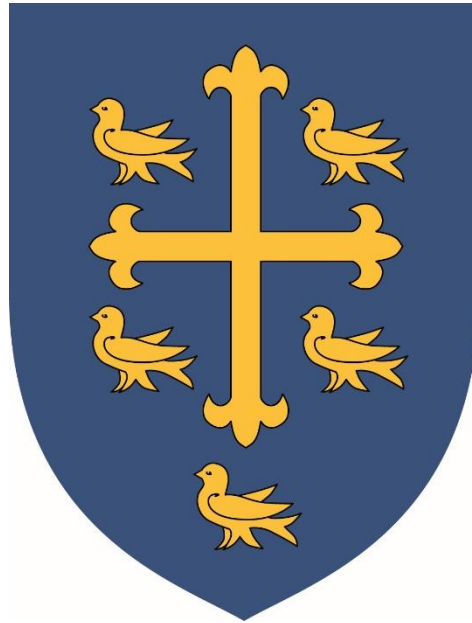


# St. Edward's Catholic Primary School



## Religious Education

## Policy 2025-26

Policy agreed/Signed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Mr K Connolly – Chair of Governors)

Agreed on: September 2025

Review date: September 2026

*'Jesus is at the heart of all that we do'*

***At St. Edward's, we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children and adults in our school, and we have the same expectation of our staff and volunteers.***

At the heart of the Church's being is her mission to teach. As a Catholic School, St Edward's sees itself as having an integral role in fulfilling this command of Jesus and is committed to the development of a united and just environment inspired by the life of Christ and the teachings of the Church, rooted in the Gospel values.

Religious Education is a priority in our school life. It is recognised as a core subject, which can engage pupil's intellect, heart and imagination. We aim to recognise the uniqueness of each child and respect the value, dignity and individuality of each one, celebrating diversity and learning the values of mutual respect, individual liberty and tolerance.

We also acknowledge the importance of good relationships within the school community and recognise that the strong partnership, which exists between school, home and the parish, must be nurtured if we are to grow as a living and worshipping community which always provides a Christ-centred environment. From the moment you enter our school, the school environment says loudly and clearly that we are a Catholic school. Catholic Social Teaching is at the heart of our curriculum and with Christ at the centre we teach our children about the importance of the common good; the need to care for creation and the importance of peace and tolerance so that we can make a difference to the world.

### **The aims of R.E. in our school**

The aims of our school are:

- To lead our children into a loving relationship with God through Prayer, Collective Worship, Scripture and Sacraments, whilst involving the wider community.
- To ensure all children feel secure, listened to and feel valued by creating a positive atmosphere.
- For children to have knowledge, to celebrate and respect the diverse nature of our society and school family.
- To see the presence of God in both themselves and others by finding ways to incorporate our School Mission Statement into their everyday lives.
- To strive for high standards and provide high quality education, rooted in Catholic Social Teaching, in all areas of school life.
- To support the parents as the first teachers of their child.
- To encourage pupils to be part of the parish community.

### **How will this be achieved?**

- Working in partnership with all members of the school team involved in school life including our Parish Priest Fr. Denis McGillicuddy.
- Inviting the local community to join and assist in curriculum activities.
- Engaging parents in all school celebrations and finding ways to involve them in school roles.
- Emphasising and living out our Gospel virtues; and the use of our positive behaviour policy and reward system.
- Demonstrating mutual respect to all those we encounter in our school building.
- Embedding Catholic Social Teaching across the curriculum.
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## **The Religious Life of the School**

### **Assemblies and Prayer & Liturgy**

Our Parish Priest comes to celebrate with our school community on a weekly basis. Year groups take it in turn to prepare these masses. The themes are based on the Liturgical calendar. The children also walk to the Parish Church at least once a half term to celebrate Mass as well as other Holy Days of Obligation. Fr. Denis also works with children, parents and staff in preparing the children for the Sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation. Children receiving the Sacraments also have access to retreat days where the school attend/ invite external providers to lead the children in a day of worship and prayer.

