



## St George's Catholic Voluntary Academy

### Religious Education Policy

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#### **Introduction**

We believe that RE in a Catholic school enriches every part of school life. Our Mission is to help our school community:

*"Grow in faith, have faith in growing"*

We aim to form disciples of Jesus Christ through a Catholic education rooted in Gospel values. Religious Education (RE) is at the heart of our curriculum and daily life, nurturing every child's faith, intellect, and moral character. As a staff, we are dedicated to setting good examples and expressing our own faith in our teaching and through our care for pupils. We seek to enable our children to learn more about and appreciate the Catholic faith regardless of gender, cultural background or ability.

This policy is informed by *To Know You More Clearly* (2023) – the Religious Education Directory for Catholic Schools in England and Wales. It ensures compliance with the general norms and expectations set out by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, effective from September 2026.

#### **Aims, Purpose and Requirements**

The Catholic school shares in every aspect of the Church's life, but particularly, her duty to preach the Gospel by evangelisation and catechesis. Throughout the centuries, the Church has educated young people and adults as part of her life, handing on the Deposit of Faith and working for the common good of all people. The witness of faith in Jesus Christ lived in the Catholic way of life, by staff and pupils alike, is itself a teaching and learning experience.

In school, Religious Education is, in the first instance, formation in the Catholic faith:

Religious Education is central to the curriculum of the Catholic school and is at the heart of the philosophy of Catholic Education. Religious Education has developed in a way that reflects the particular identity of our Catholic schools in England and Wales. It teaches about the faith in the context of a school which proclaims the Gospel, and invites the individual to respond to the message of Christ. As the individual responds to this invitation, growth in faith and knowledge helps the pupil to respond to the call to holiness and understand the fullness of what it is to be human. For some, then, Religious Education will also be received as evangelisation and for some, catechesis.

Religious Education has its own content, methodology, assessment and culture. The broad areas it covers, which reflect the four constitutions of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and covers the teaching of the Church as presented in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, are God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, the Church, celebration and worship, and life in Christ. As the core subject par excellence of the Catholic school, Religious Education should be accorded the same status and taught with the same rigour as the core subjects of the National Curriculum. It is open to inspection and assessment by public examination and at diocesan level. It is an important contributory factor to the passing on of the Deposit of Faith from one generation to the next.

Every Catholic school in the Diocese of Nottingham is required to teach, develop and resource Religious Education with the same commitment as any other core subject, because the outcome of excellent Religious Education is religiously literate and engaged young people who have the knowledge, understanding and skills – appropriate to their age and capacity – to reflect spiritually, think ethically and theologically, and who are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.

Accordingly, the following requirements apply to Religious Education in all Catholic schools in the Diocese of Nottingham:

- Whole school Religious Education is to provide for a lived faith experience through the celebration of Mass, other celebrations of the Word, assemblies, retreats, charitable work and catholic social teaching. The Religious Education subject leader in primary schools and the Religious Education Department in secondary schools contribute to this whole school direction.
- Religious Education is to be resourced as a core subject and allocated 10% of teaching time in every year group (excluding collective worship, prayer, or liturgy).
- RE is taught explicitly and systematically through a curriculum that is progressive, coherent, and rooted in Catholic theology.
- The Religious Education curriculum is to be delivered in accordance with the Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools and Colleges in England and Wales approved by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales in 2012 and any guidelines issued by the Apostolic See, the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and the Diocese of Nottingham.
- Our RE curriculum is guided by the **Model Curriculum** within the RED and is adapted to meet the needs of our children. This includes:
  - ❖ Age-appropriate study of Scripture.
  - ❖ Teaching that aligns with the six lenses of "Hear, Believe, Celebrate, Live, Dialogue, Encounter."
  - ❖ Faith development that is academically rigorous and inclusive.
- A key world religion studied must be Judaism because an understanding of the scriptures and history of Judaism are necessary for a proper understanding of Christianity and Catholicism. A study of Judaism provides students with a very thorough understanding of the context of Jesus' ministry and hence a fuller understanding of the significance of his life, death and resurrection for Christians. There is a particularly close relationship between Judaism and Christianity, such that Pope John Paul II spoke of Jewish believers as our 'elder brothers in the faith'. Judaism is the principal other religion in the Religious Education Curriculum Directory and is referred to more often than any other faith, for all of the reasons stated above.
- Religious Education is to be assessed in accordance with the Levels of Attainment in Religious Education in Catholic Schools and Colleges approved by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales in 2007.
- Religious Education will be inspected according to the diocesan inspection framework in force at any given time.

The Nottingham Roman Catholic Diocesan Education Service will support all Catholic schools in their delivery of the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory and other norms of the Bishops' Conference and provides guidance in this regard. Guidance related to the diocesan canonical inspection framework, school self-evaluation and useful curriculum resources can be found on the NRCDES website.

## **How we enable all pupils to 'Grow in faith and have in growing' through our RE provision**

At St George's School, we develop the children's knowledge and understanding of the major world faiths and we address the fundamental questions in life, for example, the meaning of life and the existence of a divine spirit. We enable children to develop a sound knowledge not only of Christianity but also of other world religions. Children reflect on what it means to have a faith and to develop their own spiritual knowledge and understanding. We help the children learn from religions as well as about religions.

