces to discuss difference, then it is religious education teachers who create those spaces and guarantee their safety. Religious education teachers - perhaps especially those for whom faith is a living reality - must not be brittle when they encounter disagreement and dissent in their lessons. Ultimately, as well as being competent in subject knowledge, they must be agile conductors of classroom debate, resilient custodians of religious wisdom, and sensitive mentors to enquiring students.

*RED, 2023*

### ***Aims of Religious Education as stated in the RED 2023***

- 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.

### **The outcome of excellent Religious Education is:**

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. RED 2023

*"The task of handing on the faith to future generations is both the privilege and responsibility of the local Church. Its primary purpose is to bring young people to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ." Cardinal Basil Hume*

### **Process for delivery of R.E.**

The structural elements of the programme of study *as stated in the RED 2023*

The programme of study for religious education in Catholic schools presented in this directory has a framework with four structural elements: knowledge lenses, ways of knowing, expected outcomes, 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 things we are looking at and they divide the content of the programme of study into four systematic sub-sections for the study of Catholicism and two additional lenses for the study of religions and worldviews, which together comprise the six knowledge lenses of hear, believe, celebrate, and live (the study of the Catholic religion), dialogue, and encounter (the study of other religions and worldviews).

## **Teaching other religions**

The first four lenses systematically set out what a study of Catholicism comprises. The two lenses called 'dialogue' and 'encounter' set out the requirements in relation to the teaching of other religions and worldviews.

The first of these two lenses is called 'Dialogue' and is an exemplification of the Church's teaching on the relationship between Catholicism and other Christian traditions, between Catholicism and Judaism, between Catholicism and other religions, and between Catholicism and non-religious or atheistic worldviews. It is called 'dialogue' because it focuses on the importance of dialogue as the only authentic way of living faithfully in a pluralistic world.

The sixth lens is called Encounter. In addition to understanding what the Church teaches about its relationship to other faiths, religions, and worldviews, pupils are also expected to engage in a discrete study of other faiths, religions, and worldviews, modelled on the concentric circles of *Ecclesiam Suam* outlined above. 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,<sup>132</sup> and finally because to enter into dialogue is a means of learning how to live peaceably with difference. Therefore, as they progress through school, pupils will study:

- Other Christian denominations
- Judaism

- Islam
- Dharmic religions and pathways
- Other religions and worldviews, including non-religious worldviews.

It is important for the avoidance of a comparative approach, and all the risks of relativism this brings, that the study of other religions is a study of how those who profess that religion or worldview understand it on their own terms.

**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, which were themselves an evolution of the Levels of Attainment in Religious Education. The three ways of knowing are: understand, discern, and respond. They are represented in the programme of study by icons: head (understand), heart (discern), and hands (respond).

**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.

**Curriculum branches** are the way this programme of study presents its model curriculum. The model curriculum presents the expected outcomes in six curriculum branches that correspond to the six half- terms of a school year. The model curriculum is rooted in the narrative of 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 four knowledge lenses within the context of the narrative of salvation history.



The six curriculum branches are:

- Creation and Covenant,
- Prophecy and Promise,
- Galilee to Jerusalem,
- Desert to Garden,
- To the Ends of the Earth,
- Dialogue and Encounter.

## **Teaching and Learning**

Teaching and learning strategies from across the curriculum can be appropriately adapted to inspire the learning needs of pupils.

## **Equal Opportunities, Inclusion and Differentiation**

A central message of the Catholic faith is that although we are all different, God loves each one of us equally, regardless of background, gender or ability. It is therefore vital that we recognise and cater for the individual needs of children, acknowledging that all children have different gifts and talents and that these should be celebrated. Learning tasks should be matched to the abilities of the children to enable them to achieve success, helping them to develop to their full potential and to develop a positive self-image.

We aim to ensure that resources do not reinforce any kind of stereotypes and that they do reflect our own school community. It is important that the children are provided with images, which reflect the multi-cultural society in which we live, enhancing their awareness and knowledge of other faiths and cultures, respecting the rights of the individual at all times. This is essential in preparing children to take their places in a multi - cultural society. Children with special educational needs, whether they are children with learning difficulties, or children who are able and talented in RE, will be presented with tasks to suit their ability. Differentiation for these children may be in the amount of support offered by the teaching and support staff, or tasks with varying levels of difficulty, including tasks which will extend the more able children's spirituality or knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the topic being covered.

The governing body has wider responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010 and will ensure that our school strives to do the best for all of the pupils, irrespective of disability, educational needs, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sex, gender identity, religion or sexual orientation or whether they are looked after children.

## **Assessing and Recording Achievement**

As a Catholic school our main concern is with the development of:

- the whole child;
- the formation of the Christian character,
- the ability to take their place in society;
- the fulfillment of academic potential.

To this end the profiling of the pupil's whole person development is as important as the assessment of academic outcomes. We use assessment against the expected end of year outcomes as a guide to pupil attainment and use this in line with our Assessment for learning policy.

Reporting to parents is through written reports where RE is a discrete subject and through discussion of the reports with parents. There are also opportunities to share progress in RE through Parents' Consultation Evenings.

## **Information Technology**

All classes have access to laptops and other ICT equipment, which is used to enhance R.E. teaching and learning.

## **How Schools will be Inspected**

All Catholic schools, academies and colleges are subject to canonical inspection by their diocesan bishop. Some schools and academies are subject to a Section

48 or 50 inspection (or their academy equivalents) and for those schools the canonical inspection fulfils this statutory function

Section 5 and section 28 inspectors must not inspect religious education or the content of collective worship. This is the legal prerogative of the Catholic Bishop.

An inspection under the National Framework makes judgements on the Catholic life and mission of the school, **religious education**, and collective worship. Schools will be inspected every 5 years if 'Good' or better.

When inspection religious education, inspectors will consider and evaluate:

- Pupil outcomes: how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.
- Provision: the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in religious education.
- Leadership: how well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.

(CSI Handbook-Inspection)

## **Right of withdrawal from RE**

Parents have the right of withdrawal from RE for their children. The school has a separate Policy for the Withdrawal from RE.

## **Religious Education IN-SERVICE**

Catholic Teachers Certificate (CCRS). All Teachers are encouraged to secure this qualification in R.E. It is expected that the R.E. Co-ordinator and all aspiring to Senior Leadership in Catholic schools will obtain this.

## **Annual in-service for all staff**

It is recommended that one day's INSET is allocated to the Catholicity of the school.

## **Consultation Process**

This policy was drawn up in consultation with the staff and governors of St Thomas More's Catholic Primary School and will be reviewed on a two-yearly basis.

Governors are responsible for the R.E. Curriculum. This is managed by the Headteacher on a day-to-day basis.

**This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Prayer and Liturgy Policy**