



# Religious Education Policy



I am a  
child  
of God  
*1 John 3:1*



## St Gerard's Catholic Primary School

"Guided by God, St Gerard's Catholic Primary and Nursery School is an inspiring and aspirational community where we learn to love, hope, dream and achieve."



***“St Gerard’s Catholic Primary and Nursery School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment”.***

**Introduction**

We at St. Gerard's believe that each child is unique and the recognition of this individuality, together with a concern for the total development of the 'whole child' should be at the heart of our educational philosophy. This is in line with our Mission Statement which is evident around our school to remind all staff, parents and visitors of our reasons for learning.

We feel that this development is best achieved in an atmosphere where personal relationships can flourish and children of all faiths are respected and given the opportunity to explore his/her own capabilities and potential in the knowledge that he/she has the support and encouragement of a caring community.

**Background**

St Gerard's is very much part of the community. The School accepts Catholic children living within the Parish of St. Marie's. In addition the school admits a number of traveller children and children from the local Refuge. Many of the children come to us from non-Christian faith traditions or with no religious beliefs of affiliations whatsoever. All are made welcome and all the children participate to a greater or lesser extent in the school's religious activities. The School is part of the parish of St Wilfrid's.

**General aims and philosophy**

Religious Studies address all pupils in our school regardless of diversity of religious background and commitment. They aim to:

- Help pupils recognise and appreciate the religious and spiritual dimensions of life
- Lead to a deeper knowledge and understanding of the Catholic and other religious traditions
- Challenge pupils to examine their own commitment and to respect that of other.
- We recognise that there will be vacancies in the stages and levels of faith experienced by individual members of our school community.

We recognise the importance of interaction between home, parish and school in fostering true Christian attitudes and helping to develop in each person a deeper understanding of his/her relationship with God.

We are concerned that the presence of Christ should be evident to all within our school and we aim to promote a welcoming atmosphere of co-operation where experience and expertise can be shared with mutual trust and openness.

Religious Education occupies a central place in the life of our school and is to be found across the whole curriculum stimulating spiritual growth and development along with academic, physical and social progress.

## **Structure and Management of Religious Education**

### **The role of the Religious Education Co-ordinator**

- To be the daily leader of a Catholic educating community.
- To ensure that the Religious Education programme is given full regard both in terms of classroom religious studies and the overall curriculum of the school.
- To ensure that spiritual development of individuals is given clear focus and assistance through the prayer life and liturgy of the school.
- To recognise the prime responsibility of parents for the religious education of their children and ensure parents are involved as fully as possible in the life of the school.
- To promote close working between Parish home and school.
- To provide clear leadership and support in implementation and organisation of RE programme.
- To demonstrate serious reflection through reading and attendance of courses organised by the Liverpool Archdiocese.

### **The role of the Classroom teacher**

- To plan teach and evaluate lessons in accordance with RE programme following the Come and See Programme and in a manner appropriate to the age ability of pupils in the class.
- To provide a stimulating environment within the classroom through display and a reflection table.
- Leading the children in prayer and daily reflection; encouraging children to develop their spiritual and moral awareness of theirs and others religion.

### **Role of staff in worship**

- To enable the children to celebrate the aspects of life experience that have been recognised and reflected upon.
- To create opportunities for prayer and reflection.
- To foster an atmosphere which may evoke responses of joy, sorrow, thanks and praise.
- To encourage pupils to contribute appropriate skills and gifts in the preparation of collective worship.

### **Communication**

- Regular termly staff meetings are held to discuss implementation of RE programme.
- Staff are encouraged in informal discussion wherever needs arise and are given opportunities to report back from the topic days and other courses organised by the Christian Education Department of Education.

### **Requisition**

- Religious Education resources are given a high priority and generous funding is available from the school budget.
- Resources are updated regularly and resources that are recommended by the Archdiocese are purchased.
- The Headteacher and SLT have responsibility for the purchase of resources such as books, poster, music etc...

- Staff requests for additional aids are encouraged and acted upon.

### **Parish Links**

- The school extends a warm welcome to priests and Governors visiting the school.
- The school hosts a Parish, School and Class Masses each half term. Father Joe Bibby celebrates this Mass with us.
- The Sacramental programme is part of the Widnes Parish of St Wilfrid's.

### **RE in the Classroom**

Since the total curriculum in our school is based on the values of the Gospel and because we see all education as revealing the mystery of God, we recognise two aspects of religious education in our school;

**Implicit** or unstructured religious education – those opportunities which arise in the course of the day to lead pupils through curriculum content or through relationships to a religious understanding of their implications. It is the policy of this school to use such opportunities as they arise.

