# St. Mary's R.C. Primary School

# St. Mary’s Catholic Primary RE Policy

# Our Mission Statement

# We come together as Saint Mary’s family,

# to learn, share our faith,

# and do our best

# to follow in the footsteps of Jesus

# To achieve our mission statement through RE the school will:

* help pupils to live and learn in a Catholic Christian environment leading to acceptance and respect of others in a diverse school community and wider world
* provide an environment in which high expectations will lead to a striving for excellence in all areas of school life
* educate and develop each member of the school community by building on their strengths and supporting their weaknesses
* foster purposeful relationships with those who learn in, work in and visit our school where diverse views and backgrounds are respected

Introduction

St. Mary's School is a voluntary-aided Roman Catholic School, in the Diocese of Salford. As a school founded by the Catholic Church, St. Mary's School bases its teaching on the Gospel message of God's immeasurable love for us, and invites the children to respond by loving God and by loving their neighbour as themselves. So the children are encouraged to take Jesus as their model.

St. Mary's School achieves this by teaching the children to know and love God and His creation. This teaching permeates all aspects of the curriculum and the daily life of the school. This teaching is celebrated in the worship and liturgies, rites and rituals of the Catholic Church. Parents are encouraged to uphold and reinforce the fundamentals of the Catholic faith that are taught in the school.

St. Marys School demonstrates openness to all baptised Catholic children especially the poor and the troubled. It endeavours to see that all children present in the school may learn happily with others, and are given the opportunity to develop their full potential. To this end, St. Mary's School encourages the children to develop self-esteem, self-respect and self-discipline as well as a tolerance of and respect for others.

The Place of R.E. in the School

St. Mary's School fully believes that Religious Education is the foundation of all our teaching and the entire educational process. The Christian Catholic beliefs and values inspire and unify every aspect of our school life. They are the basis and essential influence on our school curriculum.

Religious Education is linked to all our teaching and the key areas of the children's learning. This is because we see education as being God's work, and so education is religious in that it concerns discovering the breadth and depth of God's creation and His creatures. Hence, whatever area of the curriculum children are studying they are actively learning about:

* the mysteries and wonders of God's creation
* the challenges and discoveries that are presented to them
* the uniqueness and dignity of individual people
* how they can enjoy God's world.

Leadership of Religious Education

Religious Education is the responsibility of the R.E. subject leader / head teacher. This role is to monitor and assess the R.E. curriculum throughout the school to ensure continuity and progression. A governor has specific responsibility for R.E. and liaises closely with the staff of the school to fulfil their monitoring duties.

Curriculum Content

R.E. is a core subject in our school, alongside English, Maths and Science, and therefore we devote 10% of our curriculum time to its delivery. This provides a cohesive approach and opportunities for whole school assemblies and celebrations as well as displays which are relevant to every child.

The core of our RE curriculum is based on the programme “Come and See”.

Assessment and Recording

The assessment of Religious Education at our school is designed to assist our children's learning and to enable them to strive for a feeling of confidence and success in their understanding of the Catholic faith.

Progress is monitored through discussion, questioning, posing problems and giving opportunities to present their knowledge to others in a variety of ways, e.g. class assemblies.

Attainment level records are completed at the end of each half term to show children's levels of understanding.

Marking

In line with the school's marking policy, the marking of children's religious work should always be positive and supportive to encourage the child in his/her faith journey.

Teaching Staff

All teachers at St. Mary's School are either Roman Catholics or are sympathetic to the teaching of the Catholic faith which permeates all aspects of our school life. Through example, commitment and teaching, the children are encouraged to develop a loving and trusting relationship with God, an experience which it is hoped will influence their attitudes to life and their relationship with other people. All teaching staff have the responsibility of teaching Religious Education to the children in their class.

Discussion of approaches between teachers is vitally important as well as regular discussions taking place at our staff meetings. Discussion may also be held with our secondary colleagues.

All staff are encouraged to regularly attend relevant courses.

