

Religious Education Policy

1. Our Mission Statement

*As one family working together
to be the best that we can be,
we live, love and learn with Jesus.*

At St Augustine's School, we "believe that Religious Education is not one subject among many but the foundation of the entire education process. The beliefs and values it communicates should inspire and unify every aspect of school life. It should provide the context for, and subsequently shape the school curriculum and offer living experience of the life of faith in its practical experience." (Bishops of England and Wales 1998)

At St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, we strive to ensure that each child develops a personal relationship with God. We enable all children to develop a sound knowledge of the Catholic faith and to develop their own spiritual knowledge and understanding.

At St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, Religious Education counts for 10% of the total curriculum time, as recommended by the Diocesan Director of Education.

2. Aims and Objectives

At St Augustine's School, we strive to help the children to know God and experience the Christian life of His community. We acknowledge that the children's development in faith in a loving God begins with the love and care of the family and we strive to form a partnership of education in faith between home, parish and school. We try to support parents, who "are the first teachers of their child in the ways of faith." (Rite of Baptism)

Our aims of Religious Education are encompassed in our Mission Statement.

- The school is committed to creating a community which fosters Christian relationships based on the gospel values of truth, holiness, justice, love, forgiveness, healing and peace.
- The school endeavours to be a place where the beliefs and values of the Roman Catholic tradition are taught, learned and lived in daily practice so that prayer, worship and liturgy are appropriate and meaningful experiences which further the spiritual development of each individual.
- We aim to ensure that the curriculum provides a Catholic, Christian context in which children can grow in understanding and in the acquisition of skills, attitudes and values.
- With Christ as the basis of its existence, the school endeavours to respect the uniqueness and needs of the individual children, teachers and all other people who are involved in the school community.

3. How we meet our stated aims.

A) The scheme of work

We base our long term overview and detailed short term planning on the Birmingham Archdiocese Curriculum Strategy for Religious Education in Catholic Primary Schools: "Learning and Growing as the People of God." It lays out clearly the steps to be taken in RE at each stage of every term in the Foundation and Primary Years. RE is taught as a discrete subject. Coverage consists of a minimum of two RE lessons per week. This does not include Prayer, Assemblies, Christmas Plays, Circle Time, PSHE and Hymn Practice. However Mass "may be considered the equivalent of half an hour of RE, but only once in any week." (Communicating Christ)

We teach Religious Education to all children in the school, including those in Nursery and Reception classes.

The topics studied in Religious Education build upon prior learning. We offer opportunities for children of all abilities to develop their skills and knowledge in each unit and we ensure that the planned progression built into the scheme of work offers the children an increasing challenge as they move through the school.

B) Sacramental Preparation

Preparation for the first celebrations of Communion and Reconciliation begin in the Reception year and deepen and develop throughout KS1. Most children receive these Sacraments for the first time in the Spring and Summer terms of Year 3. Some children receive these Sacraments later. Arrangements are also made for those children joining the school later in KS2 who have not already received these sacraments. Pupils in Y6 receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Spring or Summer term.

The preparation for these Sacraments involves parents, teachers and priests. The celebration involves the whole school and the parish community.

C) Prayer and Collective Worship

At St Augustine's School we see worship as an integral part of our school life. We see that making the time to celebrate enables the children to acknowledge the value of the experiences they have explored. In worship, we proclaim God and respond in prayer.

As a community which seeks to ground its busy life in God, we acknowledge the need to plan some of our prayer life very deliberately. An Act of Worship is held every morning, before/after lunch and at the end of the school day. Acts of Worship are whole school, groups of classes or single classes.

"No Christian community is built up which does not grow from and hinge on the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist."

(Vatican II, Presbyterarum Ordinis)

We recognise that the Eucharist is the high point of the sacramental system and we purposely develop the children's knowledge of and participation in it.

We celebrate Mass with the local community regularly and on Holy Days of Obligation.

For particular events eg Saints' days, seasonal liturgies and harvest, assemblies are planned and discussed at the beginning of each school year.

4. Legal Right

Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from Religious Education lessons and acts of worship.

5. The Scheme of Work for RE

We base our long term overview and detailed short term planning on the Birmingham Archdiocese Curriculum Strategy for Religious Education in Catholic Primary Schools: "Learning and Growing as the People of God". It lays out clearly the steps to be taken in RE at each stage of every term in the Foundation and Primary Years. RE is taught as a discrete subject. Coverage consists of a minimum of two RE lessons per week. This does not include Prayer, Assemblies, Christmas Plays, Circle Time, PSHE and Hymn Practice. However Mass "may be considered the equivalent of half an hour of RE, but only once in any week". (Communicating Christ).

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6. Planning

The long term plan indicates which units are to be taught and for how long. This plan is reviewed annually.

Medium term planning is completed on a unit by unit basis according to the long term plan.

Short term planning is completed on a weekly basis and is stored on the shared drive.

7. Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Children are assessed regularly using a variety of strategies: informal and formal observation, peer and group assessment, discussions, sampling, self-assessment and assessment through specific tasks. All recorded pieces of work are marked in line with school marking policy and pupils are encouraged to respond to questions set and comments made by the teacher.

