St Joseph & St Theresa Catholic Primary School

St Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Multi-Academy Trust

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

Religious Education Policy



"We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us" Romans 12:6

"A good school provides a rounded education for the whole person. And a good Catholic school, over and above this, should help all its students to become saints." Pope Benedict XVI

At St Joseph & St Theresa Catholic Nursery & Primary School, we aim to provide the highest standards of education in a welcoming and positive Catholic learning environment.
We focus on the growth and development of each person, encouraging every child to recognise their God-given gifts and talents and develop these so that they can use them for good and reach their full potential.
We want our school to be a place where everyone learns to respect, work, play and cooperate with others in a Christian, caring way, whilst fostering close links with our Church, parish and wider community.
Religious Education is at the heart of our curriculum and is central to our mission of "Growing together with Jesus".
Through Religious Education, pupils are encouraged to develop secure knowledge of the Catholic faith, deepen their theological understanding, ask meaningful questions and consider how their learning relates to their own lives and the wider world.
We aim to develop religiously literate young people who can understand the teachings of the Church, grapple with religious ideas, discern wisely and respond thoughtfully.
Our Religious Education curriculum is delivered through **Discerning Disciples**, the programme developed by the Archdiocese of Birmingham to implement *To Know You More Clearly*, the Religious Education Directory (RED).

Aims

As a Catholic community, St Joseph and St Theresa Catholic Primary School is a place where God and our children are at the heart of all we do, and where the Catholic Pupil Profile Virtues and Catholic Social Teaching permeate all aspects of school life.
As a Catholic school, Religious Education is a core subject of the curriculum and is allocated appropriate time and resources.

Our aims are:

- **Growing in Faith, Hope and Love:** Every child in our care will be supported to grow in Faith, Hope and Love, developing their understanding of God and the Catholic faith. We encourage children to develop a personal relationship with God whilst respecting the individual religious identity of every pupil.

- **Developing religious knowledge and understanding:** We provide a high-quality Catholic education in which children develop secure knowledge of Scripture, Catholic beliefs, traditions and practices. Pupils are encouraged to make connections between their learning and develop an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the Catholic faith.

- **Developing questioning minds:** We encourage pupils to ask meaningful questions, explore different interpretations and grapple with theological ideas. Through purposeful dialogue and reflection, pupils learn to discern wisely and make informed judgements about what is true, good and beautiful.

- **Recognising the dignity of every person:** We promote self-esteem and self-worth through mutual respect, recognising that every person is made in the image and likeness of God. Children are encouraged to understand the consequences of their actions and recognise the importance of forgiveness, compassion and reconciliation.

- **Developing a hunger for justice:** Catholic Social Teaching is woven throughout school life. Pupils are encouraged to recognise their responsibility towards others, understand the importance of the common good and consider how faith inspires action in the world.

- **Building community:** Every person is a valued member of our school community. We encourage children to contribute positively to the lives of others and develop strong partnerships between home, school, parish and the wider community.

- **Celebrating our Catholic identity:** We welcome parents, families and parishioners to Masses and religious celebrations. We maintain close links with the Parish of St Joseph's, Burntwood, and work alongside parents, the Parish Priest and catechists in preparing children for the sacraments.

Ultimately, we aim for our children to receive excellent Religious Education so that they become religiously literate and engaged young people who have the knowledge, understanding and skills, appropriate to their age and capacity, to reflect spiritually and think ethically and theologically.