Home Links

The school recognises that it cannot teach our children without the co­operation of the parents and the parish. The parents/guardians are the first educators and they are in partnership with the teachers who have the professional skills and training to help parents in the task of teaching the Catholic faith.

We endeavour to do this in an atmosphere of trust and confidence. During the year, parents and friends are invited to join us at many celebrations.

At the beginning of the school year we hold a welcome ceremony for new members of our community. At the end of the year we hold a goodbye ceremony to say farewell to anyone leaving us and to thank them for their contribution and commitment to the life of our school.

Parents are always invited and welcomed to all our school and class celebrations which include school masses and assemblies.

Parish Links

We recognise that the school stands in the midst of the local community. At parish level, we take an active part in the holy days of obligation masses in the parish church. In addition, the whole school goes to Mass on the first Wednesday of each month.

We give regular support to CAFOD our children to become aware of the needs of the wider world of children and families overseas. This leads to an appreciation of the diversity of culture, races and faiths within the world.

Parish Priest

The parish priest, who is also a governor of the school, has responsibility for the pastoral care of the school community. The parish priest promotes the spiritual life of the 'school church'. He leads the celebration of liturgies, mass, penitential services, and the Ash Wednesday service. In addition, the parish priest visits the school on a weekly basis to discuss the topics being studied with each class in their R.E. lessons.

Prayer

An essential part of the Catholic ethos of the school is the prayer life. Staff meetings and Governors meetings begin with a prayer. The most important aspect of prayer for children is that they realise it is their way of communicating with God and is first and foremost a personal occasion.

Children are encouraged to pray in different ways according to their age and personal development. Our ‘Come and See’ programme offers progression for children as they move through the school. Children are introduced to a variety of different ways of praying:

* quiet reflection / meditation
* praying together
* writing own prayers
* prayers through music
* learning traditional Christian / Catholic prayers

Staff are encouraged to pray with children, and to be an example for them. Through prayer, we endeavour to develop our relationship with God.

Class prayers are established throughout the school and each teacher uses prayers appropriate to age and ability of the class. Candles, pictures and objects are also used as a focus for prayer.

Children take part in infant or junior assemblies, and whole school assemblies where children and staff join together to pray. Children are encouraged to pray their own prayers. When there is no whole school assembly, classes will have daily acts of worship including pupil-led liturgy.

Sacramental Preparation

Through our R.E. scheme, knowledge of all the sacraments is established, with special emphasis upon Baptism, Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation. Years 5 & 6 also learn about the Sacrament of the Sick and Holy Orders. The children are prepared through the parish for the Sacrament of First Holy Communion from Year 2. The course of preparation is carried out in the school which works in close consultation and partnership with the priest and catechists. In this way we hope to achieve true partnership between school, family and parish, with the children celebrating their First Communion in their local church.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is also led in the parish. Like the Sacrament of Communion, the preparation for Reconciliation starts at the beginning of the child's school life. It begins with the child's first experiences; teachers and helpers work towards a loving, caring and forgiving atmosphere in school.

Pupils in Years 3-6 will have the opportunity to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation in school during Lent.

Liturgy and Celebration

These are important moments in the life of St. Mary's School; when gathered together round the table of the Lord, the community is nourished and strengthened. Our masses will reflect the liturgical year and other notable occasions such as our start of the school year, First Holy Communion celebration and our leavers’ mass. All children, irrespective of their church affiliation, are involved with the celebration, have a part to play, and so identify with what is happening.  Masses should encourage participation in the preparation of the room, music, mime, processions, gestures, readings and prayers; staff will ensure that the language and symbols used are appropriate to the age group concerned.

Assemblies are occasions for celebrating the children's work and are experiences of worship when all the children are actively involved. The theme of the assembly is usually based on the class topic or on the liturgical year. Class assemblies generally last about twenty minutes and may contain prayers, Bible stories, modern stories with a biblical message, children's prose and poetry, drama, music, dancing and singing.

Our 3 Working Teams

Every child and member of staff at St. Mary’s will be involved in a group that will meet at least once a week. The groups will then feedback back to the rest of the school.