The aims of religious education are to help children:

- Develop an awareness of spiritual and moral issues in life experiences;
- Develop knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major world religions and value systems found in Britain;
- Develop an understanding of what it means to be committed to a religious tradition;
- Be able to reflect on their own experiences and to develop a personal response to the fundamental questions of life;
- Develop an understanding of religious traditions and to appreciate the cultural differences in Britain today;
- Develop investigative and research skills and to enable them to make reasoned judgments about religious issues;
- Have respect for other peoples' views and to celebrate the diversity in society.

### **Our Approach**

At school, we follow the draft curriculum from the Diocese of Nottingham along with the use of resources from Magister to support learning. This distinguishes RE from other subjects and so reminds us that RE is unique and special within our curriculum.

### **Methods of Organisation**

Religious Education is taught within its own right using the draft curriculum from the Diocese of Nottingham along with the use of resources from Magister scheme. 10% of curriculum time is devoted to Religious Education excluding assembly and celebrations of the Word, as advised by the Bishops of England and Wales.

### **RE and Inclusion**

We strive hard to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. We recognise the fact that all classes in our school have children of widely differing abilities and so we provide suitable learning opportunities for all children by matching the challenge of the task to the ability of the child. We achieve this in a variety of ways, for example, by:

- Setting tasks of increasing difficulty (we do not expect all children to complete all tasks)
- Set retrieval tasks based on prior knowledge both in year and from previous years
- Grouping the children by ability in the room and setting different tasks for each ability group based on age appropriate specific 'driver' words
- Providing resources of different complexity, adapted to the ability of the child
- Using classroom teaching assistants to support the work of individuals or groups of children
- In EYFS, use continuous provision to provide consolidation for previously learned content

In our school we teach RE to all children, whatever their ability. The teaching of RE is a vital part of our school curriculum policy, which states that we provide a broad and balanced education for all our children. When teaching RE we ensure that we provide learning opportunities matched to the needs of children with learning difficulties. We consider the targets set for individual children in their school support plan and EHCPs.

### **Multi-cultural Statement**

We regard it as essential that our children develop an understanding and respect of other faiths, especially living in such a richly diverse city as Derby. All children, whatever their faith, attend and participate in Celebrations of the Word and Masses.

In RE and through using the draft curriculum from the Diocese of Nottingham along with the use of resources from the Magister scheme, we study the main religions of the world. Across the academic year, we study Judaism and Islam each year and then Hinduism and Sikhism and other Dharmic religions bi-annually.

### **Teaching and Learning Style**

We base our teaching and learning style in RE on the key principle that good teaching in RE allows children both to learn about religious traditions and to reflect on what the religious ideas and concepts mean to them. Our teaching enables children to extend their own sense of values and promotes their spiritual growth and development. We encourage children to think about their own views and values in relation to the themes and topics studied in the RE curriculum.

Our teaching and learning styles in RE coincide with our learning styles across other subjects within school based on Cognitive Load Theory. This is based on the research of Sweller, Kirschner and Rosenshine who argue to direct instruction in the early stages of learning and discovery-based approaches later. Cognitive science tells us that working memory is limited and that cognitive load is too high if students are rushed through content. This limits the acquisition of long-term memory. Cognitive science also tells us that for students to become creative thinkers or have a greater depth of understanding they must first master the basics, which takes time.

Our RE teaching and learning styles support our overall curriculum design which has three main principles that underpin it:

- ❖ 12.1. Learning is most effective with spaced repetition.
- ❖ 12.2. Interleaving helps pupils to discriminate between topics and aids long-term retention
- ❖ 12.3. Retrieval of previously learned content is frequent and regular, which increases both storage and retrieval strength.

In addition to these three principles, we also understand that learning is invisible in the short-term and that sustained mastery takes time. Our content also has intra-curricular links to strengthen schema, where appropriate. Continuous provision provides retrieval practice for previously learned content.

Within RE, our teaching styles enable children to build on their own experiences and extend their knowledge and understanding of religious traditions. We use their experiences at religious festivals such as Easter, Diwali, and Passover etc. to develop their religious thinking. We organize visits to local places of worship and invite representatives of local religious groups to come into school and talk to the children.

Children carry out research into religious topics. They study specific religious faiths and also compare the religious views of different faith groups on topics such as rites of passage or festivals. Children discuss religious and moral issues using computers and working individually or in groups. Sometimes they prepare presentations and share these with other members of the school in celebrations of the Word.

### **Curriculum Planning in Religious Education**

We follow the draft curriculum from the Diocese of Nottingham along with the use of resources from the Magister scheme of work to inform our planning.

Planning is undertaken at two levels:

- ❖ Long term – planning is based on the branch cycle set out in the RED. In FS2 and Key Stage 1, there is a one year cycle covering the topics for their year group. From Y3 onwards, due to the mixed year groups and to facilitate collaborative planning, there is a two-year cycle of RED branches. We ensure that all children have complete coverage of the agreed syllabus through this system.
- ❖ Medium Term – Planning is carried out each term to coincide with each 'Branch' as set out in the draft curriculum from the Diocese of Nottingham. Our medium-term plans give details of each unit of work for each term. These plans include learning objectives, success criteria, resources to be used, adaptation and ICT links. The RE subject leaders keep and review these plans on a regular basis.

