St. Michael's

Catholic Primary & Nursery School

RE Handbook

St Michael's: RE Handbook
Date: Autumn 2026

Aims and Objectives of Religious Education

The Aim of Religious Education

In the life of faith at St. Michael's Catholic Primary School, religious education plays a central and vital part. At the heart of Catholic education lies the Christian vision of the human person. This vision is expressed and explored in religious education. Therefore, religious education is never simply one subject among many, but the foundation of the entire educational process. The beliefs and values studied in Catholic religious education inspire and draw together every aspect of the life of a Catholic school.

The aim of Religious Education at St. Michael's encompasses all children from whatever background providing collaborative activities which respects and promotes the child's innate capacity for wonder, awe, reverence, imagination - for the spiritual.

The aims of Religious Education are:

1. to engage in a systematic study of the mystery of God, of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the teachings of the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold, the basis for them and the relationship between faith and life;
2. to enable pupils continually to deepen their religious and theological understanding and be able to communicate this effectively;
3. to present an authentic vision of the Church's moral and social teaching to provide pupils with a sure guide for living and the tools to critically engage with contemporary culture and society;
4. to give pupils an understanding of the religions and worldviews present in the world today and the skills to engage in respectful and fruitful dialogue with those whose worldviews differ from their own;
5. to develop the critical faculties of pupils so to bring clarity to the relationship between faith and life, and between faith and culture;
6. to stimulate pupils' imagination and provoke a desire for personal meaning as revealed in the truth of the Catholic faith;

7. to enable pupils to relate the knowledge gained through religious education to their understanding of other subjects in the curriculum.

(Religious Education Curriculum Directory: To Know You More Clearly, 2024)

The following strategies and aims underpin the effective delivery of Religious Education in our school.

- Religious education is the core of the core curriculum and is to be the source and summit of the whole curriculum.
- Religious education will be taught discretely and developmentally. It will include engaging and comprehensive content to deepen knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith, of key theological ideas and their application to life and culture.
- Ample opportunities will be offered for children to apply and use their knowledge and skills in cross-curricular studies to deepen their understanding of religious truths and think creatively.
- Engagement with their own and others' beliefs and values will help to develop good attitudes and dispositions so that children are instilled with a love of learning and a desire to go on learning.
- Pupils' awareness of the faith and traditions of other religious communities will encourage respect and understanding.
- Engagement with difficult questions of meaning and purpose, which everyone has to face, will enable them to think critically about their own questions of meaning and purpose.
- Offer the children a sense of self-worth through their experience of belonging to a caring community and an awareness of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.

Objectives

In order to achieve our aim, we will utilise a religious education programme which:

- Will provide opportunities for celebration, prayer, and reflection in implicit and explicit ways.
- Will provide children with the language of religious experience - a 'literacy' in religious activities, places, stories, symbols and rituals, peoples and objects.
- Will present a 'systematic presentation of the Christian event, message and way of life', in ways appropriate to the age and stage of development of the child.
- Will require that the adults involved understand the underlying theological as well as educational principles.

- Will provide the adults with adequate preparation for teaching about other faiths in context with the Religious Education Directory
- Will be delivered within a broad and balanced curriculum, where it informs every aspect of the curriculum. Every other subject is to be informed by religious education and have a strong relationship with it.
- Respects the need for support for Religious Education co-ordinators and for Inset training.
- Respects the different pastoral needs and practices within our parish and supports the need for sacramental catecheis.

The Religious Education Programme

Religious Education is at the core of our curriculum at St Michael's Catholic Primary School. Our curriculum complies with the Requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales and has been designed in line with the new Religious Education Directory (To Know You More Clearly).

With support from the Liverpool Archdiocese, we introduced the new Religious Education Directory (RED) 'To know you more Clearly' and have implemented it successfully from Nursery to Year 5. Year 6 will begin in the 2027/2028 academic year.

