

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC VOLUNTARY ACADEMY



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

Mission Statement

'By working together at St Mary's school we aim through Jesus Christ to share God's love, helping our community to learn, grow and make a difference.'

The Importance of the Role of Parents in Religious Education

St. Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy recognises the central role parents have in the religious education of their children. The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales re-iterated in their statement on Religious Education in Catholic Schools (2000): "The first educators in the faith are parents." In recognition of this, we strive to maintain a faithful partnership with parents, communicating clearly both the curriculum and the wider spiritual opportunities offered to families and warmly inviting parents to share their knowledge and experiences with the school community. Our school works closely in partnership with the home and St. Mary's Church community to which our children belong. The General Directory for Catechesis confirms, "This partnership between home and parish is enhanced by the role of the Catholic school in which the educational mission of the Church finds a particular and important expression." Religious Education in a Catholic school encompasses the whole educational mission of the Church and is not confined to timetabled Religious Education lessons.

The Importance of Religious Education Religious education is the "core of the core curriculum" in a Catholic school ([Pope St John Paul II](#)). Placing religious education at the core of the curriculum helps the school to fulfill its mission to educate the whole person in discerning the meaning of their existence, since **"Religious Education is concerned not only with intellectual knowledge but also includes emotional and affective learning. It is in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of what it is to be human truly becomes clear. Without religious education, pupils would be deprived of an essential element of their formation and personal development, which helps them attain a vital harmony between faith and culture."** ([Religious Education Curriculum Directory p4](#)).

Our Aims for Religious Education:

Through the content and delivery of the curriculum we aim to:

- nurture our children's faith and in general foster their religious, spiritual and moral development
- share our faith experiences along with those of the children
- explore the religious dimensions of questions about life and purpose within the Catholic tradition
- encourage the children to recognise and respect other faith traditions
- enable children to develop as responsible, caring members of society
- to give R.E. a high priority in the schools curriculum, not only a subject in its own right , but permeating every subject, and extending into every area of the schools daily life.

The Curriculum

At St. Mary's CVA, religious education is primarily based on the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RED) "To Know You More Clearly". In line with the Bishop's mandate, this curriculum will be fully implemented from Reception to Year 6 by September 2027. In recognition of the importance of religious education in our school, we devote 10% of the teaching week to religious education lessons. In Key Stage 1 this is 2 hours 15 minutes and in Key Stage 2 this is 2 hours and 30 minutes, not including Celebration of the Word. In Early Years, the timetable and learning style is more flexible, but teaching of Religious Education is prioritised to give children the opportunity to engage fully with the curriculum.

The Religious Education Directory has a clear framework for learning:

Four Knowledge Lenses: Hear, Believe, Live and Celebrate indicate what should be known by the end of each age phase.

- Ways of Knowing: Understand, Discern and Respond are the skills through which children progress and develop their thinking during the curriculum journey.
- Expected Outcomes set out for each year group what pupils should be able to know, remember and do.
- Curriculum Branches divide the model curriculum into half-term units of study which repeat annually, giving a spiral curriculum which allows children to build progressively on the prior knowledge and develop their understanding year by year.

The curriculum Branches are:

- Advent 1 - Creation and Covenant
- Advent 2 - Prophecy and Promise
- Lent 1 - Galilee to Jerusalem
- Lent 2 - Desert to Garden
- Pentecost 1 - To the Ends of the Earth
- Pentecost 2 - Dialogue and Encounter

Other Faiths and World Views:

Catholic education seeks to form pupils who are well prepared to play a positive role in society and to follow Jesus' teaching to "love your neighbour". We therefore embrace learning about other world views and faiths.

The Religious Education Directory includes a branch called 'Dialogue and Encounter' which focuses specifically on exploring other world views and recognizing the connections with the Catholic faith.

Opportunities for dialogue and encounter are sought throughout the academic year and especially focus on broadening pupils' experiences and on real-life encounters with those of other faiths or none, to enable connections and develop understanding.

