RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
and
CATHOLIC LIFE POLICY

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1. Mission Statement

At Our Lady and St Joseph Catholic Academy, we welcome, nurture, educate and inspire our school community, as members of God's family, to achieve their full potential and grow in faith.

We enable children, in an atmosphere of respect and affectionate trust, to be happy and to grow in their understanding of the Gospel Values thus preparing them to become valuable members of society.

We strive to make the teachings of Christ the source and inspiration of all we do and our mission is:

Forming Christ-centred pilgrims of hope with kind hearts, questioning minds, a thirst for knowledge and a hunger for justice.'

Religious Education is central to the curriculum of the Catholic school and is at the heart of the philosophy of Catholic Education. Religious Education in schools should be regarded as an academic discipline with the same demands and rigour as other subjects. It must present the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness and depth as other subjects.

2. United Conventions on the Rights of a Child.

Article 14

1. States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

2. States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

Article 30

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

3. Aims and Intended Outcomes of Religious Education

Our Religious Education Curriculum aims 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.

The outcomes we intend to achieve:

The outcome of excellent religious education is religiously literate and consciously engaged young people who have the knowledge, understanding, and skills- appropriate to their age and capacity- to reflect spiritually, and think ethically and theologically, and who recognise the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.

Legal Right:

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from Religious Education; however, parents and prospective parents need to be aware that Religious Education impacts on the rest of the curriculum and daily life within the school. Therefore, it can never be confined to 'timetabled slots' but may take place in a variety of contexts other that those which are specifically structured.

4. Approach

As the moral judgement of the child develops slowly and progressively in this key stage, the general atmosphere of the school, classroom and the outlook of staff helps the children develop moral qualities of self-discipline, perseverance, determination, patience, fair play and consideration for others. Additionally, children are taught to love and worship God and live good lives in response to this love, which includes forgiveness of others.

How we will meet our stated aims:

- Provide opportunities for daily prayer, including child-led and spontaneous prayer.
- Demonstrate a caring, inspiring and creative environment to explore the RE curriculum.
- Plan original and stimulating lessons following 'Discerning Disciples'- the Religious Education Programme for Catholic Primary Schools in the Archdiocese of Birmingham.
- Impart religious knowledge and understanding of:
  - Beliefs, teachings and sources.
  - Celebration and ritual.
  - Social and moral practices and way of life.
- Teach children to learn from religion by reflection on meaning by:
  - Engagement with own and other's beliefs and values.
  - Engagement with questions of meaning and purpose.
  - Engagement with analysis and evaluation
- Develop the spiritual life of the pupil by:
  - Delivering the Diocesan Sacramental preparation programme which is inclusive and in accordance with the rites of the Catholic Church.
  - Teaching and providing opportunities for Holy Mass and other Christian celebrations.
  - Providing times for prayer and teaching different mediums of prayer.
- Help the children grow in their faith by providing opportunities through celebration, prayer, learning and reflection.
- Promote the skills required to engage in moral examination of who we are and reflect upon religious belief and practice in who we ought to be.
- Lead children to respect themselves and all others because we are all made in the image and likeness of God and know that everyone is redeemed through Christ Jesus.
- Ensure the living out of the Gospel values and Jesuit virtues, which are linked in with the Commandments of Christ and his Church.
- To teach children that their ministry in life is one mirrored by Christ - King, Priest and Prophet.
  - King- they have been given a special role in life to use and develop their talents to use for the Glory of God and his people.
  - Priest- to live Holy and prayerful lives according to God's Law.
  - Prophet- to be witnesses to the Gospel and proclaim it to all.

5. SMSVC Development

The distinctive nature and religious character of our school is not something restricted to RE lessons, but presents itself in all aspects of our school life, especially in the way we assist the spiritual, moral, vocational, social and cultural development of our pupils. SMSVC helps to give pupils the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to lead confident, healthy, independent lives and to become informed, active, responsible citizens. SMSVC is part of our everyday life alongside the Catholic Pupil Profile and fundamental British Values and is at the heart of everything we do.