This new directory seeks to present the teaching of religious education in a sequential and progressive form, rooted in the liturgical year. The framework has four structural elements:

- **Knowledge lenses** which indicate what should be known by the end of each age phase. These are split into hear, believe, live and celebrate.
- The '**ways of knowing**' are the skills which develop as the children progress through their curriculum journey. These are split into understand, discern and respond.
- **Expected outcomes** are set for each age phase and indicate what pupils are expected to know, remember and be able to do.
- Curriculum **branches** are the way the programme of study presents its model curriculum. There are six half term branches which are the same in each year group:



Autumn 1, Branch 1- Creation and Covenant - Encounter the God who creates and calls all people with a focus on the accounts of Creation.

Autumn 2, Branch 2 - Prophecy and Promise - Explore the expectant waiting for the Messiah through the Advent season.

Spring 1, Branch 3 - Galilee to Jerusalem - Experience the ministry of Jesus and the Word of God. They will learn through parables, encounters, miracles and teachings.

Spring 2, Branch 4 - Desert to Garden - Study the season of Lent and its culmination in the events of Holy Week.

Summer 1, Branch 5 - To the ends of the Earth - Study the events that flowed from the Resurrection and Ascension in the coming of the Holy Spirit and the work of the apostles and early Church.

Summer 2, Branch 6 - Dialogue and Encounter - Learn how Christians work together with people of different religious backgrounds, building an understand that all people work towards a common good and should respect all humanity.

Planning

The Bishops' require 10% of the taught time for Religious Education in Years 1 to 6. This time does not include prayer and liturgy, singing assembly, whole school assemblies etc. This time allocation needs to be distributed appropriately across the timetable to ensure quality time is given for effective teaching and learning throughout the week. The Senior Leadership Team are responsible for this.

Long Term Planning
The focus of each half term (each branch) is set out in the Religious Education Directory (see Appendix 1).

Medium term planning
The focus of each half term (each branch) is set out in the Religious Education Directory (see Appendix 1).

Short term planning
Teachers are well supported in their short term planning.

All year groups are provided with medium term planning documents from the Archdiocese which contain key concepts, Scripture and lesson ideas. Teachers from St. Michael's adapt the planning and suit the needs of our pupils and ensure best practice. Teachers can speak to the RE co-ordinator, Mrs Hillier, for further support if needed.

Lesson pedagogy
All Religious Education lessons will have a clear focus on an 'Expected Outcome' taken from the Religious Education Directory. To achieve this outcome, there will a learning objective using 'driver words' shared with the children. (see appendix 2 for driver words).

Teachers will draw on prior learning, recapping key knowledge, vocabulary, rituals, etc.
Cover pages at the start of each topic will be used as a reference tool for vocabulary and expected outcomes.

All lessons will begin with 'Hear', where Scripture is shared with the children. This will be done in a variety of ways to bring Scripture alive, to allow children to make deeper connections with the Word of God and the lives of His people. However, the Bible reading will always heard first from the source.

Teachers deliver the 'knowledge content' of the lesson using a range of approaches: discussion, video, PowerPoint, drawing ideas from artworks, questions posed to visitors, etc. Teachers will ensure all pupils are exposed to progressive religious vocabulary used by the Catholic Church.

Key knowledge and vocabulary will be referred to on the cover page and RE display in classes.

The children will develop their religious knowledge, skills and understanding through an independent, paired or group learning tasks. This can take many forms: dance, song, discussion, debate, art, design, composition, instrument playing, a written task, drama, etc.

A plenary will be used to recap key knowledge content, address errors or gaps in knowledge and deepen understanding.

Throughout all stages of a lesson, teachers and support staff will assess pupil attainment through questioning, observing and monitoring, and will provide verbal feedback, or quick reviews to ensure children are secure with key knowledge content.

Foundation stage approach

The content of RED for Nursery and Reception will be delivered through:

- Whole class core input: teacher led
- Adult directed group activities: teacher or assistants work with groups of children
- Continuous provision: child centred learning across the areas of learning in the foundation stage

Religious education contributes to the areas of learning outlined in the curriculum for the foundation stage but has a particular and important contribution to:

- Personal, social and emotional development
- Communication and language
- Literacy
- Understanding of the world
- Expressive arts and design

Adaptive teaching

As with all other areas of the curriculum, the purpose of making adaptations in religious education is:

- To enable children to succeed in the set task or activity and to challenge them to take the next
- step in learning;
- To challenge children to be self-motivated and to take responsibility for their own learning;
- To enable children to recognise and celebrate their achievement;

Teachers will continually assess the strengths and needs of learners and adapt their teaching accordingly to ensure all learners can meet expectations.

