

# St Alban's Catholic Primary School



# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Religious Education Policy</b>
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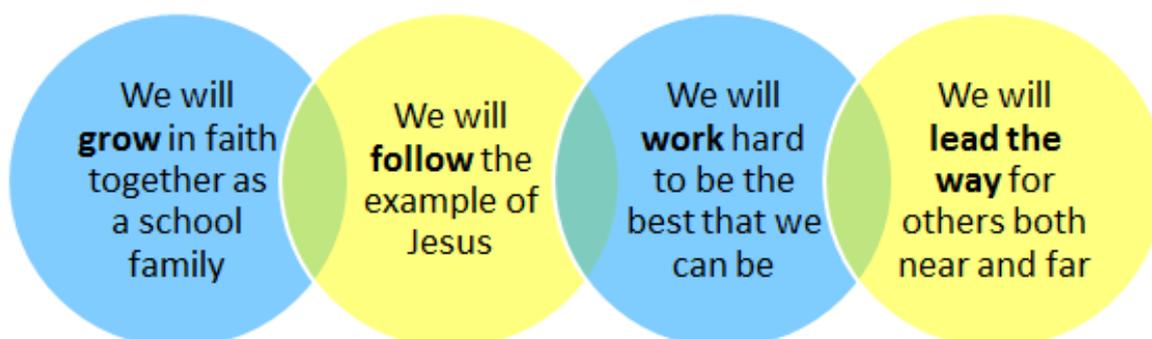
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## 1. MISSION STATEMENT

The new mission statement for St. Alban's was created by the children, staff, parents and governors of the school.

# St. Alban's Catholic Primary School MISSION STATEMENT



*St Alban's Catholic Primary School is a Christian community embracing a partnership between the school, home, and parish. It offers to each member the opportunity to grow in knowledge of the Father through Jesus His Son with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, fostered through prayer, worship and awareness of the scriptures.*

*We believe that every individual is uniquely created and loved by God and therefore has a right to be part of a community where each member is valued and respected for their own worth irrespective of race, colour, creed or ability. The children will be helped to appreciate that they are members of God's wider world in its richness and diversity.*

*Our Curriculum provides a Catholic Christian setting in which all children have an equal opportunity to grow in understanding and in the acquisition of skills, attitudes and values.*

## 2. INTRODUCTION

Religious education is the centre of our existence as a Catholic school and is a core part of our curriculum. We place a high value on creating an atmosphere of welcome in the school. The religious education at St. Alban's Catholic Primary is based on sound educational principles suited to the age and ability of the children. The programme is supported and enhanced by the school ethos.

Through our religious education programme and policy on worship we stress a personal spiritual life, an acceptance of objective moral norms and a strong sense of social responsibility. It is within this framework that the aims of our policy are derived.

Within this environment we believe that:

“...Religious Education is not one subject amongst many but the foundation of the entire education process. The beliefs and values it communicates should inspire and unify every aspect of school life.” (Bishops Conference of England and Wales 1988)

“For the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the very spirits of human beings.” (The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium 1998)

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Policy on Education in Personal Relationships (E.P.R.)

Our Mission Statement is central to the life of our school. All members of the school community are encouraged to think of ways in which they can strive to live out the Mission Statement in their everyday lives.

### **3. THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

“The first educators in the faith are parents. It is they, above all others, who establish in their children the first sensitivity and responsiveness to the presence of God, to the practice of prayer and to the patterns of life in the community of faith, the parish. By their example in the home and, their participation in the Mass and the other sacraments, the foundations of a life-long faith and discipleship in their children are laid down.”

Statement from the Bishop’s Conference of England and Wales on Religious Education in Catholic Schools 2000.

It is, with this statement in mind that we recognise and acknowledge the importance of the partnership with the home and parish communities to which our children belong. As the General Director for Catechesis affirms: “This partnership between home and parish is enhanced by the role of the Catholic school in which the educational mission of the church finds a particular and important expression.”