Spirituality in Our Lady & Joseph Catholic Academy is concerned with raising and developing an awareness in each person of a sense of God and the way God acts in our world and in our lives.

Social development and Citizenship in Our Lady & St Joseph Catholic Academy is concerned with leading children to understand that we are made not only for ourselves but to live with, in and through community. Only in community are we able to live out Gospel values. We believe that good relationships which are based on mutual respect and love are the

key to a harmonious environment where all can work together towards the common good. We further believe that what is learned in our school community will enable our children to understand the wider community and their Christian role in society.

Moral development in Our Lady & St Joseph Catholic Academy is concerned with giving children the opportunity to learn what is right and wrong and respect the law; understand consequences; investigate moral and ethical issues and offer reasoned views. It is further developed by the enforcement of the school behaviour policy and in the general relationships and attitudes of staff and children to one another.

Cultural development in Our Lady & St Joseph Catholic Academy is concerned with the cultures and traditions represented in our school, its immediate environment, our country and the world. As Catholics, we value the wide cultural diversity in the worldwide expression of our beliefs within our own faith worldwide. We believe that it is our duty to lead our children, through the development of respect and understanding, to learn to live with a wider variety of people from different national, cultural, racial and religious backgrounds.

Vocational Development in Our Lady & St Joseph Catholic Academy is concerned with enabling the children to explain what beliefs and values inspire and influence them and providing them with opportunities to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses and how these relate to their future lives and vocations. They will consider what it means to belong to the Church and understand how Jesus' call to follow him relates to them as individuals. They will develop an understanding that whatever they feel called to do in life is a vocation which calls them to a life of holiness, using their gifts and talents joyfully in the service of 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' footsteps.

6. Gospel Virtues

We follow the Catholic School Pupil Profile which is rooted in Jesuit values. There are eight pairs of virtues which help children to lead better, happier and more fulfilled lives. We plan specific lessons at the start of each half-term to ensure the children understand the meaning of the virtues, where they appear in the Bible and how they can live them through their own lives. We also look for opportunities to explore these themes further through other curriculum areas.
The sets of virtues are:

- Curious and Active
- Intentional and Prophetic
- Grateful and Generous
- Attentive and Discerning
- Compassionate and Loving
- Faith-filled and Hopeful
- Eloquent and Truthful
- Learned and Wise

7. Catholic Social Teaching

All Catholics are called to reach out to others in ways reflected in the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. Children need to be introduced to and nurtured in the ways of social justice so it will become second nature to them.

- God made each one of us and we are special because we are God's creation. This means that we treat others with respect and fairness because God made them too.
- All God's people should have food, work, clothes, a home, school and medical care. These are 'rights.' Jesus wants those who enjoy these rights to help their sisters and brothers obtain their rights. We do this through being a Rights Respecting School and through acts of charity working together for the Common Good.
- All children are taught to be good stewards of God's creation through recycling, litter picking, etc.
- Catholic Social Teaching is embedded across the whole curriculum. This includes children grappling with and answering 'Big Questions' linked to one of the seven core principles:
  - 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 teach the children at Our Lady & St Joseph Catholic Academy how they can make a difference in the world by living out these seven principles.

8. Charitable Outreach and Social Action

Pope Francis told us, 'Faith without action is not faith at all.' Our charities and social action programme is driven by the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and participation in the programme forms a fundamental part of each child's education in Our Lady & St Joseph Catholic Academy.

All children, young people and staff in the St Raphael the Archangel CMAT benefit from the opportunity to actively participate in our Catholic mission by volunteering, fundraising and donating. We are committed to ensuring that our children are educated in actively living out their faith, recognising how they can play a part in supporting vulnerable members of society and knowing that small contributions can make a big difference to the lives of others. Our pursuit of justice, our uncompromising drive to preserve human dignity and to provide an option for the poor is who we are as a Catholic community. We aim to foster and develop an awareness of the needs of others: locally, nationally and globally. Some examples include:

