



St. Ethelbert's Catholic Primary School

Religious Education Policy

"I serve Jesus with my body, heart, mind and soul."

Serviam means 'I serve'. Jesus Christ has taught us that it is more blessed to serve than to be served. At St Ethelbert's school, following our Catholic faith, we serve the whole person – mind, heart, body and soul.

Body – because we care for our wellbeing, our parish neighbourhood and our environment.

Heart – because we teach love and respect for all.

Mind – because we believe in excellent education.

Soul – because we learn to pray and become closer to God as his children.

For the Catholic school's Mission Statement to achieve its aims there must be a scheme of work for Religious Education. Our scheme of work for Religious Education is the "The Way, The Truth and The Light". This policy document details the planning, delivery, assessment and recording of the programme. It also makes statements on prayer, liturgy, assembly, music and first sacraments and contains sections on spiritual and moral development and P.S.H.E.

Safeguarding

As part of the school's 'ethos', our dedication to The Gospel Values and duty of care expected amongst all adults and children at St Ethelbert's, we take our safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. Please see our Safeguarding Policy and Whistleblowing Policy.

Spiritual and Moral Development

In the case of Spiritual and Moral development, we aim to identify significant opportunities for including these dimensions in our teaching of the National Curriculum.

Having identified and taken opportunities for Spiritual and Moral development in the curriculum, we aim to attempt to evaluate the pupils' response in order to decide whether or not we are helping them and whether or not we might help them more.

Spiritual Development

Spiritual development is the quest for what is 'true and good'. It is in this sense that we aim to help our pupils, each in their unique way, to think, appreciate, question, struggle, suffer, wonder, love, reflect, work and pray.

Promoting Spiritual Development

A book, any book, can be more than just a story or series of events. It can become an opportunity to recognise, reflect on and be moved by the existence and experience of others.

In the same way we can help children to develop their desire to search for meaning through their experience of play and experience developed through practical activities.

We encourage children to express their innermost thoughts and feelings through dance, art, music or writing; using themselves, their homes and their families as sources and getting them to talk about their work.

In this way their creativity can become more thoughtful, imaginative and personal. In P.E. children gradually come to understand the beauty of physical effort, energy, the value of the individual, respect for others and the need for good relationships in team games.

We encourage children to seek for truth, beauty and perfection in R.E., language, music, history and P.E. Not just in appreciating others but also learning the need to persevere and practise in order to improve.

Children need to understand that when we correct them it is not just for the sake of accuracy but the search for the right, the 'true'. This is why we should all reject the shoddy and only accept our best efforts.

God the Creator and Author of all knowledge

God is the author of all knowledge, beauty, goodness and truth. Our faith asks us to respond to these things in whatever form, as they are a revelation of God, their author. This gives new meaning and depth to study. Our work is not simply a task to be undertaken and assessed, or an attainment to be reached. It is contributing to God's creation and continuing purpose. The way in which we respond to our opportunities either enriches or impoverishes that continuing creation.

Questioning

There are often no easy answers to difficult questions which arise in history, R.E., or science. Sometimes there may be no answer at all or there may be several. This can be disconcerting for young children, particularly if their home life is unstable. They easily assume that teachers know all the answers and we may encourage this dependence if we ask only closed questions with the one answer we want. If we encourage them to understand that a number of answers may be acceptable, providing they can be justified and that the question may not be fully solved, then we are preparing them to see where they will find the answers to the major questions in their lives and where real security and reassurance are to be found. To lead children in the direction of open ended enquiry is to help them in their spiritual quest.

Reflection

Jesus is the fullest expression of God's presence in the world. So for Catholics Spiritual development means a familiarity with His life, words and actions, which make plain to us the way God acts in the world.

In this respect Spiritual Development is inseparable from R.E., catechesis, prayer and liturgy, where we introduce children to Jesus and relate His teaching to their experience. Here the liturgical life of the school assumes its richest significance where opportunities for prayer and reflection enable children to strengthen their life in Christ. This is the most explicit expression of the school's spiritual life.

We need to give the children the opportunity to reflect on what they have seen, read or done, analyse and justify the meaning they give to experiences. There are opportunities in the curriculum to help children see how popular opinion, emotions or prejudices may cloud or distort their understanding. They must learn to question rationally the views of the media and contemporary society. By exploring, questioning, reflecting and sometimes rejecting, children will become more aware of themselves, their feelings, reactions and needs.

We must also beware of the temptation to reduce Spiritual Development into an attempt to improve behaviour by turning all moments of reflection on what we are doing and why into a search for moral conformity.

Self-awareness

The intensely personal nature of Spirituality and Spiritual Development makes it varied and adaptable to an infinite number of circumstances and individuals of different ages and experience.