Entitlement and Provision

Religious Education is a core subject and is allocated **at least 10% of curriculum time**, as required by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
Religious Education is taught through timetabled lessons each week, following the requirements and progression of the Discerning Disciples curriculum.
This allocation is dedicated curriculum time and does not include time committed to assemblies, Worship Through Song, RSHE, preparation for and attendance at Mass, or other acts of prayer and liturgy.
A greater percentage of time may be allocated to Religious Education at particular points during the year, where appropriate.
Religious Education is also taught as a discrete subject in the Early Years Foundation Stage, with learning adapted to children's developmental needs.
Children in EYFS also participate in the wider Catholic life of the school, including charitable activities, Masses and age-appropriate opportunities for prayer and liturgy.
Religious Education, Catholic Life and Mission, and Prayer and Liturgy are distinct but complementary aspects of Catholic education.
Religious Education is an academic curriculum subject which develops knowledge, understanding and theological thinking. Prayer and liturgy provide opportunities for worship and spiritual encounter, whilst Catholic Life and Mission permeates the wider life and ethos of the school.
Prayer is not used as a substitute for curriculum Religious Education unless it forms part of the specified academic learning.

RE Curriculum

St Joseph and St Theresa Catholic Primary School follows the Discerning Disciples curriculum, developed by the Archdiocese of Birmingham in accordance with To Know You More Clearly, the Religious Education Directory.
The curriculum is rooted in Sacred Scripture, Catholic teaching and the person of Jesus Christ.
It provides a coherent and progressive programme of study through which pupils encounter the story of salvation, develop their understanding of the Catholic faith and explore the significance of religious beliefs and practices.
The curriculum follows a spiral approach, enabling pupils to revisit key concepts and deepen their knowledge and understanding as they progress through the school.

The Six Curriculum Branches

The curriculum is organised into six branches, broadly corresponding to the six half-terms of the academic year.

Branch 1 – Creation and Covenant

Pupils explore God as Creator, the accounts of Creation in Scripture, the dignity of the human person and God's covenantal relationship with humanity.

Branch 2 – Prophecy and Promise
Pupils explore the prophets, God's promises to his people and the fulfilment of these promises through the coming of Jesus Christ.
Branch 3 – Galilee to Jerusalem
Pupils encounter the life, ministry and teachings of Jesus, exploring his miracles, parables and proclamation of the Kingdom of God.
Branch 4 – Desert to Garden
Pupils explore Lent, Holy Week, the Passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, developing their understanding of the Paschal Mystery.
Branch 5 – To the Ends of the Earth
Pupils explore the Resurrection, Ascension, coming of the Holy Spirit and the mission of the apostles, alongside the continuing life and mission of the Church.
Branch 6 – Dialogue and Encounter
Pupils explore the Catholic Church's commitment to dialogue with other Christians, religions and people of goodwill. They encounter other religious traditions and worldviews, developing knowledge, understanding and respect.
The curriculum is taught in accordance with the progression and timings specified by the diocesan programme.

Knowledge Lenses
The Religious Education Directory identifies six knowledge lenses through which pupils encounter and understand religious knowledge:

- **Hear:** Sacred Scripture and the story of salvation.
- **Believe:** The beliefs and teachings of the Catholic Church.
- **Celebrate:** The sacramental, liturgical and prayer life of the Church.
- **Live:** The moral life and teachings of the Church.
- **Dialogue:** The Church's relationship with other Christians, religions and worldviews.
- **Encounter:** The study of other religions and worldviews.

These lenses provide a coherent foundation for the development of pupils' religious knowledge and understanding.

Ways of Knowing
The curriculum develops three interconnected ways of knowing:
Understand
Pupils develop secure knowledge and understanding of Scripture, Catholic beliefs, religious practices and the lives of individuals and communities shaped by faith.
Discern
Pupils consider the meaning and significance of religious knowledge, explore different interpretations and develop the ability to make informed and reasoned judgements.
Respond
Pupils reflect upon and communicate their responses to religious learning, considering its significance for individuals, communities and the wider world.
Together, these ways of knowing enable pupils to move beyond factual recall towards deeper theological understanding and thoughtful engagement with religious ideas.