Children learn in different ways, so as with other subjects, it is necessary to provide a range of learning activities using a variety of media.

Additional learning needs and/or disabilities

It is essential to take into account all children with a variety of additional learning needs and plan accordingly.

The following approaches take into account a wide range of special needs:

- Providing opportunities to eat or taste, to look at, to smell, to touch, to listen to and to and engage with (a multisensory approach).
- Providing a variety of materials, toys, food, interactive objects which engage children's curiosity and involves them in sharing and taking turns (motivational stimuli).
- Music – songs to sing, music to move to and especially songs with sign language and action songs. Music is often an effective way of marking the start and finish of a session and creating a sense of celebration or reflection/stillness.
- Using a variety of media to animate a story and bring a theme to life, for example, objects named in the story or key to the theme, the use of puppets or role play.
- Reassurance and predictability are especially important. A familiar structure for each session builds confidence and if a change is planned it is important to let children know. Some children may benefit from a visual schedule to guide them through the sequence of activities.

In their planning and delivery of the RED, teachers will provide meaningful and appropriate religious education experiences for all children, taking account of different needs, abilities and learning styles.

Teaching Other Faiths/Religions

As they progress through school, pupils will study:

- Other Christian denominations
- Judaism
- Islam
- Dharmic religions and pathways
- Other religions and worldviews, including non-religious worldviews

The children will study other faiths, other religions, other worldviews during 'Branch 6'. The children will encounter this content through two lenses: dialogue

and encounter. 'Dialogue' and 'Encounter' set out the requirements in relation to the teaching of other religions and worldviews.

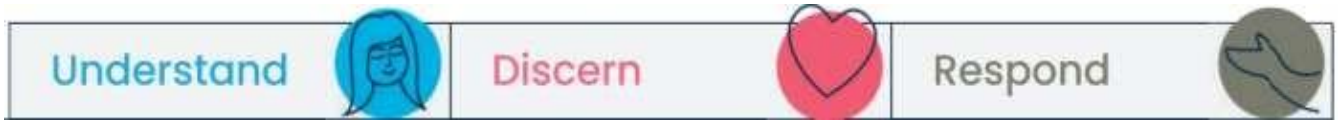
Recording

At St. Michael's, recording provides evidence of - and celebrates - the individuals' achievements. Recording takes a range of formats:

- Each child from Year 1 to Year 6 has an RE book in which they can record their work.
- Class Dojo is used to evidence any practical work: dance, song, drama, discussion, etc.
- Work is marked in line with our marking and feedback policy.

Assessment

The **ways of knowing** describe the skills that pupils develop as they progress through the religious education curriculum. They are called ways of knowing since they describe the holistic ways human beings experience education: as a growth in understanding, as a creative and critical assimilation, and as a recognition of the application of learning to one's own life. The three ways of knowing are 'understand', 'discern', and 'respond'. Both the skills of 'understand' and 'discern' are assessed termly at St. Michael's in line with all other subjects.



Assessment at St. Michael's involves:

- Informal assessment
- General observations
- Teacher judgement

Formal assessment tasks at the end of each half term are currently being trialled and developed.

Evaluation of teaching and monitoring

It is important that all opportunities are taken to evaluate our teaching of Religious Education. This can be done individually and collectively and in a variety of ways including:

- Discussion at staff meetings and INSET
- Observation of assemblies and liturgies
- Displays of children's work

- Observation and monitoring of class teaching
- Pupil Voice
- Self evaluation (See CSED)

Reporting

There are four dimensions to reporting in Religious Education:

- To provide feedback to pupils in their achievements and progress.
- To inform colleagues of the achievements of individual pupils and the areas studied by a class and year group.
- To inform parents of the progress and achievement of their children.
- To inform parents, governors, parish and external agencies of the content and quality of Religious Education being provided and the achievements of the pupils.