### **4. AIMS**

The aims of our religious programme are:

- to give children an appreciation of their uniqueness and dignity as individuals
- to develop the capacity for awe and wonder
- to develop opportunities for contemplation and reflection
- to celebrate the experience of being loved by God
- to challenge children to examine their own lives, to deepen their personal faith commitment and to respect that of others
- to ensure that children acquire a deeper understanding of themselves, their relationships with others and with the natural world

- to promote spiritual and moral development in all aspects of school life, since God is present in all things, thus enabling children to make sense of how God is active in our world
- to provide models of Christian witness
- to use the Bible, the liturgy and the teaching of the Church and the witness of Christian living to reveal signs of God's presence
- to raise awareness that we live in an increasingly interdependent world
- to provide the children with occasions and opportunities to experience love, care, concern, co-operation, respect, trust, honesty, truthfulness
- to provide the child with a knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of the Roman Catholic Church
- to raise awareness of the values and way of life of other world faiths and to help the children understand and value people whose customs and beliefs differ from their own
- to help the children to develop a range of skills including the ability to investigate, interpret, communicate, criticise, evaluate and socialise
- to foster attitudes of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, right judgement, courage, reverence, awe and wonder
- to deliver a curriculum that fosters excellence and enjoyment for all pupils.
- to develop respect for others and all creation

## 5. OBJECTIVES

Within the context of our Mission Statement, Learning and Teaching, Special Educational Needs, E.P.R., Assessment, Marking, Recording and Reporting, Equal Opportunities and Health and Safety Policies, the teaching of RE will give children the opportunity to:

- appreciate that God's love and presence are made real and celebrated in the seven sacraments of the Church
- develop the appropriate skills and attitudes to promote an informed and full response to God's call in everyday life
- reflect, discuss and question their thoughts, feelings, emotions and attitudes
- study, investigate and reflect upon their learning
- develop ways of expressing themselves through the various types of informal and formal prayers
- familiarise themselves with the sacred books of the Old and New Testaments
- take part in a variety of celebrations including non-Eucharistic liturgies, Masses and assemblies
- come to know and understand the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church

## 6. THE ORGANISATION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHING

We follow Come and See, the Catholic scheme for primary schools, in line with Diocesan guidance and The Curriculum Directory (2012). Teaching in RE is based upon the four Constitutions of the Second Vatican Council:

- REVELATION – God speaks – finding meaning in life.
- CHURCH – Christ the light of the nations – Community of Faith
- CHRISTIAN LIVING – Joy and hope – Way of Life
- SACRAMENTS – Liturgy: Celebration – Celebration in symbol and ritual

### THE THEMES

Come and See is developed through three themes based upon the above documents of the Second Vatican Council, which are gradually explored each time at greater depth. They are Church, Sacrament and Christian Living. The basic question – belief for each season time is explored through three kinds of themes:

- Community of Faith – Church
- Celebration of Ritual – Sacraments
- Way of Life – Christian Living

Each of the themes occurs in each season time and each theme gradually builds on the understanding of the previous theme. The themes for each season are as follows:

#### AUTUMN

The three autumn themes are developed in the light of an understanding of Creation:

**Family** - Domestic Church focuses on life as a gift, myself as a unique and loved creation, the creative love and care that can be expressed in family groups.

**Belonging** – Baptism/Confirmation focuses on the call to belong. Baptism and Confirmation, sacraments of the gift of God's life and friendship.

**Loving** – Advent/Christmas focuses on the capacity for entering into loving relationships and the perfect gift and revelation of God's love, Jesus, born to Mary, born as one of us.

#### SPRING

The three spring themes are developed in the light of an understanding of Incarnation:

**Community** - Local Church focuses on the people of God gathered in Christ, united in the journey of faith, in care for one another, in sharing their story and in celebration.

**Relating** - Eucharist focuses on the invitation to know Jesus, to live in communion with him and one another.

**Giving** - Lent/Easter focuses on Jesus' loving self-giving. On the cross, the Father's love that raises him to new life and the challenge of Christians to follow Jesus' example of self-giving.

#### SUMMER

The three summer themes are developed in the light of an understanding of Redemption and the work of the Holy Spirit.

**Serving** --Pentecost focuses on the on-going mission of Jesus Christ in the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Inter-Relating** – Reconciliation focuses on love, compassion and forgiveness of God the Father revealed in Jesus and poured out by the Spirit to bring forgiveness and reconciliation in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

**World** – Universal Church focuses on the same love revealed in the diversity of the world and its people, and the gifts of the Spirit that bear fruit in love, joy, justice and peace for all people.

## **7. COMMUNITY OF FAITH - CHURCH**

The children will be encouraged to:

- understand that we are all made in the likeness of God and are called to be members of the community of the Church,
- understand the roles of the people of the Church, past and present and that to be a member of the Church is to follow the example of Jesus Christ,
- reflect upon the benefits and responsibilities of belonging to a community by becoming active members within it,
- explore the relationships between the Catholic Church and other denominations and faiths.