<u>Learning and Teaching</u>
Religious Education is taught with the same academic rigour and high expectations as other core curriculum subjects.
Teachers use the Discerning Disciples curriculum, accompanying teacher notes and diocesan guidance to plan learning that is theologically accurate, appropriately challenging and accessible to all pupils.
The curriculum's direct knowledge and discernment statements are central to teaching and learning. Teachers ensure that all three curriculum elements — **Know, Discern and Respond** — are incorporated into every lesson.

Know, Discern and Respond

Know

Pupils encounter and develop a secure understanding of the direct knowledge statements identified within the curriculum.

Teachers explicitly introduce new knowledge, explain its meaning and provide regular opportunities for rehearsal and retrieval.

Pupils are supported to remember and explain the knowledge they have acquired, using accurate theological vocabulary.

Discern

Pupils are encouraged to grapple with religious ideas, consider their meaning and significance, and develop reasoned judgements.

Teachers use the curriculum's discernment statements and purposeful discovery questions to support pupils in thinking deeply.

Discernment is more than simply expressing an opinion. It requires pupils to draw upon secure knowledge, consider different perspectives and justify their thinking.

Respond

Pupils reflect upon and communicate their understanding of religious learning.

Responses may include writing, discussion, artwork, creative activities or consideration of how religious beliefs influence people's lives and actions.

The balance of Know, Discern and Respond may vary within individual lessons, but all three elements must be evident.

The DISCERN Teaching Model

To support consistent, high-quality teaching, staff use the school's DISCERN model.

This provides a framework for effective teaching rather than a rigid sequence of activities.

D – Dialogue

Teachers activate relevant prior knowledge and use purposeful dialogue to stimulate thinking.

Children are encouraged to recall previous learning, discuss key ideas and make connections with the knowledge required for the current lesson.

I – Introduce New Knowledge

Teachers explicitly introduce the curriculum's direct knowledge statements.

Knowledge is explained clearly and rehearsed throughout the lesson so that pupils develop secure understanding and recall.

S – Scaffolded Support

Teachers provide appropriate modelling, explanation and scaffolding to enable all pupils to access the curriculum.

Support is carefully adapted and gradually removed to develop independence.

C – Collaborative Conversation

Pupils use structured discussion and discovery questions to deepen understanding and develop discernment.

Teachers encourage pupils to explain their reasoning and draw upon their religious knowledge when making judgements.

E – Evaluate Understanding

Teachers check pupils' understanding throughout lessons, identify misconceptions and adapt teaching accordingly.

Assessment is used to ensure pupils have the knowledge required to engage in meaningful discernment.

R – Record Responses with Discernment

Pupils independently demonstrate their understanding, theological thinking and responses.

Recording is age-appropriate and enables pupils to make their learning visible.

N – Next Steps and Notes

Teachers use assessment, feedback and reflection to identify next steps and inform subsequent teaching.

The DISCERN model supports the effective implementation of the curriculum whilst allowing teachers to exercise professional judgement in their choice of activities and teaching approaches.

Knowledge and Retrieval

Direct knowledge statements form the foundation of learning.
Teachers introduce these explicitly and provide frequent opportunities for pupils to rehearse, explain and recall them.
By the end of each lesson, pupils are expected to demonstrate independent recall of the direct knowledge statements, appropriate to their age and stage of development.
Pupils are not required to repeat knowledge from previous lessons word for word indefinitely but should demonstrate secure understanding and explain previously taught concepts in their own words.
Retrieval of previous learning is carefully planned and purposeful.
Teachers use the DINT (Do I Need This?) approach to activate relevant knowledge from previous lessons, branches or year groups.
Retrieval activities may include artwork, Scripture, key vocabulary, images, quotations or structured discussion.
Prior knowledge is revisited where it supports understanding of the current lesson, rather than through artificial or unrelated connections.