Formal reporting to parents is done throughout the year at Parents' Evenings and at the end of year through the child's written report.

Religious Life

Resources

Staff communication

Time will be given for staff to communicate and consult at staff meetings and in the provision of time on INSET days. Time will also be given for the Subject Leader to feedback when they have been to briefings.

Staff induction

The Senior Leadership Team will ensure that all new staff receive appropriate CPD in order to carry out their aims of our RE curriculum, wider Catholic Life and the Mission of the Catholic Church. Adequate support will be put in place to develop less confident or knowledgeable staff members.

Staff development and training

At St. Michael's, staff development is seen as crucial in raising standards of achievements for all our children. Staff meetings and INSET form an integral part of this development for the whole staff incorporating development of subject knowledge and self-evaluation. The RE co-ordinator, Mrs Hillier, ensures that staff attend training where appropriate.

Relationship of Religious Education to the whole curriculum

Prayer and Liturgy

The children participate in prayer throughout each school day. Celebration of The Word is carried out weekly as part of an assembly or within individual classrooms. Prayer and Liturgy will be in many forms giving time for greeting, praise, thanksgiving, forgiveness, celebration, reflection, meditation and spiritual growth.

Spiritual and Moral Development

Our Religious Education work must affect the Spiritual and Moral development of all the children in the school, we also ensure all subjects help to develop these important areas. The children need to see the wonder of God in all things and need to know right from wrong; this is reflected in all that we do in our school – Daily Life and Relationships.

Sacramental Preparations

Children will receive Reconciliation and Holy Communion in Year 4.
Sacramental Preparation is a three-way process: Home – Parish – School. Whilst the school plays an integral role in preparation, what is done in school is closely co-ordinated with the catechesis (the process of educating to and in faith) offered at home. Guidance is given to parents on how they can help their child with the programme preparation at home. This process puts a strong emphasis on the collective role of School, Home and Parish in children's faith development.

Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy

The RED links strongly to the teaching of RSHE, using Journey in Love. We have mapped the links between RE and Journey in Love in order to make clear how they support each other.

Religious Education's influence on other School Policies

As mentioned above, Religious Education must influence all that goes on within our school and does not stand alone as a single subject or lesson. It is both implicit and explicit in many activities with school. Religious Education has a strong bearing on many other policies, including Behaviour, Antibullying, Equality, Safeguarding and Child Protection, Special Educational Needs, Display and throughout our cross-curricular links.

Religious Education is an integral part of the School Improvement Plan and will be considered and prioritised alongside each of the other subject areas. We will try to allocate one INSET day, either as a school or with other Widnes Catholic schools, every year to Religious Education development.

The school has an R.E. Lead, who works with the rest of the staff to develop Religious Education throughout the school. The RE lead participates in training organised by the Archdiocese and leads in-house school training. They also carry out monitoring of Religious Education. The CSED is reviewed annually to consider teaching, learning, resources, planning, assessment, record keeping and target setting. This informs the RE Leader's Action Plan for the following academic year.

It is the duty of the R.E. Lead to provide appropriate support for all colleagues and particularly for any newly-appointed staff. The R.E. Lead must try to involve the Parish Priest and the Governors in any developments and, in order to do so, they must work hand-in-hand with the Senior Leadership Team.

Evaluation on Religious Education Policy

It is very important that there is constant review and evaluation of Religious Education within the school, as has been mentioned above. This, as stated, will be covered annually and must involve initially the R.E. Lead and Senior Leadership Team, followed by the rest of the staff, the Parish Priest and the Governors. Within this annual review there will have to be continual development and questioning by all staff to ensure that Religious Education is a living and lived out subject within our school.

It will be through this continuous review, evaluation and development of Religious Education that we will try to ensure, just as was stated at the beginning of this document, that Religious Education is a collaborative activity which respects and promotes all children's innate capacity for wonder, awe, reverence, imagination - for the spiritual.

The RE Handbook was reviewed in the Autumn Term 2026. It will be updated annually and reviewed as appropriate.

The RE Handbook has been shared with the Governing body and signed off by Mike Volynchook on their behalf

Signed…….

Date…….