We come together, in various ways throughout the week:

- Monday; Whole school Gospel assembly led by the Head Teacher or class worship.
- Tuesday ; Hymn practise led by the class leading that week's mass.
- Wednesday: Mass.
- Thursday: Celebration of the Word- Pupil prepared prayer in classes.
- Friday; Celebration/ Praise assembly led by an SLT member. Children from each class receive a Star of the Week for a variety of reasons, the children then have Tea with Mrs K. The house cup is presented to the house that has achieved the most points that week. Attendance, punctuality and good behaviour is also celebrated and promoted in this assembly.

### **Prayer**

Prayer is an important aspect of the religious life of our school. We begin and end each day in prayer and prayers are said before and after meals.

Through prayer, we aim to help the children develop a personal relationship with God. For prayer to happen and to be of value, we need to create the right atmosphere. At St. Edward's we appreciate the value of objects to help to focus the mind on prayer and so all classrooms have a designated RE area/ altar where the children can see a statue, crucifix, candle or other religious object.

From the Foundation Stage, the understanding of prayer as an open dialogue with God is discussed and developed with the children. All children, appropriate to their age, are given regular opportunities to experience reflective, contemplative and silent prayer. Alongside this, the children have opportunities within lessons to compose their own prayers to be shared with others. Many of these prayers will focus on discussions within the classroom or current affairs e.g. for people involved in disasters within our world.

All meetings e.g. briefing, staff/ phase meeting all begin with a prayer.

We encourage pupils to take part and experience many different forms of prayer.

### **Personal private prayer**

There is a time in each act of worship where the children are encouraged to talk to Jesus in their own words. This is sometimes introduced into the class prayers offering opportunities for a quiet time of prayer. Pupils are encouraged to know that they can pray at any time or in any place.

### Informal communal prayer

Pupils are given the opportunity to share informal prayers in class prayer time. The teacher encourages prayers that are relevant e.g. thanksgiving, concern for others, forgiveness and guidance. We encourage pupils to be spontaneous and to not feel embarrassed to pray aloud. Staff are sensitive to the feelings of all pupils. We teach the pupils that it is also possible to offer up a prayer to Jesus; to listen to prayers in our hearts that have not been spoken.

### Formal communal prayer

Pupils are taught set prayers related to their year group. These prayers come from guidelines from the Diocese.

Resources School has a bank of resources which are stored centrally.

Prayer Tables/RE Displays Each classroom has a designated prayer area. This is draped in cloth depicting the current liturgical colour. The Crucifix is displayed prominently. The area has specific prayers displayed for use during classroom worship. Children are encouraged to use this area as a main focus when praying singularly or together. Children of all ages are encouraged to write and prepare their own prayers usually focusing on the liturgical time of year. Each classroom is expected to have at least one RE display which reflects either the current topic being taught, or the liturgical time of year.

### Parish, Home and School links

We at St. Edward's recognise that parents are the primary educators of their children. In recognition of this, we continue to develop strong links with parents to ensure that we support them and work in partnership in bringing up their children in the Catholic faith.

- In September we hold 'Meet the Teacher' workshops where the staff can introduce themselves. The headteacher presents at each meeting and promotes the Catholic ethos of the school and provides reminders of safeguarding, attendance and any other topical issues that all parents may need to be reminded of.
- We invite parents, friends and parishioners to all liturgical celebrations e.g. school/ class masses.
- We work in partnership with the Parish Priest and parents to prepare the children to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation.
- We meet with parents at Parents evening to discuss their child's development as well as being available most days after school.
- Parents are invited to workshops on topics relevant to the curriculum at that time.
- Each year group prepares an assembly throughout the year.
- Parents are encouraged to promote and sponsor our fundraising events and celebrations.
- The Friends of the school (PTA) help with funding for school initiatives. They also host social events for all members of the school community to attend.

- The Christmas and summer fayres are held on the school site where teachers, parents and parishioners are all welcome to join in running a stall, game or another role in the running of these events.
- Every year children from our school carol sing at local homes for the elderly, St. Paul's Convent or St Marys Hospice.

### **Charities**

At St. Edward's we wish to develop concern for others in our children. We hope that through our actions the children become more aware of the needs of others, develop sensitivity, generosity and a sense of responsibility to others. We support many local charities and organisations through our fundraising efforts whilst celebrating festivals, such as Harvest, Advent and Lent.

Our children and families are very supportive and generous and we have been able to raise substantial amounts of money for both local and worldwide causes.