Recording and Presentation

Pupils' work should demonstrate their developing knowledge, understanding, discernment and responses.
From the beginning of Key Stage 1, recording provides purposeful evidence of learning throughout each week.
Direct knowledge statements are recorded in an age-appropriate manner, with pupils supported to demonstrate independent recall.
Appropriate scaffolding, including cloze activities, visual prompts and partially completed statements, may be used where necessary.
Pupils are given opportunities to demonstrate their theological thinking through varied recording activities.
Each curriculum branch includes opportunities for extended writing, appropriate to pupils' age and stage of development.
High expectations for presentation are maintained, and RE books should demonstrate clear progression in pupils' knowledge and understanding.

Catholic Social Teaching and Building the Kingdom

Catholic Social Teaching is embedded throughout the curriculum where relevant.
Pupils are encouraged to explore the relationship between Catholic beliefs, human dignity, justice, stewardship and the common good.
Building the Kingdom approaches support pupils in making meaningful connections between religious learning, other curriculum subjects and contemporary life.
These connections should arise naturally from the curriculum and deepen understanding rather than distract from the specified religious knowledge.

Marking, Feedback and Assessment

Marking, Feedback and Assessment

Assessment in Religious Education is an integral part of teaching and learning.
It enables teachers to identify pupils' developing knowledge, understanding and ability to discern and respond to religious learning.
Assessment is informed by the expected outcomes of the Religious Education Directory and the requirements of the Discerning Disciples curriculum.

Formative Assessment
Teachers assess pupils' understanding throughout lessons using questioning, structured discussion, retrieval activities, observation and independent work.
Particular attention is given to:

- Secure understanding and independent recall of direct knowledge statements.
- Accurate use of theological vocabulary.
- The ability to make connections between current and previous learning.
- The ability to use religious knowledge to discern meaning and make reasoned judgements.
- The ability to communicate thoughtful responses to religious learning.

Assessment is used to identify misconceptions, adapt teaching and provide appropriate support and challenge.

Feedback
RE work is marked in accordance with the school's Marking and Feedback Policy.
Feedback focuses primarily on the quality and accuracy of religious learning.
Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to deepen explanations, clarify misconceptions and develop theological reasoning.
Although high standards of literacy are encouraged, feedback prioritises religious knowledge, understanding and discernment.

Summative Assessment
At the end of each curriculum branch, pupils will complete a **summative assessment provided by the Archdiocese of Birmingham**. These assessments are expected to be predominantly multiple-choice questions, designed to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding of the content taught throughout the branch.
Assessments will provide an opportunity for pupils to demonstrate their retention of key knowledge and for teachers to identify areas of secure understanding and any gaps in learning.
The results of these assessments, alongside evidence gathered through formative assessment, will inform teachers' judgements about pupils' attainment and progress in Religious Education.
Teachers will use assessment outcomes to identify misconceptions, inform future teaching and plan opportunities to revisit and consolidate knowledge.
The RE Subject Leader will support staff in analysing assessment outcomes, identifying patterns of attainment and ensuring consistency across the school.
Assessment of pupils' ability to Discern and Respond will continue to be informed by their written work, classroom discussions, independent responses and teacher observations, recognising that multiple-choice assessments primarily measure knowledge and understanding.
Pupils' progress and attainment in Religious Education will be shared with parents through consultation meetings and annual reports.

<u>Equal Opportunities and SEND</u>
As a Catholic school, Jesus Christ remains central to every aspect of school life.
All pupils are entitled to a broad, balanced and challenging Religious Education curriculum that is relevant to their needs.
We believe that every person is made in the image and likeness of God and is therefore a unique and valued individual. We are committed to ensuring that all children, irrespective of physical ability, race, gender, creed or stage of achievement, have the opportunity to reach their full potential in Religious Education.
Teachers use adaptive teaching to ensure that all pupils, including those with SEND, can access the knowledge and expected outcomes of the Discerning Disciples curriculum.
Appropriate scaffolding, visual resources, modelling, structured discussion and alternative methods of recording are used to remove barriers to learning.
Support is carefully planned to enable pupils to develop independence and engage in meaningful theological thinking.