Our Faith underpins all aspects of the curriculum at St. Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy. We also nurture the respect for other faiths through the study of Judaism in the Advent Term and one other faith in the Pentecost Term. The whole school study Hinduism, Sikhism or Islam on rotation.

Teaching Methods:

Our R.E. programme encourages us to share faith experiences with the children using a broad range of teaching and assessment methods.

At St. Mary's CVA, the teaching of religious education is designed to be as varied and creative as possible, to help children to engage fully with the ideas explored, to ask wondering questions and to lead their own learning in discerning their response.

Learning within the classroom may include:

- Whole class discussion and teaching
- Group discussion and feedback
- Drama and role play
- Independent research
- Exploration through music and art
- External speakers / workshops

Learning in religious education cannot always be recorded and does not begin or end in the classroom. Learning from religious education will also flow into other curriculum areas as pupils make links between their learning. We aim to give children the opportunity to connect their formal learning with their wider understanding through regular opportunities to reflect and respond.

Learning beyond the classroom may include:

- Following the example of a role model in daily life at home or in school
- Participation in charitable activity and fundraising
- Inspiration through reflection in prayer and liturgy
- Conversations with clergy or parishioners in school
- Response to catechesis in the parish e.g for Reconciliation or First Holy Communion
- Engagement with programmes based on Catholic Social Teaching (CST) e.g. Faith in Action; Live Simple Award and ACN Apostles.

We also aim to ensure that links are maintained with homes and the parish, acknowledging that the first responsibility for the formation of Faith lies with parents.

Special Needs:

We recognise the uniqueness of each of our children. Therefore it is our responsibility to ensure that the children's learning is appropriate to their individual needs.

Equal Opportunities:

It is our responsibility to ensure that religious education in its fullest sense is accessible to all who come to St. Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy.

Feedback, Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Developmental feedback is given in Religious Education to support children's progress and to challenge their thinking. This follows the school's Marking & Feedback Policy and may be given verbally. Assessment follows diocesan and national guidelines, assessing against the expected outcomes for each branch in the Religious Education Directory. Pupil attainment is recorded termly on the Trust assessment recording system Insight and progress is tracked regularly by the RE Lead and SLT. The RE Lead moderates outcomes in Religious Education both internally and with local Catholic schools, to ensure consistency of expectations with other schools in the diocese. Outcomes for Religious Education are shared in line with other core curriculum subjects, both during parent consultation meetings and in end-of-year reports.

Monitoring and Evaluating

The RE Lead and SLT/Governance monitor every aspect of Religious Education in line with other core curriculum subjects. Monitoring is conducted at least termly (this takes the form of lesson observations, book scrutiny and pupil voice) and feedback is given to individual staff. Outcomes may inform further training at staff meetings or actions for the subject action plan. Self-evaluation of Religious Education is the responsibility of the Headteacher, the RE Lead, Governors and the Senior Leadership Team, with further input from all teachers of religious education, from families and from pupils. This process ensures a culture of continuous improvement, so that teaching and learning in Religious Education remains the best it can be.

Staff Formation

All staff support the Catholic ethos of our school and strive to develop children's progress and understanding in matters of faith. There are regular opportunities for all staff to engage in personal prayer and reflection which may support their professional role.

All teachers involved in planning and delivering Religious Education lessons have attended termly diocesan training on the curriculum directory resources. The RE Lead collaborates with other local schools to share best practice more widely.

Guidance on the right of withdrawal from religious education and/or collective worship in schools in England (CES)

- (i) The right of withdrawal from Religious Education and/or Collective Worship Parents of pupils in VA schools and voluntary academies are permitted, by law, to request that their child is withdrawn from receiving all or part of religious education and/or collective worship given at the school and any such request shall stand until such time that a parent's request is withdrawn.

Date of Policy:

July 2026

Date of next review

September 2029