Locally

- **O**ur weekly Foodbank led by schools in our CMAT region provides around 1,000 meals to families within our parish who are facing difficult and unexpected challenges – whether due to job loss, illness, or other unforeseen circumstances. Each team takes on the responsibility of raising funds, creating a thoughtful meal plan, shopping, and sorting the food into bags ready for distribution.
- Fundraising (Pledge a £1) and the Reverse Advent Calendar for Fr Hudson's Caritas, a charity dedicated to making a difference in the lives of vulnerable people across our diocesan community.
- Fundraising for the local homeless charity 'Doorway,' the local hospital and hospice.
- Carol singing at local care homes

Nationally

- Poppy sales for the Royal British Legion
- Macmillan Coffee Morning

Globally

- Operation Christmas Child, an initiative collecting shoe boxes of items to be sent to children around the world.
- Fundraising for CAFOD who support vulnerable communities worldwide.

Children are also taught about the importance of standing up for social justice as an important aspect of Christian life. There are planned opportunities for pupils to engage in campaigns for social justice e.g. contact by letter or face to face with local councillors or our MP, anti-bullying initiatives, mental health days, a variety of awareness days, Live Simply, and child-led groups including the Mini Vinnies.

"A faith without works, a faith that doesn't get you involved isn't faith, its words and nothing more than words'
Pope Francis

9. RE Curriculum

We follow the Diocesan curriculum programme 'Discerning Disciples' which emphasises a comprehensive RE curriculum that addresses pupils' intellect, hearts, and imaginations, focusing on a systematic study of the Catholic faith and life.

The programme is divided into 6 branches which are linked to the Liturgical year:

Autumn 1	**Branch 1- Creation and Covenant**
Autumn 2	**Branch 2- Prophecy and Promise**
Spring 1	**Branch 3- Galilee to Jerusalem**
Spring 2	**Branch 4- Desert to Garden**
Summer 1	**Branch 5- To the Ends of the Earth**
Summer 2	**Branch 6- Dialogue and Encounter**

Within each branch there are four 'knowledge lenses':

Hear- Revelation the word made flesh in Jesus Christ
Believe- Content of faith
Celebrate- Liturgy, Prayer and Sacrament
Live- Christian Moral Living & Catholic Social Teaching

And two further knowledge lenses in Branch 6:

Dialogue- the church's teaching on relationships with other Christian traditions/Judaism/other religions/ non-religious world views
Encounter- the study of other faiths/world views

Pupils will develop the following ways of knowing: Understand, Discern, Respond. They will also have the opportunity to consider philosophical and ethical issues, study a wide variety of religious artistic representations and examples of lived religion.

RE is a core subject and at least 10% of curriculum time each week is dedicated to RE, ensuring it is a significant part of the educational experience.

10. Teaching and Learning in RE

Our approach to teaching RE emphasises high quality, engaging and interactive learning experiences, making the study of faith relatable and meaningful for the children. Lesson building is completed each week by class teachers and this is monitored by the RE Subject Leader to ensure consistency, challenge and accurate coverage as set out in 'Discerning Disciples'.

To ensure every lesson is grounded in best practice and faithful to the curriculum, each lesson follows the DISCERN model. The DISCERN model offers clear, memorable pedagogical principles for lesson planning and delivery:

	Component
D	**Dialogue (**from the beginning and throughout the lesson)
I	**Introduce recall** ('I do')
S	**Scaffolded support**
C	**Collaborative conversation** ('We do')
E	**Evaluate understanding**
R	**Record responses with discernment** ('You do')
N	**Next steps & notes**

Oracy, through structured discussion, plays a key role throughout the lesson. Teachers plan talk carefully so that all pupils are encouraged to contribute, listen attentively, and build on one another's ideas with respect and kindness. Learning is recorded in pupil's individual RE books in a wide variety of ways but at least one piece of work within each branch will be an extended piece of writing.

Teachers use a range of resources to support teaching and learning. This includes the use of IT which is integrated into RE in a number of ways e.g. through the use of computers, digital cameras and the school website. Digital screens in classrooms are used to present symbols, pictures, music and presentations to support RE lessons. Vocabulary linked to each unit is explicitly taught and referred to during every RE lesson.