Adaptations should support access to the curriculum without unnecessarily reducing the depth or ambition of the learning.
Teachers continually evaluate pupils' understanding and adapt their approaches to ensure that all children can develop secure knowledge, engage in discernment and communicate their responses.

Monitoring

Religious Education is monitored by the RE Subject Leader in accordance with the school's monitoring schedule and RE Action Plan.
Monitoring evaluates the effective implementation of the Discerning Disciples curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

Particular attention is given to:

- Fidelity to the curriculum's direct knowledge and discernment statements.
- Effective implementation of Know, Discern and Respond.
- The quality of teaching and theological accuracy.
- Pupils' retention and understanding of religious knowledge.
- The development of pupils' ability to discern and respond.
- The effectiveness of adaptive teaching.
- Progression in religious knowledge and understanding.
- The quality of assessment, feedback and recording.

Monitoring activities include:

- Regular meetings with senior leaders to discuss Religious Education.
- Meetings with diocesan RE advisers.
- Completion of termly School Improvement Plan reviews.
- Regular review of the RE Policy and curriculum implementation.
- Audits of resources.
- Learning walks and lesson visits.
- Book looks at least termly.
- Pupil voice interviews.
- Assessment moderation.
- Staff professional development.
- Monitoring visits by the RE Link Governor.

Findings are evaluated and shared with relevant staff, senior leaders and governors.
The impact of monitoring informs the school's RE Action Plan, staff development priorities and ongoing curriculum improvement.
The RE Link Governor is involved in monitoring activities, with termly opportunities to review findings, actions and impact.

RE Displays and School Environment

Each classroom has a designated **prayer area** which provides a focus for prayer and reflection. This area is changed regularly to reflect the liturgical year, a special saint or other significant aspects of Catholic life.
Prayer areas may include religious artefacts, Scripture, prayers, candles and other appropriate resources. They should be welcoming, purposeful and uncluttered, encouraging pupils to pause, pray and reflect. Children are encouraged to contribute to the creation and development of these areas at an age-appropriate level.

RE curriculum displays are separate from classroom prayer areas and provide a visual celebration of pupils' learning. These displays should reflect the current Discerning Disciples curriculum branch and include:

- The title of the current curriculum branch or unit.

- Key theological vocabulary relevant to the learning.
- Examples of children's work demonstrating their developing knowledge, understanding and theological thinking.
- Relevant Scripture, images or other resources that support and reinforce the curriculum content.

Displays should be purposeful, regularly updated and used as a learning resource to support pupils in recalling and making connections with their religious knowledge.
Our school mission is displayed throughout the school and is regularly referred to by pupils and staff. Catholic Pupil Profile displays are prominent throughout the school environment, and Catholic Social Teaching is reflected in displays and children's work.

Sacramental Preparation

Sacramental preparation is an important part of the Catholic life of St Joseph and St Theresa Catholic Primary School.
Alongside the Religious Education curriculum, the school works in partnership with parents, the Parish Priest and parish catechists to support children preparing to receive the sacraments.
The school follows the sacramental preparation programme developed by Birmingham Diocesan Education Service (BDES). This programme is delivered in school to support children in preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion in Year 3, and Confirmation in Year 6. It provides structured opportunities for children to develop their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the sacraments they are preparing to receive.

This programme complements the Discerning Disciples Religious Education curriculum and the preparation undertaken in partnership with families and the parish.
Parents of children in Years 3 and 6 are invited and encouraged to attend sacramental preparation meetings led by the RE Subject Leader, Parish Priest and parish catechists.
Masses of Commitment are planned, providing opportunities for children and their families to make promises as they prepare for the sacraments.
Children in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 are provided with opportunities to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation in school during Advent and Lent, as part of their preparation for Christmas and Easter.
The school works closely with the parish to ensure that children develop the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the sacraments they receive, recognising that sacramental preparation is a shared responsibility between school, home and parish.

