



Religious Education Policy

I am a
child
of God
1 John 3:1

St Gerard's Catholic Primary School

Guided by God, St Gerard's Catholic Primary and Nursery School is an inspiring and aspirational community where we learn to love, hope, dream and achieve."

“St Gerard’s Catholic Primary and Nursery School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment”

Introduction

At St Gerard’s, we believe that each child is unique. The recognition of this individuality, together with a concern for the total development of the ‘whole child’ is at the heart of our educational philosophy. This is in line with our Mission Statement, which is evident around our school. This is to remind all staff, parents and visitors of our reasons for learning. We feel that this development is best achieved in an atmosphere where personal relationships can flourish and children of all faiths are respected and given the opportunity to explore their own capabilities and potential, in the know that they have the support and encouragement of a caring community.

Background

St Gerard’s is part of the local community. We accept Catholic children living within the parish of St Marie’s. In addition, we admit a number of traveller children and children from the local refuge. Many of the children come to us from non-Christian faith traditions, with no religious beliefs or affiliations whatsoever. All are made to feel welcome and all of the children participate to a greater or lesser extent in the school’s religious activities. Our school is part of the parish of St Wilfrid’s.

General Aims and Philosophy

Religious Studies address all pupils in our school, regardless of diversity of religious background and commitment. They aim to:

- Help pupils recognise and appreciate the religious and spiritual dimensions of life.
- Lead to a deeper knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith and other religious traditions.
- Challenge pupils to examine their own commitment and to respect that of others.

As a school, we recognise that there will be vacancies in the stages and levels of faith experienced by individual members of our school community. We recognise the importance of interaction between home, parish and school in fostering true Christian attitudes and helping to develop in each person, a deeper understanding of their relationship with God.

We are concerned that the presence of Christ should be evident to all within our school and we aim to promote a welcoming atmosphere of co-operation where experience and expertise can be shared with mutual trust and openness.

Religious Education occupies a central place in the life of our school and is found across the whole curriculum, stimulating spiritual growth and development along with academic, physical and social progress.

Structure and Management of Religious Education

The role of the Religious Education Coordinator

- To be the daily leader of a Catholic educating community.
- To ensure that the Religious Education programme is given full regard both in terms of classroom Religious Studies and the overall school curriculum.
- To ensure that spiritual development of individuals is given clear focus and assistance through the prayer life and liturgy of the school.
- To recognise the prime responsibility of parents for the religious education of their children and ensure parents are involved as much as possible in the life of the school.
- To promote close working between parish, home and school.
- To provide clear leadership and support in implementation and organisation of the RE programme.
- To demonstrate serious reflection through reading and attendance of courses organised by the Liverpool Archdiocese.

The role of the Classroom Teacher

- To plan, teach and evaluate lessons in accordance with the chosen RE programme, Come and See, in a manner appropriate to the age ability of pupils in the class.
- To provide a stimulating environment within the classroom through display and a reflection table.
- Leading the children in prayer and daily reflection; encouraging children to develop their spiritual and moral awareness of theirs and others religion.

The role of staff in worship

- To enable children to celebrate the aspects of life experience that have been recognised and reflected upon.
- To create opportunities for prayer and reflection.
- To foster an atmosphere which may evoke responses of joy, sorrow, thanks and praise.
- To encourage pupils to contribute to appropriate skills and gifts in the preparation of Collective Worship.

Communication

- Staff meetings are held to discuss implementation of the RE programme.
- Staff are encouraged in informal discussion, wherever needs arise, and are given opportunities to report back from the courses organised by the Christian Education Department of Education.
- Regular emails sent by the RE Coordinator to staff, informing of any updates regarding RE within the school.

Requisition

- Religious Education resources are given high priority and generous funding is available from the school budget.
- Resources are regularly updated and resources that are recommended by the Archdiocese are purchased.
- The Head teacher and SLT have responsibility for the purchase of resources such as books, posters, music, etc.
- Staff requests for additional aids are encouraged and acted upon.

Parish links

- The school extends a warm welcome to priests and governors visiting the school.
- The school hosts whole school masses throughout the year. KS2 also take part in class masses with Father Mark.
- The sacramental programme is part of the Widnes Parish of St Wilfrid's.

RE in the Classroom

- Since the total curriculum in our school is based on Gospel values and because we see all education as revealing the mystery of God, we recognise two aspects of Religious Education in our school;

Implicit (or unstructured Religious Education) – those opportunities which arise in the course of the day to lead pupils through curriculum content or through relationships to a religious understanding of their implications. It is the policy of this school to use opportunities as they arise.