### **Other Religions**

As a Catholic school the Church's doctrine is central to the life and worship of the school day. However, at St Edward's we recognise the high number of pupils who belong to other faith communities. All who teach, learn and work within our school are involved inspired and hopefully enriched by it. In order to ensure the value and respect for the customs and beliefs of these pupils, we try to incorporate major festivals into the schools diary. We invite parents/ visitors in to class to discuss how they celebrate these significant times with the other children. Through the curriculum, RE offers an opportunity to look at other faiths and the way they worship God, drawing on pupils' own knowledge and inviting them to inform and educate others. Visits to other places of worship are also undertaken at the appropriate time to link with the learning taking place.

Cultural Education:

- Helps children to appreciate their own cultural background and those of other people.
- Helps children to realise that God calls us to live, work and play together in a united world.

Each KS2 class studies another religion, drawing on similarities and differences between our own culture and theirs.

Year 3- Hinduism

Year 4- Judaism

Year 5- Sikhism

Year 6- Islam

### **Sacramental Education**

Preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Eucharist take place in Year 3. In addition to the strategy, which is followed by all pupils, the school provides extra resources and sessions for the children to enable parents to take an active part in their child's preparation for these sacraments.

Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation takes place in Year 6. The school uses the Diocesan strategy, which is followed by all pupils, the school provides extra resources and sessions for the children to enable parents to take an active part in their child's preparation for these sacraments.

Parents are invited to attend a series of meetings and workshops throughout the year with the teachers, school leaders and Parish Priest to help them support their children at home.

A Mass of Commitment is held each year where the children, parents and parish community all confirm their commitment to supporting the pupils on this next step in their faith journey.

### **Religious Education**

Our primary aims for Religious Education lessons are to help our children to become religious and literate in their faith.

There are numerous cross-curricular activities that deepen the children's understanding that stem from Religious Education lessons, such as drama, writing, computing, art and music. Thus our children have a diverse experience that supports their development and understanding of their Catholic faith.

We allocate at least 10% of the timetable to RE in addition to assemblies, hymn practice and collective worship. In KS1 this is equivalent to 2 hours and in KS2, 2 hours 30 minutes. The expectation for recorded work is that it should reflect the teaching time that has taken place and that there should be some evidence of extended work in each unit taught.

RE, although it is a core subject, is not regarded as a stand-alone subject, but instead it permeates through all that we do and influences the teaching of all areas of the curriculum.

The Religious Education scheme we use within school is the Birmingham Archdiocese Curriculum Strategy for Religious Education "Learning and Growing as the people of God." This strategy, as far as possible, secures continuity and progression from Foundation stage through to year 6. It provides us with a framework to ensure that pupils understanding of the Catholic faith and traditions grow commensurately with other subjects.

RE lessons are seen as an opportunity to promote knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith and its teachings. Pupils will be given the opportunity to develop a range of skills including those of communication and enquiry and the ability to engage in religious thinking.

The children also have access to a prayer garden. When it is appropriate lessons or parts of lessons will be held here and children can go here for independent prayer when accessing the outdoors.

Our school ensures that the Gospel Virtues are not just taught in isolation but are promoted through the children's everyday lives. All children have contributed to displays around school celebrating these values and also discuss them during times of collective worship. Teachers plan specific lessons at the beginning of each half term to ensure children understand the meaning of the Values, where they appear in the Bible and how they can live them through their own lives.

In addition to the Diocesan Curriculum Strategy, pupils:

- Explore the school mission statement and what it means for them in their daily lives.
- Complete research into the life of their Class Saint at the start and then during the academic year.
- On the feast of St Edward the children will undertake activities to enable them understand his life and mission.
- Explore Gospel Virtues and CST in RE, but also look for links in other subjects.

### **Teaching strategies/ methods**

We use a wide range of strategies for teaching RE depending upon the age and ability of the pupils. These methods enable children to develop the knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes relevant to religious education. Whole class lessons are prepared by teachers each week and these lessons include;

- Studying texts/ telling stories and discussing pictures to introduce and develop themes.
- Listening carefully to each other whilst undertaking group work/ discussion.
- Undertaking role-play/ drama activities.
- Completing written tasks.
- Writing prayers/ holding prayer services.
- Participating in art activities.
- Guiding the children to ask relevant questions.
- Encouraging children to reflect on what they have learned and its significance to their own lives.