**Explicit** or structural religious education – those timetabled periods of time given to an explicit consideration of religious education in the classroom. It is the policy of this school to allocate 10% of the curriculum timetable to Religious Education plus explicit teaching during assembly times.

To fulfill our aims and objectives we use the Archdiocesan recommended Religious Education Programme "Come and See" which has as its foundation four key dimensions of religion; Revelation, Church, Sacraments and Christian Living.

The aim of this programme is to explore the religious dimension of questions about life, dignity and purpose within the Catholic tradition.

It has a strong experiential dimension and is structured in such a way that pupils are encouraged to recognise and value their own experiences and test them against Christian revelation and against the experience of others. Central to *Come and See* is Christian belief in Jesus Christ, word and revelation of God.

Each term a belief about the mystery of life is explored within the Catholic faith tradition. Each basic question is explored through three kinds of themes and three topics are provided for the exploration of each theme.

The topics are developed through five levels which take account of age and development of pupils in the Primary years and are designed to address a variety of skills and attitudes.

### **Methodology**

We aim to employ a variety of teaching and learning styles which are appropriate to the age and stage of development of the pupils in each class.

These provide the use of discussion and debate, reading and development of reference skills, ICT, writing in forms such as stories, prayers and personal accounts, music, art work and display, drama and prayer and meditation.

As with all other areas of the curriculum, teachers provide this process for pupils in a variety of groupings such as whole class, pairs, small groups of similar ability levels, and mixed abilities.

## **Staff Development**

We are committed to keeping Religious Education central to future developments within our school, as we see it as crucial, as we continue to develop our whole school mission and ethos, based on the values Jesus taught us.

St Gerard's sees the importance and value of staff attending Archdiocesan courses for Religious Education 'Come and See' topics and co-ordinator training, and will continue to support this. We will also continue to support staff in studying for the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies, as we see this as enhancing our provision for our pupils.

Staff have Annual Performance Management meetings with their line managers, during which they are able to discuss any training and development needs they have. Requests for professional development are considered with reference to individual need and to the school's priorities, as identified within the school's development plans. They may be by attending a formal training course or it may be that the individual observes other teachers or has an opportunity to look at other children's work. Staff meeting time is used for Inset, alongside other core subjects.

Before staff begin a topic they are requested to read the "Come See for Yourself." Before You Begin" material. If time is available in staff meetings, this material will be share, to enable a deeper understanding of what each topic is about.

## **Staff Induction**

All new members of staff receive a Staff Induction policy. This policy introduces them to the school ethos and mission statement. Most newly qualified teachers at St Gerard's are familiar with Come and See. They all plan with an experienced member of staff who, along with the R.E co-ordinator and Headteacher, is willing to help and answer any questions.

All new members of staff will receive a copy of the RE handbook and are introduced to RE resources. New members of staff are also given the opportunity to attend a 'Come and See training day to help broaden their knowledge. If necessary, RE will form one of the NQT half termly action plans and consequently they will receive necessary support.

## **RESOURCES – STAFF**

### **Teachers**

We have 10 teachers, including the head teacher, all of whom have responsibility for providing Religious Education at St Gerard's. We also have a very able HLTA who supports the Religious Education curriculum and attends RE Co-ordinator meetings. She has also completed the CCRS course.

Miss Hanlon is the lead for Religious Education in our school and leads the RE team, consisting of herself, Mrs Flint and the Headteacher Mr Landrum.

All other staff support the teaching of Religious Education, to ensure pupils access relevant and appropriate learning experiences within 'Come and See' lessons. They help develop the Catholic life of the school, through living

the Mission Statement.

### **RE and ICT**

Resources for teaching RE, particular topics or faiths, are organised and maintained by Mrs Flint. Staff are able to use these resources as and when the topics, feasts or season of the Church dictate. Each class has access to Gods Story, Churches Story, Good News Bibles and the Come and See website. ICT is integrated effectively across all areas of the curriculum, including Religious Education and Collective Worship. We see the use of Interactive Whiteboards, laptops, and other technologies as enhancing the learning and teaching within lessons.

### **RELATIONSHIP OF RE TO THE WHOLE CURRICULUM**

Each class must participate in an act of Collective Worship each day. These can take the form of whole or part school assemblies. Where the class does not take part in an assembly the teacher is responsible for the Collective Worship of their own class. Collective worship should contain opportunities for prayer, scripture, quiet reflection and celebration. Children are supported in planning and preparing class and assembly Collective Worship.