The Monitoring and Assessment Focus follows a four year rolling programme.

Particular assessment sheets are completed where all children are assessed against key learning objectives. The document "Levels of Attainment in Religious Education in Catholic Schools" is used to enable teachers to make accurate judgments on pupils' achievement.

Samples of children's work are stored in portfolios. This demonstrates what the expected level of achievement is, in RE, in each year group in relation to Diocesan expectations.

All Assessment sheets for each strand can be found on the shared drive.

Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

The monitoring of the standards of the children's work and the quality of teaching in RE is the responsibility of the RE subject leader. The RE subject leader is also responsible for supporting colleagues in the teaching of RE, 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 leader gives regular summary reports in line with our MER Policy in which strengths and weaknesses in the subject are evaluated and areas for further improvement are identified. The RE subject leader has specially allocated time for carrying out the vital task of reviewing samples of the children's work and for visiting classes to observe the teaching of RE. This process of review also helps to determine priorities for the SIP.

8. Teaching and Learning Styles

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 enable children to build on their own experiences and extend their knowledge and understanding of religious traditions. We use their experience at religious festivals such as Easter, Diwali, and Passover to develop their religious thinking. We

organise 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. 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 assemblies. Children lead assemblies and prayer services.

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 common tasks which are open-ended and can have a variety of responses;
- setting tasks of increasing difficulty (not all children expected to complete all tasks);
- grouping the children by ability in the room and setting differentiated tasks;
- providing resources of different complexity, adapted to the ability of the child;
- directing classroom assistants to support the work of individuals or groups of children.

9. Contribution of Religious Education to the teaching of other subjects

English

- Religious Education contributes significantly to the teaching of English in our school by actively promoting the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Some of the texts that we use in Literacy lessons have religious themes or content, which encourage discussion and this is our way of promoting the skills of speaking and listening. We also encourage the children to write letters and record information in order to develop their writing ability.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

- We use ICT where appropriate in Religious Education. The children find, select and analyse information, using the Internet and network-based programs. They also use ICT to review, modify and evaluate their work to improve its presentation.

Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Citizenship

- Through our Religious Education lessons, we teach the children about the values and moral beliefs that underpin individual choices of behaviour. So, for example, we contribute to the discussion of topics such as smoking, drugs and health education. We also promote the values and attitudes required for Citizenship in a democracy by teaching respect for others and the need for personal responsibility. In general, by promoting tolerance and understanding of other people, we enable children to appreciate what it means to be positive members of our pluralistic society.

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.

10. Resources

We have a variety of resources in our school to fully support the implementation of the RE strategy. We keep resources for Religious Education in a central site appropriately labeled for easy access. There are sets of Bibles for both Key Stages and a collection of religious artefacts which we use to enrich teaching in Religious Education. The school library has a good supply of RE topic books to support the children's individual research.

11. Inclusion and Equal Opportunities

In line with school policy, all children have access to the whole curriculum.

St Augustine's School approaches Religious Education in the light of the Catholic Faith tradition. However, children of other faiths are accepted and welcomed into our community. The parents of such children are made aware of our philosophy, aims and objectives but the faith of these children is respected. We encourage them to share their background and beliefs with other children at appropriate times, aiming to encourage tolerance, respect and understanding between cultures and traditions represented in the country as a whole.

English as an Additional Language

At St Augustine's, we encourage all our children to achieve the highest possible standards. We do this through taking account of each child's life experiences and needs. A number of our children have particular learning and assessment requirements which are linked to their progress in learning English as an additional language.

When delivering the RE curriculum we ensure we meet the full range of needs of those children who are learning English as an additional language. This is in line with the requirements of the Race Relations Act 1976 and our equal opportunities policy.

The RE curriculum can create different language demands which we identify and address. (see EAL policy)

Teaching Religious Education to children with additional needs

In our school we teach RE to all children, whatever the ability. When teaching RE, we ensure that we provide learning opportunities matched to the needs of children with learning difficulties. We take into account the targets set for individual children in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

12. Links with the parents and the Community

We are aware of the important role which parents have in the education of their children and acknowledge them as the first teachers of their child in the ways of the Faith.

Parents are regularly invited to celebrate non-Eucharistic and Eucharistic liturgies, including Masses and assemblies. Parents are involved in the preparation of their children for First Confession, Communion and Confirmation. Parents receive termly curriculum information booklets outlining the content of the RE curriculum for that period of time.

13. Links with the Parish

St Augustine's School is part of the parish of St Augustine's and strives to form a close relationship with the parish.

The role of our Parish Priest is very important and we endeavour to involve him not only in the liturgical life of the school but also in the pastoral care system and other areas where his talents and gifts may be used.

We involve the children in a weekly parish Mass. Preparation for the Sacraments is a partnership of school, home and Parish.

14. Health and Safety

Visits to the church must be approved by both Parish Priest and Headteacher.

When visiting the church, adequate levels of supervision must be adhered to at all times.

The pupils are not allowed to light candles. They may blow out candles on the altar using the appropriate instrument.

15. Link Governor

The Vice Chair of the Governing Body, Mrs Barbara Lewis, is the RE Link Governor.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed annually by staff and governors or earlier if local or national directives are received.