For the teaching of religious education to be effective teachers need to:

- Have a secure knowledge and understanding of the faith, religious education and of the scheme of work.
- Set high expectations to challenge pupils to deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Plan effectively.
- Incorporate meaningful prayer into lessons.
- Motivate pupils through teaching methods which match learning objectives and the needs of the pupils.

When teaching is effective pupils will:

- Show an interest in their work;
- Sustain concentration;
- Think and learn for themselves;
- Work at an appropriate pace;
- Understand what they are doing;
- Develop ideas;

- Acquire knowledge.

### **Religious Education Planning**

Long Term planning- The long term plan indicates all the units to be studied from the 'Learning and Growing as the People of God' strategy, when they will be taught and for what period of time. It also highlights the focus units for the assessment cycle. This ensures that children are studying the appropriate Liturgical units in conjunctions with the Church's liturgical celebrations. All staff contribute to the long term plan and can be access on staff common at any time.

Medium Term planning- This is the responsibility of the class teacher and should be completed on a unit by unit bases according to the long term plan. The desired teaching strategies and activities are chosen and identified and are added to the short term plan. Staff use their medium term plan to devise learning questions for each lesson to ensure a clear, systematic sequence and provide a unit divider to each child so that they can see what learning will be taking place.

Short Term Planning- Weekly planning is the responsibility of the class teacher and should be made available weekly via the year group folder and timetable. A template is provided via the shared staff area where staff can update their plans according to learning outcomes, groupings, questions, resources etc.

### **Differentiation**

In order to match the work to the needs of our children, we differentiate in a variety of ways. Medium and short term planning should indicate how activities will be differentiated. We differentiate by resource; teachers provide learning resources matched the individual child's achievements and ability. We differentiate by support, teacher provide classroom support appropriate to a designated group or individual child. We can differentiate by task by setting the task appropriate to the individual child. Teachers expect children to respond to the task differently.

Each teacher is responsible for providing for the needs of all of the children in the class. Therefore work should be differentiated to meet the needs of all. Through support from the appropriate adults children with SEN are supported with appropriate work and guidance to ensure full access to the RE curriculum. It is vital to maintain all children's self-esteem through the way the work is presented and the feedback given.

### **Equal opportunity**

All children receive the religious education provided at the school regardless of gender, race, religion or ability as these are integral to the Gospels revelations and the Church's message and it is central to our school mission statement.

### **Planning, Assessment and Monitoring**

All staff contribute to a long-term plan at the beginning of each academic year based on events in the school diary throughout school year e.g. dependent upon when Sacraments will be. Weekly planning is completed by class teachers using the recommended planning format from the Diocese. The planning and R.E. books from each class are monitored by the R.E. Lead to ensure consistency and coverage. This is undertaken informally weekly and in more depth termly.

Questioning, listening to children's discussions and observing them on task can help teachers to make on going, informal assessments and inform the planning for the next lesson. Formal assessments will be carried out at the end of specific units of work using the assessment sheets given by the Diocesan RE Department. The themes for assessment are, "The liturgical year, Scripture, Celebrating the Sacraments, Living as Christians and Prayer" and are rotated on a four year cycle. Each year, schools are given a focus strand for the assessment at the end of the specific units. The RE Lead will collect work samples for a portfolio. Assessment can be in written form, pictorial or by teacher observations. Teachers complete a tracking document which tells the story of their class for the assessed unit and using this they can identify actions that need to be put in place and then assess the impact in the next unit.

At the end of each year, a child from each class will have their work assessed against the end of phase expectations for RE. Staff use this in order to support the progression of RE throughout the school. Regular staff meetings and drop ins are held in order to look at and share the attainment of pupils. This allows staff to evaluate their own teaching and identify priorities within their own classrooms and supports the leader in the monitoring and evaluation of pitch and progression. 6 children are selected to be monitored and this sample should include a child from all significant groups in school.

To ensure coverage, monitoring, continuity and progression in the teaching and learning of R.E. the RE Lead will undertake a book trawl at least of twice a year. Classroom observations, pupil interviews and monitoring of the school environment are also undertaken at least once a year and the findings shared with the staff and included in the CSED.

In line with Diocesan recommendations, Reception aged children are assessed at the beginning of their school journey. It is used to find out what the children's prior religious knowledge, vocabulary and experience is.