Explicit (or structured Religious Education) – those timetabled periods that give to an explicit consideration of Religious Education in the classroom. It is the policy of this school to allocate 10% of the curriculum timetable to Religious Education plus explicit teaching during assembly times.

- To fulfil our aims and objectives, we use the Archdiocesan recommended Religious Education Programme "Come and See", which has four key dimensions of religion as its foundation; Revelation, Church, Sacraments and Christian Living.
- The aim of this programme is to explore the religious dimensions of questions about life, dignity and purpose within the Catholic tradition. It has

a strong experiential dimension and is structured in such a way that pupils are encouraged to recognise and value their own experiences, test them against Christian revelation and against the experience of others.

- Central to Come and See is Christian belief in Jesus Christ, word and revelation of God. Each term, a belief about the mystery of life is explored within the Catholic faith tradition. Each basic question is explored through three kinds of themes, and three topics are provided for the exploration of each theme. The topics are developed through five levels which take account of age and development of pupils in the Primary years, and are designed to address a variety of skills and attitudes.

Methodology

- We aim to use a variety of teaching and learning styles which are appropriate to the age and stage of development of the pupils within each class.
- These provide the use of discussion and debate, reading and development of reference skills, ICT, writing in forms such as stories, prayers and personal accounts, music, art work, drama, prayer and meditation.
- As with all other areas of the curriculum, teachers provide this process for pupils in a variety of groupings such as whole class, pairs, small groups of similar ability levels, and mixed abilities.

Staff Development

- We are committed to keeping Religious Education central to future developments within our school, as we continue to develop our whole school mission and ethos, based on the values Jesus taught us.
- St Gerard's sees the importance and value of staff attending Archdiocesan courses for Religious Education 'Come and See' topics and Coordinator training, and will continue to support this.
- We will also continue to support staff in studying for the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies, as we see this as enhancing our provision for our pupils.
- Staff have annual performance management meetings with their line managers, during which they are able to discuss any training and development needs they have. Requests for professional development are considered with reference to individual need and to the school's priorities, as identified within the school's development plan. They may be by attending a formal training course (in person or virtually), or it may be that the individual observes other teachers or has an opportunity to look at other children's work. This may be with staff from our own school or staff from a school within the Catholic cluster group. Staff meeting time is used for INSET, alongside other core subjects.
- Before staff begin a topic, they are requested to read the 'Come and See for Yourself- Before You Begin' material. If time is available in staff meetings, this material will be shared, to enable a deeper understanding of what each topic is about.

Staff Induction

- All new members of staff receive a Staff Induction policy. This policy introduces them to the Ethos and Mission Statement at St Gerard's.
- Staff at St Gerard's are familiar with Come and See. If new staff are appointed, they are provided with training and support to ensure that they feel confident to deliver the programme. Staff are invited to plan with an experienced member of staff who, along with the RE Coordinator and Head teacher, is willing to help and answer any questions.
- All new members of staff will receive a copy of the RE Handbook and are introduced to RE resources. New members of staff are also given the opportunity to attend a Come and See training day to help broaden their knowledge.
- If necessary, RE will form one of the ECT's (Early Career Teacher) half termly action plan and consequently they will receive necessary support.

Resources- Staff

- We have 11 teachers, including the Head teacher, all of whom have responsibility for providing Religious Education at St Gerard's. We also have a very able HLTA, who holds the CCRS qualification, who supports the Religious Education curriculum and attends some RE Coordinator meetings.
- Miss Sanders is the appointed lead for Religious Education at St Gerard's. She leads the RE team, consisting of herself, Mr Landrum (Head teacher) and Mrs Flint (HLTA).
- All other staff support the teaching of Religious Education, to ensure pupils access relevant and appropriate learning experiences within Come and See lessons. They help develop the Catholic life of the school, through living the Mission Statement.
- All staff are responsible for being good role models and setting a good example for children. Staff embody the Gospel values in all that they do and ensure that they promote religious teaching both implicitly and explicitly throughout the school day.

RE and ICT

- Resources for teaching RE, particular topics or faiths, are organised and maintained by Mrs Flint. Staff are able to use these resources as and when the topics, feasts or season of the Church dictate.
- Each class has access to God's Story books, Church Story books, Good News Bibles and the Come and See website.
- ICT is integrated effectively across all areas of the curriculum, including Religious Education and Collective Worship. We see the use of interactive whiteboards, laptops and iPads as enhancing the learning and teaching within lessons.