Chaplaincy Team

A group of pupil volunteers work with the staff to prepare for, plan and celebrate school liturgies. The Chaplaincy Team is designed to give the children more ownership and understanding of this central aspect of their faith.

Student Council

Our Student Council is a representative structure for students, through which they can become involved in the affairs of the school, working in partnership with school management, staff and parents for the benefit of the school and its students. The student council works with a teacher, who is the link person between students and staff and management in the school.

Mini Vinnie’s

The Mini Vinnies are the youngest members of the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP), an international Christian voluntary organisation dedicated to tackling poverty in all its forms by providing practical assistance to people in need.

Discipline and Relationships

We believe that children learn best when they are safe and happy. Good relationships between staff and children are paramount. We encourage open, honest discussion with children. Particular care is taken when teaching R.E. to ensure that there is consistency between teaching and practice.

Spiritual and Moral Development

The religious character of our school is seen as giving shape to every aspect of school life, and especially the spiritual and moral development of our children.

Spiritual development is understood as the development of all those aspects which enable us to appreciate goodness, beauty and truth.

Through our teaching, we hope to enable children to reflect on their experiences of life and grow in knowledge of their feelings, needs and reactions. Through their awareness and understanding of themselves, they will recognise God's action in their lives and come to an inner peace and contentment.  In addition, pupils are taught about the importance of the mission of the Church and the school’s contribution to the ‘common good’.

Helping children to make their moral decisions is a crucial part of the formation of a moral conscience. Through our teaching, we aim to help children to have an understanding of the Gospel of Jesus and through self-awareness and self- confidence enable them to come to good moral judgements. Our Behaviour Policy is based on love and respect for the individual.

Multi-Cultural and Multi-Faith

St. Mary's is a Roman Catholic school and therefore by the very religion that causes its existence, it must be a school that encourages tolerance, respect and care for all people, regardless of colour, race or creed.

Whilst Religious Education at St Mary’s is specifically of the Christian Roman Catholic tradition, we welcome input from other faiths and denominations. We appreciate how the beliefs and values of other faith communities can enrich our own spiritual existence.  We teach and learn about the other major faiths within our scheme of work, ’Come and See’

Environment

It is our intention that the environment of our school reflects our mission statement and that we are providing a caring, well ordered and stimulating environment that reflects our Christian beliefs.

Work is displayed in a variety of ways throughout the school. Each classroom has an R.E. area with a display board and prayer area, where the children's mission statement is displayed. The display board will reflect the colour theme of the liturgical year. There is a Religious Education display board at the front entrance to the school. Bibles, candles, artefacts and pictures are all used to enhance and present our Catholic faith.

What every New Teacher needs to know

* Help and guidance can be found in our New Teachers Handbook and in this Policy.
* Any questions directly relating to Religious Education should be asked of the R.E. Co-ordinator / head teacher.

Resources

* Resource books for staff can be found in the staff room
* Posters and pictures are stored in the cupboard unit in the hall
* The school library has a variety of religious books
* Musical instruments are in the year 5/6 classroom
* The mass box and altar cloths can be found in the stock cupboard

The following resources can be found within the school:

* A class set of Bibles in each KS2 class
* A selection of candles
* Other faith resources in each class room

Health & Safety

The school's Health and Safety Policy applies to all aspects of R.E. teaching. Staff should note:

* when using candles it is important that children must never be left alone with lit candles or allowed to light them or blow them out unsupervised.
* the dangers of lit candles and have a container of water nearby.
* incense and scented candles add greatly to a quiet meditative environment, but it must be remembered that children with asthma may find this uncomfortable.

Special Needs

The R.E. curriculum, as with other areas of the curriculum, is differentiated to meet the needs of our children through our long-, medium- and short-term planning.

In the classroom we intend:

* to provide a happy, caring environment so that all children can achieve their potential
* that plans should indicate a variety of learning styles for all children
* that children's work should show a variety of recording to suit all abilities
* that teaching should focus on learning outcomes and provide for individual and group work
* to build on the child's strengths to allow maximum participation in all activities
* that all children be allowed to grow spiritually and to develop a strong sense of the value of God's world.