Parents and Governors are invited to all Masses and Class Assemblies held in school. They are also invited to Christmas Plays and Carol Services. Sometimes Governors are invited to class rejoice assemblies.

The topics are taught, usually as whole class teaching sessions with individuals relating their experience. To focus the children's attention on the topic which is being covered at the time, stories, poems, pictures, teachers own personal experiences and any experiences the children can contribute.

Quiet reflective music is played as the children enter the Hall at assembly time and during class worship.

### **Prayer in the Classroom**

It is the policy of this school for classes to pray together at the start of each day at lunchtime and at the end of the school day.

Teachers are encouraged to employ a variety of styles of prayer in their classroom. These will include;

- Formal or set prayers
- Quiet private prayer
- Written prayers
- Informal or even impromptu prayer arising from discussion and events.

Progressively, pupils will be helped towards experiencing short periods of mediation/reflection.

We feel it is important to provide focal points for prayer both in the classroom and around the school. These may be permanent or temporary arrangements

- Crucifix in each room and in the entrance hall
- Displays mounted for specific lessons or assemblies
- Reflective tables in classrooms
- Crib at Christmas/Stations of the Cross at Lent
- Statues, pictures or candles
- Central displays in the hall, which reflect the liturgical seasons

- Display links to *Come and See Programme*.

### **Liturgy in School and Classroom**

- We celebrate special occasions throughout the year.
- We aim to provide opportunities for visits from our Parish Priest during Advent and Lent.
- We provide opportunities for non-Sacramental liturgies led by teachers and occasionally by pupils.
- We join together in whole school celebrations of Christmas and remembrance of the events of Holy Week in song, readings, celebrations and prayers.

### **Sacramental Preparations**

- Preparation for First Sacraments takes place during Year 4. This is done in close co-operation with the Priest, the parents and the Parish of St Wilfrid's. We aim to meet the needs of families according to their personal commitment to their Faith. All families are welcome to join our Sacramental Programme. We have very good links with Bishop John who supports us with our celebrations and services.

### **Community links**

- We involve communities in the Harvest celebrations by providing food hampers to the local Food bank in Widnes.
- Staff and pupils are encouraged to take part in Parish celebrations where possible.
- Children are involved in events organised within the community including singing and helping others.
- Visits to the Cathedral in Liverpool are organised as well as visits to other places of worship such as the Synagogue in Liverpool.

### **Diocesan Links**

The children and their families respond generously to the annual Good Shepherd collections.

Involvement in meetings and training days as seen by staff members to be of importance both socially and educationally. The SLT ensure that a member of the team attends the Diocesan meetings organised by the Christian Education Service and feed back to staff the appropriate information.

### **The Wider Church.**

- We strive to bring the children in our care to a greater global awareness of the needs of others. To this end, we encourage a generous and spontaneous response to appeals for aid whether it is in the form of prayer or practical help for example shoe boxes, collections for victims of disasters, CAFOD, Mission Together etc.
- We mark CAFOD with special assemblies, acts of self denial and fund raising activities.
- We respond to the annual Good Shepherd Appeal and some classes have small collection boxes for Mission Together.

### **The Local Neighbourhood.**

- We feel it is important to establish strong links within our local community.
- We encourage inter-action with other local schools and have links with our local Secondary Feeder School, St. Peter's and St. Paul's Catholic College.
- Helping our local charities.
- Links with the local shoe boxes appeal

## **Special Educational Needs**

- Children with Special Educational Needs are catered for within the framework of the Come and See Programme.
  - The whole school approach to the teaching of Religious Education is inclusive rather than exclusive. It caters for every child and emphasis is on discussion, pictures and drama.
  - A pictorial record of every child's understanding is acceptable. Every child no matter what is made to feel that they have achieved. All pupils are allowed to work to their different abilities.
  - As a Catholic school we are aware that all children are a unique gift from God, each with their own individual talents and needs.
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- **Equal Opportunities**
  - Religious Education is taught on a class basis and boys and girls are treated with equal respect.
  - Each child is expected to listen to the views of other people, and respect that sometimes there will be a difference of opinion.
  - In the delivery of the syllabus and other curriculum areas, the children are introduced to the views, beliefs and cultures of other faiths. Additional time is given to other faiths and we acknowledge their celebrations when they occur.
  - Each child should develop a positive attitude to their fellow human beings and show empathy and understanding towards them.

## **Policies related to Religious Education**

Collective Worship Policy  
Spiritual and Moral Policy  
RSE Policy  
PSHE Policy