The Role of Parents and the Parish

The child's development of faith begins within the family.
Parents and carers are recognised as the first educators of their children, and the school seeks to support them in this important responsibility.
Parents are encouraged to attend assemblies, Masses, religious celebrations and other school events. They are invited to contribute to their child's religious education, particularly during preparation for First Holy Communion, Reconciliation and Confirmation.
Strong links are maintained with the Parish of St Joseph's, Burntwood.
Parishioners are invited to school Masses and religious celebrations, and pupils are encouraged to participate in the wider life of the parish.
The school also supports and leads family Sunday Masses at St Joseph's Church, strengthening the relationship between home, school and parish.

The Role of the RE Subject Leader

The RE Subject Leader is responsible for supporting the effective implementation, monitoring and development of Religious Education throughout the school.

Responsibilities include:

1. Leading policy development and ensuring that the Religious Education curriculum reflects the requirements of the Religious Education Directory and the Archdiocese of Birmingham.
2. Supporting the effective implementation of the Discerning Disciples curriculum, ensuring progression and continuity throughout the school.
3. Supporting colleagues in developing secure subject knowledge, theological understanding and effective teaching approaches.
4. Providing guidance on planning, assessment, recording and the implementation of Know, Discern and Respond.
5. Monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, including curriculum fidelity, knowledge retention and pupils' ability to discern and respond.
6. Analysing assessment information and advising the Headteacher of actions required to improve provision and outcomes.
7. Taking responsibility for the RE budget and the purchase and organisation of central resources.
8. Keeping up to date with developments in Religious Education and sharing relevant information with colleagues.
9. Organising and delivering professional development to support staff in implementing the curriculum.
10. Working in partnership with the Archdiocese of Birmingham, attending relevant training, conferences and other professional development opportunities.
11. Working with senior leaders, governors and diocesan advisers to evaluate the quality and impact of Religious Education.

Study of Other Religions and Worldviews

At St Joseph and St Theresa Catholic Primary School, the study of other religions and worldviews forms an integral part of our Religious Education curriculum.
This is delivered through Branch 6: Dialogue and Encounter of the Discerning Disciples curriculum, in accordance with the Religious Education Directory.
Through this branch, pupils develop an understanding of the Catholic Church's commitment to dialogue, respect and cooperation with people of different religious beliefs and worldviews.
Pupils are encouraged to recognise the dignity of every human person and appreciate the importance of living peacefully and working together for the common good.

Dialogue

Pupils explore the Church's teaching on dialogue with other Christian traditions, religions and people of goodwill.
They learn how people of different beliefs can work together to promote justice, peace, understanding and care for our common home.
Through age-appropriate learning, pupils develop the knowledge and skills needed to engage in respectful and meaningful dialogue.

Encounter

Pupils develop knowledge and understanding of other religions and worldviews through the curriculum's specified content.
As pupils progress through the school, they encounter different Christian traditions, Judaism, Islam, Dharmic religious traditions and other worldviews, as appropriate to their age and the curriculum requirements.
Teaching presents religious traditions accurately and respectfully, enabling pupils to understand beliefs and practices from the perspectives of those who follow them.
Where appropriate, opportunities are provided for pupils to engage with authentic religious artefacts, visitors and places of worship to enrich their understanding.
The study of other religions and worldviews is not taught as a separate programme but is embedded within the planned progression of the Discerning Disciples curriculum, particularly through Branch 6.

This approach enables pupils to develop secure knowledge of their own Catholic tradition alongside respect, understanding and informed appreciation of the beliefs and traditions of others.

Parental Right to Withdraw from Religious Education

In line with Department for Education guidance, parents and carers have the right to withdraw their child from all or part of Religious Education.

If parents or carers wish to exercise this right, they should contact the school in writing or by email to request a meeting with the Headteacher.

This meeting provides an opportunity to discuss the request and ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place for the child during Religious Education lessons.

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