Educational visits are encouraged to enrich the RE curriculum e.g. to the Parish Church, other places of worship, St Cassian's, St Chad's Cathedral.

11. Assessment

Assessment in RE takes on several forms.

Formative assessment: Assessment for Learning

- Carefully planned 'hinge' questioning during the lesson, listening to children's discussions and observing them on task help teachers to make ongoing, informal assessments and inform the planning for the next lesson.
- Teachers will assess whether pupils can recall the set knowledge statement at the end of a lesson.
- Marking and verbal feedback in RE is in accordance with the school's Marking Policy. It will provide guidance to the child about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve and extend their learning. Special emphasis is made on the accurate spelling of key religious vocabulary.

In Years 1-6:

Summative Assessment of Knowledge: End of Branch Multiple Choice Quiz

- Pupils are given a multiple-choice quiz on completion of each branch (issued each half-term by the Diocese) to assess their knowledge. Outcomes will be used to identify any misconceptions and inform future planning.

Assessment of Discern Skills: Set Task

- Pupils will complete a set task issued by the diocese to assess their development of discern skills. These tasks will be Teacher Assessed to identify if pupils have met the expected standard.

In EYFS:

Summative Assessment

- Pupils will be assessed against RE Learning Goals (RELG) to determine whether pupils have a Good Level of RE Development (GLRED). Teachers will use a 'best fit' judgement.

The RE Subject Leader regularly reviews and analyses attainment and progress in order to identify trends, possible underachievement, areas for development and staff training needs.

12. Cross Curricular Links

RE is not taught only as a single subject. It is integrated into many other subjects. As mentioned previously, the children will encounter spiritual and moral issues and principles of Catholic Social Teaching during other lessons and through the Catholic Life of the school.

13. Inclusion

We believe that Religious Education is for all. It is a collaborative activity, which respects and promotes the child's innate capacity for wonder, awe reverence and imagination for the spiritual. Adaptive teaching expresses a hunger for justice by responding to pupils' differing needs so that every pupil has equitable access to learning and the opportunity to flourish. Teachers continually check understanding and adjust explanation, support, and challenge so that all pupils can access, master, and apply the direct knowledge needed to discern and respond.

14. Equal Opportunities

We work in celebration of the fact that all are made in the image and likeness of God. We believe that every person is a unique individual and we are therefore committed to equal opportunities. We believe that all children, irrespective of physical ability, race, gender, creed or stage of achievement have the right to reach their full potential in RE. All activities should be suited to the age and stage of development of the children. Care should be taken that opportunities be given to both boys and girls in RE. Pupils should be encouraged to share their experiences and culture with others in order to enhance the quality of the learning. The emphasis in our teaching of RE is to allow all the children to have enjoyment and achieve success.

Religious Education should introduce children to the background and beliefs of other faiths so that prejudice and misunderstanding can be overcome from an early age- we endeavour to seize each opportunity as it arises to ensure tolerance, respect and understanding between all cultures and traditions represented not just in the school or its immediate environment but in the world as a whole.

15. Excellence and Enjoyment

Children should be encouraged to achieve to their full potential and to experience a sense of achievement, excellence and enjoyment.

Excellence can be celebrated by:

- Displaying work and photographs of children's work
- Through celebration and achievement assemblies.
- Sharing work with the rest of the class
- Receiving an Award e.g. Principal Award, Star Worker, Virtue Awards etc.

Enjoyment can be achieved through teacher praise, stimulating lessons and inviting resources.

16. The Role of the RE Subject Leader

The curriculum subject leader for RE has responsibility for the development of teaching and learning, resources, record-keeping, assessment and liturgical development (including sacramental preparation).