We also ensure that RE and Spirituality is firmly embedded throughout all subjects. We ensure that RE is resourced extensively as an area of priority, to ensure the best outcomes for all pupils.

### **Foundation Stage**

We teach Religious Education to all children in the school, including those in the Foundation Stage.

In FS2 classes, religious education is an integral part of the topic work covered during the year. As the reception class is part of the Foundation Stage of the National Curriculum, we relate the religious education aspects of the children's work to the objectives set out in the EYFS framework.

### **Spiritual, Moral, Social and cultural Development**

Through teaching religious education in our school, we provide opportunities for spiritual development. Children consider and respond to questions concerning the meaning and purpose of life. We help them to recognise the difference between right and wrong through the study of moral and ethical questions. We enhance their social development by helping them to build a sense of identity in a multicultural society. Children explore issues of religious faith and values and, in so doing; they develop their knowledge and understanding of the cultural context of their own lives.

At the heart of our learning community are the following values:

- ❖ Kindness
- ❖ Respect
- ❖ Faith
- ❖ Perseverance
- ❖ Acceptance
- ❖ Service

The ethos and climate for learning underpins the agreed aims of the school and promotes our learning code:

- ❖ Doesn't give up
- ❖ Remembers and reflects
- ❖ Asks good questions
- ❖ Goes for gold
- ❖ Original ideas
- ❖ Not alone

### **Spirituality**

RE at our school fosters:

- ❖ **Faith formation** for Catholic pupils.
- ❖ **Respectful dialogue** with children of other faiths or none.
- ❖ **Openness** to explore diverse worldviews in line with Church teaching on interreligious dialogue.

We want to create an environment where acceptance, respect, mutual trust and love are evident and to foster a sense of self-worth.

Our aim is to help each child to think, appreciate, question and work for what is good as they grow in faith.

We try to help our children to develop a desire to search for meaning through the experiences they have in their everyday lives. We aim to guide children to question and grow in faith as they develop their spiritual quest.

Spirituality will continue to be developed through every aspect of the curriculum and every part of school life.

### **Assessment and Recording**

We assess RE using end-of-phase outcomes outlined in the RED. Children's understanding is tracked and moderated in line with diocesan expectations and standards.

We assess the children's understanding at the end of each branch. Assessment criteria is completed once a term, using outcomes devised by the Bishops of England and Wales in the RED, which we use as a basis for assessing the progress of each child, and for passing on information to the next teacher at the end of the year.

Informal assessment is done on a day-to-day basis, relying on teachers' professional judgment. This includes notes from observations, comments on children's work, outcome of tasks and discussions in class.

We mark a piece of work according to our marking policy (one longer mark per week) once it has been completed and we move learning on as necessary. Teachers will pinpoint a 'pink pen' question, target or prompt for children to follow up in response to their marking. In KS1, this may be in the form of the missing success criteria highlighted pink and the response may also be scribed by the teacher. This 'pink pen' marking may cover a range of Understand, Discern or Respond outcomes.

### **Reporting**

Parents are informed of their child's progress through discussions at Termly Learning Conferences and the annual report. They are given a link to the monthly newsletter from Ten:Ten which covers the topics that will be discussed in Celebrations of the Word and allows them an opportunity to follow the same spiritual journey as us in school.

Parents also get information about whole school Masses and all celebrations of the Word to enable them to share and celebrate as part of the school community.

### **Staff Expectations and Formation**

All staff are expected to support and model the Catholic ethos.

Teachers of RE, regardless of personal faith, must be committed to the integrity of Catholic teaching and to the spiritual development of children.

Ongoing CPD in Catholic theology and pedagogy is provided.

### **Collective Worship and Catholic Life and Mission**

While distinct from RE, our collective worship and Catholic Life and Mission complement classroom RE by encouraging:

- ❖ Prayer and liturgy rooted in the Church's tradition.
- ❖ A culture of faith, virtue, and community service.
- ❖ Social action and Catholic Social Teaching.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The RE subject leaders are responsible for monitoring the standards of the children's work and the quality of the teaching in religious education. They hold **parity of status** with leaders of other core subjects, as required by RED Article 6. The RE Governor supports strategic oversight.

The RE Lead receives dedicated professional development and works closely with diocesan advisors.

They are also responsible for supporting colleagues in the teaching of religious education, for being informed about current developments in the subject, and for providing a strategic lead and direction for the subject in the school. The RE subject leaders present the headteacher with an annual report which evaluates the strengths in the subject and indicates areas for further improvement and report termly on standards and developments in RE to the Curriculum and Standards committee. A termly report is also made available to Governors for inclusion in the Headteacher's Report. The RE subject leaders have specially allocated time for carrying out the vital task of reviewing samples of the children's work and visiting classes to observe teaching in the subject.

The policy is reviewed every 3 years in consultation with staff, governors, and the Diocese.