An environment of acceptance, respect and love is essential, though creating and maintaining such a 'safe place' is both difficult and demanding for teachers; the Catholic Council sums this up as an 'environment permeated with the Gospel spirit of love and freedom. In a Catholic school everyone should be aware of the living presence of Jesus who today is with us in our journey through life'.

Moral Development

For Christians, the natural search for happiness finds its end in the Beatitudes, 'the heart of Jesus' preaching'.

Policy and Practice

The extent to which we, as teachers, uphold honesty, respect for others, integrity of effort etc. contributes to the moral development of the children.

Having agreed our Mission Statement and incorporated it into our policies and practices, we need to be aware of the extent to which we, as a staff, are living the values we proclaim.

Moral Awareness

We can find moral values and dilemmas in most subjects we teach, though some offer better opportunities than others to develop children's growing awareness of moral questions and choices. We need to identify opportunities which help children become increasingly aware of moral issues and choices.

Conscience

Having made children aware of situations in which actions affect the lives of others, we need to encourage them to examine their own actions and be able to justify them.

Moral development is about making moral decisions, which in the Catholic tradition is about judgement of an informed conscience. It is important that children learn that this is not about personal preference or instinct, but about responsible, informed judgement based on the teaching of Christ and the Church.

To be sound moral actions, our actions need to be done as a result of free, informed choice for good 'not through blind impulse or merely external pressure'. This has implications for our encouragement of good work and behaviour. If these are achieved because pupils are afraid of punishment, then we are failing to support moral development by restricting their freedom to choose good.

Moral Decisions

Sometimes, when we are able to, we can share decision making with children, drawing them into the process and sharing the responsibility. Often we must take the decisions ourselves but the more we can share the reasons for our decisions, the more we can help promote their moral development.

Motivation - the greater good

There are many opportunities in school life to promote the greater good eg. the team, the class, the parish, the local community, charities. These all promote a sense of service to others and help to strengthen our reasons to make sacrifices.

Moral development hinges on our willingness to see our own good in relation to that of others.

What are we to teach?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that the Ten Commandments remain a framework for a truly Christian morality, to be understood in the light of Christ's teaching in the Beatitudes which sum up the Christian approach to life.

The implications of each commandment can be given the barest outline:

- We are called to recognise God alone as our Lord and Father of Jesus Christ.
- We are called to adoration and prayer.
- We are called to revere God's name and respect all His creation.
- We are called to honour the name of Jesus and refuse to compromise the truth about him.

Sunday is a special day of worship. Coming together on Sunday for the Eucharist is a central and essential part of Catholic life. The family life of parents and children lies at the heart of the human community and calls for mutual respect and love. All family and community life is "in Christ".

Catholics emphasise the sacredness of human life, including respect for the poor and weak, the sick and disabled.

God created man and woman with equal dignity.

Teaching on sexuality (See Human Love Policy) takes place within policy guidelines approved by the governors.

We should respect the property of others, avoid greed and envy and demand justice and charity in the sharing of the world's resources.

Truthfulness and integrity lie at the heart of the Christian life.

Prayer, Liturgy and Assemblies

Worship, an essential part of religious experience, should be offered as an integral part of the school's life. Prayer, worship and liturgical celebration are central to our Catholic tradition. It is of prime importance however that sound educational and pastoral principles determine the ways in which these are experienced in the school community. It is not sufficient simply to provide opportunities for such experiences; it is the task of school to promote and develop an appreciation of and a more active participation in prayer, worship and liturgy. This must be recognised as a gradual process, which takes account of the age and stages of personal, social and religious development of the pupils.

Prayer: Children should be assisted to explore a variety of methods including private, individual prayer as well as group prayer in both formal and informal styles and settings. Meditation can be a time of quiet or with reflective music and/or images and can have a focal point or not.

Liturgies: Both sacramental and non-sacramental. Since the high point of Catholic worship is sacramental, especially eucharistic, the value of liturgical experiences which are not sacramental but which prepare for and build up an appreciation of sacramental expression should not be underestimated. They will help to prepare for the fullest expression in sacramental liturgies.

Assemblies: For prayer, worship and liturgy to be real educational experiences and to contribute successfully to the development of the Faith of each individual in the community, participation in the preparation and action of these events is of prime importance.

Those organising such experiences should encourage the children to contribute appropriate skills in a spirit of offering and sharing while being sensitive to the personal, social and religious needs and abilities of everyone.

It is the policy of the school to plan and publish dates of school and class Masses each term. Parents are welcome to attend where appropriate. The school aims to fulfil the following timetable: Head teacher assembly with Infants and Juniors on Monday and the whole school on Fridays. School Masses at the beginning and end of term and on Holy Days. Class Masses in Autumn and Summer Terms and a Service of Reconciliation in the Spring Term.