Relationship of RE to the whole curriculum

- Each class must participate in an act of Collective Worship each day. These can take the form of whole or part of school assemblies.
- Where the class does not take part in an assembly, the teacher is responsible for the Collective Worship of their own class.
- Collective Worship should contain opportunities for prayer, scripture, quiet reflection and celebration.
- Children in KS2 are supported in planning and preparing class and assembly Collective Worship.
- Parents and Governors are sometimes invited to masses and assemblies that are held in school.
- They are also invited to Christmas plays and carol services.
- There may be opportunities where they are invited to class rejoice assemblies.
- The topics are taught, usually as whole class teaching sessions, with individuals relating their experience.
- To focus the children's attention on the topic which is being covered at the time, stories, poems, pictures, teachers own personal experiences and any experiences the children can contribute are used.
- Quiet reflective music is played as the children enter the school hall at assembly time and during class Collective Worship.

Prayer within the Classroom

- All classes pray together at the start of each day, at lunchtime and at the end of the school day.
- Teachers are encouraged to employ a variety of styles of prayer in their classroom. These will include;
 - Formal or set prayers
 - Quiet private prayer
 - Written prayers
 - Informal or even impromptu prayer arising from discussion and events
- Progressively, pupils will be helped towards experiencing short periods of meditation/reflection.
- We feel it is important to provide focal points for prayer in both the classroom and around the school. These may be permanent or temporary arrangements. These may include:
 - Crucifix in each room and in the entrance hall
 - Displays mounted for specific lessons or assemblies
 - Reflective tables in classrooms
 - Crib at Christmas/Stations of the Cross at Lent
 - Statues, pictures or candles
 - Central displays in the hall, which reflect the liturgical seasons
 - Display links to the Come and See programme

Liturgy in School and Classrooms

- We celebrate special occasions throughout the year.
- We aim to provide opportunities for visits from our Parish Priest, Father Mark, during Advent and Lent. We also invite Father Mark into school at other times of the year.
- We provide opportunities for non-sacramental liturgies led by teachers and occasionally by pupils.
- We join together in whole school celebrations of Christmas and remembrance of the events of Holy Week in song, readings, celebrations and prayers.

Sacramental Preparations

- Preparation for First Sacraments takes place during Year 4.
- This is done in close cooperation with the priest, the parents and the members from the parish of St Wilfrid's.
- We aim to meet the needs of families according to their personal commitment to their Faith.
- Families are welcomed and encouraged to join our Sacramental Programme.
- We have good links which will support us with our celebrations and services.

Community Links

- We involve communities in the Harvest celebrations by providing food hampers to the local food bank in Widnes.
- Staff and pupils are encouraged to take part in parish celebrations where possible.
- Children are involved in events organised within the community, including singing and helping others.
- Visits to the Cathedral in Liverpool are organised as well as visits to other places of worship, such as the Synagogue in Liverpool.

Diocesan Links

- The children and their families respond generously to our charitable collections.
- SLT ensure that a member of the team attends Diocesan meetings, organised by the Christian Education Service, and feedback to staff the appropriate information.
- Involvement in meetings and on training days are both socially and educationally important for staff members.

The Wider Church

- We strive to bring the children in our care to a greater global awareness of the needs of others. To this end, we encourage a generous and spontaneous response to appeals for aid, whether it is in the form of prayer or practical help (e.g.: shoe boxes, collections for victims of disasters, CAFOD, Mission Together etc.)
- We mark CAFOD with special assemblies, acts of self-denial and fundraising activities.
- We respond to the Good Shepherd Appeal and have also collected for Mission Together.

The Local Neighbourhood

- We feel it is important to establish strong links within our local community.
- We encourage inter-action with other local schools and have links with our local Secondary feeder school, St Peter's and St Paul's Catholic High School.
- We also support local charities in the area through fundraising.

Special Educational Needs

- Children with Special Educational Needs are catered for within the framework of the Come and See Programme.
- The whole school approach to the teaching of Religious Education is inclusive, rather than exclusive.
- It caters for every child and emphasis is on discussion, pictures and drama.
- A pictorial record of every child's understanding is acceptable. Every child is made to feel that they have achieved.
- All pupils are allowed to work to their different abilities.
- As a Catholic school, we are aware that all children are a unique gift from God, each with their own individual talents and needs.

Equal Opportunities

- Religious Education is taught on a class basis and all children are treated with equal respect.
- Each child is expected to listen to the views of other people, and respect that sometimes there will be a difference of opinion.
- In the delivery of the syllabus and other curriculum areas, the children are introduced to the views, beliefs and cultures of other faiths.
- Additional time is given to other faiths and we acknowledge their celebrations when they occur.
- Each child should develop a positive attitude to their fellow human beings and show empathy and understanding towards them.

Related Policies/Handbooks

- Collective Worship Policy
- Spiritual and Moral Development Policy
- RSE Policy
- PSHE Policy
- RE Handbook
- Collective Worship Handbook

Policy Updated

Date: September 2022

By: Miss L. Sanders (RE Coordinator)