### **Continuing professional development**

All staff have access to training and development opportunities appropriate to the year group they are working in. The RE lead also has access to the Diocesan Advisor and the opportunity to link with other local schools at the cluster meetings. At these meetings, they will have access to moderations, resource and planning suggestions as well as updates from the Diocesan advisor. We are also members of the Birmingham Catholic Primary Partnership and staff attend courses that they offer.

### **The Catholic Curriculum**

### *Catholic School Profile*

We follow the Catholic School Profile which is rooted in Jesuit values. There are eight pairs of virtues which help pupils to lead better and more fulfilled lives as Jesus would have wanted. Each half term, we focus on a set of virtues and what they mean in our lives. Throughout our curriculum, we then look for opportunities to explore these themes further e.g. in our Science lessons, how are characters behaving in our English texts.

### *Catholic Social Teaching*

Catholic Social Teaching is embedded across the curriculum. There are seven core principles that we explore:

Dignity of the Human Person

Family and Community

Solidarity and the Common Good

Rights and Responsibilities

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Stewardship of God's Creation

Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

We feel that it is important to consider the needs of our local community, and local charities are always welcome in the school to talk to the children about their work and to involve them in fundraising activities. We have fundraising events throughout the year to support the work of charities, some of which visit our school to speak to the children about their work. At Christmas time the children are involved in the Birmingham Irish Association Christmas Toy Appeal. Moreover, in our teaching, learning and other faith-related activities within school, Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is threaded throughout. CST is rooted in Scripture, formed by the wisdom of Church leaders, and influenced by grassroots movements. It is our moral compass, guiding us on how to live out our faith in the world. Our faith calls us to love God and to love our neighbours in every situation, especially our sisters and brothers living in poverty. Following in the footsteps of Christ, we hope to make present in our unjust and broken world, the justice, love, and peace of God. Modern Catholic social teaching is said to have originated in 1891 with the encyclical letter, *Rerum Novarum*. Since then, a wealth of teaching continues to give new life to the Scriptures and shape the Church's response to our modern world.

We teach the children of St. Edward's how they can make a difference in the world by living out these seven principles. The school have been awarded the LiveSimply award 2025 and also the School of Sanctuary Award 2025 which is underpinned by many of the Catholic Social Teaching Principles.

### *Social Development*

Pupils are encouraged to examine their responsibilities and influences not only on the school community but also in their families, the parish community and the local and wider community. They are encouraged to use their skills, talents and gifts, whatever they are, for the good of others.

#### *Moral Development*

Pupils learn about Catholic morality by being taught what the church teaches and by the attitude and actions of their teachers. We can help pupils develop morally through the love and message of Jesus. Jesus shows us the way through the commandments, the Beatitudes as well as the Cardinal and Theological virtues. As a school, we follow a set of values and virtues, which we enable the children to act out in their daily lives. The school plays an important part in moral development. We try to deal consistently with situations. Encouragement and praise is positive reinforcement when good and moral actions are evident in our pupils. An atmosphere of love, respect, sympathy and forgiveness contribute to the children's self confidence, self acceptance and develops their capacity to relate to others and to God. As our pupils get older, they are given increasing opportunities for independence where they have to be trusted. This enables them to discover the consequences of their choices for themselves and for others and to realise they are responsible for their own actions.

#### *Cultural Development*

Cultural diversity is welcomed and fostered in our school. Cultural development is not just to be developed with RE teaching as it involves the whole curriculum as well as the attitudes and ethos of the school. The school is continuing to develop its range of resources including examples and art and artefacts from different parts of the world and different periods in history.

#### *Vocational Development*

Vocational Development enables our pupils to have a profound understanding of what it means to have a vocation and to be able to joyfully offer their gifts and talents in service to others. It is vital that we provide pupils with models of service and commitment; to learn from people of the past and people of the present who provide examples of lives inspired by and committed to following in Jesus's footsteps.

#### **Governing Board**

The RE Subject Leader reports to the Governing Board regularly, through the link governor and occasionally by presenting updates at meetings. Governors are also invited to join with other members of the whole school community in the celebration of mass at the start of the academic year and will then be invited to a number of events throughout. The RE Link governors are involved in regular monitoring of lessons and books in addition to being present at any special celebrations and collective worship.