Music

Singing and music must be regarded as an asset to any celebration and in view of the fondness children have for music it is especially recommended in the celebration of children's Masses and assemblies. Attention must be given to the musical capabilities of the children present. In children's Masses and assemblies too the use of musical instruments can be very valuable, especially when played by the children themselves. They help to sustain the singing, evoke meditative prayer and are particularly expressive of festive joy and the praise of God. Care must always be taken not to allow the music to overshadow the singing or to become a distraction rather than an edification to the children. It must also be confined to those intervals in the Mass where music is in place.

Within these aims it is appropriate for classes jointly to have hymn practice to learn hymns, appropriate to the season and time of the Church year, which may be sung at Mass and in assembly.

The school aims, whenever possible, to maintain its own choir to sing at Mass in our own parishes wherever appropriate, or elsewhere if invited whenever possible.

Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Eucharist:

For children attending St. Ethelbert's from the parish of St. Ethelberts, preparation for the sacraments of Reconciliation and First Eucharist are parish based. The Parish Priest (and the School in support) is responsible for identifying those families whose wish it is for their children to prepare for these sacraments. The Parish Priests will establish parish based catechetical provision for these families. The age of the children concerned will generally be eight years, i.e. the summer of their first year as juniors, when they make their First Confession and Holy Communion. The role of the school is to act at all times in support of the parish-based programmes, supporting the Parish Priest and their catechists.

Planning:

Planning is supported by The Way, the Truth and The Life Scheme through teacher's books, intranet support, on-line support and Pupils' Booklet. Class teachers are expected, where appropriate, to differentiate, but also to work in mixed ability groups. Children can be taught and assessed through writing, discussion, questioning, drama, art, music, behaviour, well-being and mutual support of adults and peers.

Assessment:

Assessment is recorded on the school intranet to the 5 assessment criteria at the end of Term 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. Also at the end of term 6 an overall National Curriculum and sub level is awarded as 'best fit' at that moment in time. Assessment judgements are made in line with the teacher's understanding of the whole child, their work and understanding within each criteria. Assessment is not purely based on the written final product. There is a list of the Assessment Criteria from level 1 to 5 for St. Ethelbert's. Sub-levels are in A = Secure, B = Within the Level and C = beginning this level and out of the previous lower level. We are awaiting guidance to move over to the new National Curriculum without levels on emerging, expected and exceeding.

Monitoring:

The Subject Leader (must be Catholic and should have the Catholic Teachers' Certificate) will monitor termly planning, weekly planning, lessons, work, marking, cross-curricular links and assessments. The Foundation Governors and Parish Priest are freely invited to monitor any lesson / assembly / service as a matter of duty, by appointment with the headteacher. The Subject leader is the ambassador for R.E. and will promote the ethos through the school (pupils, staff, parents, visitors, governors and stakeholders) to the Parish and within the community.

Gifted and Talented:

These pupils are identified as being well above average in attainment and/or to have a 'love and flair' for the subject. These children are identified to the Subject Leader and to their families and possibly the Parish Priest with permission of families. These children can be stretched through leading fund-raising, research projects and assisting other pupils (spreading the Good News).

Prayer Areas:

All classes and rooms should have a crucifix and/or some other catholic focal point. Prayers can be added to this at any convenient time and do not need to be neat, checked or marked in any way. Teachers should leave blank prayer cards for pupils to take.

Display:

All classes have at least one R.E. display at any one time. The subject Leader is responsible for open areas, and staff are encouraged to put displays in public areas.

Church Noticeboard:

The school has a noticeboard in St. Ethelbert's Church to promote the school with photographs, newsletters, education reports and R.E. news.

Spreading The 'Good News':

Pupils are given a St. Francis Crucifix in Reception Class, Prayer Cards in each class and The Holy Bible used by our Catholic Secondary School – the Ursuline College, Westgate – on leaving Year 6. Equal financial contributions are made by the School, Parish and P.T.F.A.

Families and Parents:

The pupils' families and parents are invited to all occasions and services – Golden assemblies, Class and Church Masses, The Crowning of Mary, Candlemas, Ash Wednesday, Harvest Festival, Year 6 led Stations of the Cross, Services of Reconciliation, Nativities, School and Deanery Carol Services and Class-led assemblies.

Other Faiths:

The school will teach Judaism every year for one week and Hinduism, Sikhism or Islam on a rotating annual basis. This is not beginning until September 2010 whilst we analyse the Other Faith teaching in Year 5 syllabus and teachers get used to the new scheme.

Here I Am Other Faiths Programme

Year and Term	Other Faith
Autumn Term 2017	Judaism
Summer Term 2018	Islam
Autumn Term 2019	Judaism
Summer Term 2019	Hinduism
Autumn Term 2020	Judaism
Summer Term 2020	Sikhism
Autumn Term 2021	Judaism

Headteacher
Review July 2018