Information Technology

All classes have access to laptops and other ICT equipment which will be used to enhance R.E. teaching and learning.

Review

The school will undertake an annual review of Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school with input from the governing body, staff, parents, pupils and our diocesan adviser. Outcomes will be used to plan training and development needs for the upcoming year and prioritise actions in the following school development cycle.

**Appendix 1 Sacramental Preparation**

The sacramental preparation of the children of St. Mary’s School is the role of the head teacher.

The school keeps in close touch with the leader of the catechetical team.

 First Holy Communion is commonly celebrated by children in Year 3, although children from other classes may join in with the programme. Reconciliation is celebrated as well.

The school encourages children in their steps in faith through the R.E. curriculum by the emphasis given to aspects of that curriculum at these important times.

**Eucharist**

The school encourages all of the children to take part in Eucharist celebrations, within the school community and within the parish. Special roles are given to particular school years in these celebrations, and all children are asked to take part in hymns, prayers and readings.

However, we lay special emphasis on:

* Welcoming, at the start of the year/term/ week and at the start of celebrations.
* Recognition of the Eucharist as sharing, of giving thanks for gifts, especially bread and wine as gifts of the earth.
* Taking part in celebration where the children have been involved in making special food and giving it as a gift.
* Developing the idea of offertory and of ourselves as gifts.
* Recognising that we are a community, of the past and present, and that as members of that community we need to take care of each other.
* Developing, through celebrations of the liturgical seasons, the need to accept responsibility for sin and put matters right: the recognition of special meals shared by Jesus with his friends, knowing that he gave his life for us.
* Going forth to follow Jesus, at the end of the celebration and at the end of the year.

**Reconciliation**

We encourage our children in celebrating this sacrament by emphasising the following aspects of our R.E. syllabus:

* Taking responsibility - in school for younger pupils, for the school environment, for their own behaviour.
* Developing awareness that their actions affect others - their rights are others' responsibilities.
* Through stories of famous people/saints to recognise that through repentance and forgiveness lives can be changed.
* Being aware of how peace can be broken, around the school, in the wider community and between nations and what can be done to 'build bridges'.
* The celebration of repentance and reconciliation in services in Advent and Lent and at the start of every Mass.
* The idea of new starts / new life at Easter.
* That Jesus is with us every day as we move on in our lives and in our faith.

We are a worshipping community; all our children take part in that worship. We are a part of the worshipping community that is the parish. We encourage parishioners to take part in the life of the school, to join us for assemblies, mass, to visit on open days, to volunteer their services to help with art / craft / literacy. We work to develop our links with the parish so that children can be fully involved in the life of the parish primarily in sacramental preparation and celebration.

**Appendix 2 - Collective Worship**

We acknowledge the legal requirement that there must be a daily act of worship for all pupils. (This can take place at any time during the school day and can be either a single act of worship for all pupils, or separate acts of worship in school groups).

The act of worship is distinct from R.E. lessons. It forms an integral part of school life and is central to the Catholic tradition. In this voluntary aided Catholic School, responsibility for arranging collective worship rests with the governing body after consultation with the head teacher.

Those responsible will ensure that acts of worship are in accordance with the school’s instrument of governance and consistent with the rites and practices of the Catholic Church.

As a Catholic school we hope that parents will be fully supportive of our approach to collective worship as part of living out our mission statement. However, we recognise that parents have the right to withdraw their children from collective worship and in such circumstances appropriate supervision arrangements will be made.

Collective worship is celebrated in a variety of ways including: whole school worship; class worship; worship through hymns; class mass or liturgy; whole school masses during the year, including holy days of obligation during term time.

Collective worship in our school community provides opportunities to:

deepen our relationship with God; grow in spiritual, moral and liturgical understanding; grow in understanding of our living faith tradition; develop a sense of wonder and inspiration in the person of Christ; reflect upon our own individual faith journeys; develop the skills of prayer.

September 2023

To be reviewed September 2024