Together with SLT, the subject leader for Religious Education has several responsibilities, not least being to support and promote the Catholic Mission of Our Lady & St Joseph Catholic Academy. Their responsibilities include:

- Taking the lead in policy development
- Supporting colleagues in the implementation of 'Discerning Disciples', and in assessment and record keeping activities.
- Monitoring and evaluating provision in RE
- Monitoring and evaluating standards and achievement in RE
- Analysing outcomes from assessments and advising staff on any action needed.
- Taking responsibility for the RE budget and the purchase and organisation of central resources for RE
- Keeping up to date with developments in RE and disseminating information to colleagues as appropriate.
- Leading or organising staff training and formation on identified areas of need
- Working in partnership with the diocese and St Raphael the Archangel CMAT e.g. attend cluster meetings, training, conferences, network meetings and other events.

17. Partnership and Collaboration

We believe that if our Catholic ethos is to be effective, we must at every stage seek to involve parents and give them the confidence to play their part in the formation of their children. The school supports and develops the primary task of parents as first teachers of the children in the ways of faith. Every opportunity is therefore taken to enrich the relationship between church, family and school by involving parents, priests and parishioners in activities such as special assemblies, school masses and liturgies, 'Stay & Pray,' sacramental preparation meetings and fundraising events.

Parents are kept informed of learning in RE through weekly home learning, detailed curriculum information shared on the school website and through the weekly newsletters. Parents Evenings and the annual report to parents provide an opportunity to share information about children's attainment and progress in RE, their effort and attitude towards RE and what the child needs to do in order to improve in RE.

Parents are invited to share their views on Catholic Life and RE through annual questionnaires.

We maintain our close relationship with the Parish by involving the clergy in leading the many liturgical celebrations, inviting the priest in to support with explaining the rituals, symbols and prayers of the church to the children in RE lessons, promoting and supporting Parish events, encouraging parishioners to become foundation governors and by encouraging children to become active members of the parish e.g. altar servers, choir.

Ways and means of forging links with the parents and the wider community are continually evaluated and reviewed.

18. Sacramental Preparation

We provide support for all pupils who are preparing to receive the Holy Sacraments:

Reconciliation and the Eucharist

- Year 3 children are prepared thoroughly for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist using the Diocesan Sacramental Preparation programme.
- A meeting takes place for parents with teachers, school leaders and the Parish Priest to explain the programme and enlist support for their children on this next step in their faith journey.

- First Reconciliation takes place during Lent, and the children are encouraged to receive the sacrament regularly after that.
- First Holy Communion takes place in May/June, and is one of the most important occasions of the school year bringing together school, parish and families.

Confirmation

- Year 6 children are prepared for the sacrament of Confirmation using the Diocesan Sacramental Preparation programme.
- A meeting for parents takes place with teachers, school leaders and the Parish Priest to explain the programme and enlist support for their children on this next step in their faith journey.
- The children are usually confirmed during the first half of the Spring term and this occasion is seen as an important occasion for the school, families and parish community.

The children in both Year 3 and Year 6 participate in retreat days focusing on the Sacraments.

19. Staff Training and Formation

All new staff will be supported during induction and beyond, so that they fully understand the responsibility they carry within their individual role for delivering the RE curriculum and promoting the Catholic life of the school. RE is regularly the focus of staff meetings where teaching, learning and assessment are discussed. The RE leader attends and feeds back from Diocesan Cluster meetings each term and staff access other relevant training and formation through a range of providers including the Birmingham Diocesan Education Service, EducareM, and CMAT staff retreat/ INSET days. Any individual training needs are identified through regular monitoring and evaluation and addressed through relevant training and formation.

20. The School Environment

Visitors to Our Lady & St Joseph Catholic Academy are aware of the distinctive nature of the school through the physical environment, the presence of images and symbols and the recognition of a learning environment that respects the dignity of all persons as made in God's image and likeness. At Our Lady & St Joseph Catholic Academy every effort is made to provide a spiritually uplifting, stimulating and aesthetically pleasing environment:

21. Linked Policies and Documentation

Please see the following other policies and documents which support this policy:

- Prayer and Liturgy Policy
- RSHE Policy
- SMSVC Development at Our Lady & St Joseph's Catholic Academy
- Promoting British Values
- Charities and Social Action Plan