Our links with the community include:

- inviting elderly members of the parish and local community to join us for various liturgical and non-liturgical celebrations,
- collecting for various charities,
- joining with the parish for various celebrations during the liturgical year,
- supporting the Parish Catechists in the preparing children for their First Holy Communion,
- sharing our Christian message through song at a range of venues in the parish local community.

The priest within the parish acts as the school chaplain and is available to help staff and children with the principles of different topics. Other local clergy are also involved in the liturgical life of the school.

## **8. CELEBRATION OF RITUAL - SACRAMENTS**

We will help the children to explore the meaning of celebration in the following ways:

- Preparing and participating in the Mass. This will take the form of Masses at the beginning of term, on holy days of obligation and on our feast day. Masses may also be organised to celebrate special occasions.
- Every class takes a turn to prepare an assembly and attends a parish Mass each year.
- There is a daily act of collective worship for each class/key stage or the whole school, led by the Head Teacher, a member of staff or by the children.
- Year 3 leads a Way of the Cross service for the school in Lent.
- Prayer Services are held before school during Advent and Lent and are open to all children, parents and staff.
- Each class in KS2 does the Stations of the Cross during the week nearest to Holy Week.
- The assemblies incorporate a religious or moral theme.
- There is a weekly singing assembly in which the children learn music and songs that will be used in worship and liturgy.
- Prayer is an integral part of everyday school life. The children are given the opportunity to pray formally and informally and to experience personal and communal prayer at various times of the day.

- The children will learn certain prayers from memory and be introduced to other prayers which they will use for different occasions.
- Through the topics in Come and See the children will develop an understanding of the ways in which other people worship and pray.

## **9. WAY OF LIFE – CHRISTIAN LIVING**

The children will be encouraged to:

- see Jesus as the model of the Christian way of life,
- form moral judgements based on the values which Christ expressed in His life and teaching,
- understand the traditions and values of other world faiths,
- examine core values and their impact upon themselves and the whole community

## **10. TEACHING AND LEARNING**

One of the main purposes of classroom RE is to draw pupils into a systematic study of the teaching of the Church and the saving mystery of Christ, which the Church proclaims. The following strategies and aims underpin the delivery of religious education in our school.

- In our school, RE is taught discretely and developmentally. It includes the deepening of knowledge and understanding of key theological ideas and their applications to life. It is the policy of this school to give 10% of the timetable to the teaching of RE in accordance with Diocesan guidance.
- Ample opportunities are 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 difficult questions of meaning and purpose which everyone has to face enables them to think critically about their own questions of meaning and purpose.
- The development of a sense of self-worth through the children's experience of belonging to a caring community and an awareness of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.

At St Alban's we believe in providing the children with rich and varied learning opportunities. Teachers are encouraged to be as creative as possible in their lesson planning and to employ a range of teaching styles including:

- whole class discussion and teaching
- group discussion and feedback
- differentiated activities according to ability
- partner work
- individual research and study

## **11. HOMEWORK**

The home/school sheet provides a link with parents and gives them information about the themes and key vocabulary associated with the topics being covered each term. Other R.E. homework is set where appropriate and is linked to the R.E. being taught in the classroom.

## **12. WORLD RELIGIONS PROGRAMME**

As part of the Come and See programme, two weeks are set aside for the study of other religions, one in the autumn term and one in the summer term. Judaism, the root of our faith is studied every year along with one other world religion. The other religions studied are; Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism.

During our World Religion Weeks, pupils are given the opportunity to explore aspects of these religions through practical activities and, wherever possible, from input by representatives of other faiths as well as trips to their place of worship.

## **13. PRAYER**

Prayer is a central and ever living part of our school day. Through prayer, we seek to deepen the children's relationship with God in a way that is relevant and meaningful to them. We feel that at every stage the children in our care should be encouraged to spontaneously express their joy, wonder, awe, concern, thanks, sorrow, sadness, anger, fear and disappointment through prayer (see Collective Worship policy).

From Reception children are taught an attitude of stillness, quiet and openness to the presence of God, experienced in a variety of ways.

Prayer forms an essential part of all acts of collective worship and liturgical celebrations. Each class has their own prayer table which is a focus for the children's prayer. More formal prayers are shared too, such as morning and evening prayers and grace before meals. Children are also encouraged to compose their own prayers. There is a crucifix in every classroom. Staff and Governors pray together before meetings. Our parish priest comes into school to celebrate liturgies with the children and is available to lead the staff and children in prayer.

## **14. SPIRITUAL AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

At St Alban's, we believe that spiritual development relates to that aspect of inner life through which the children acquire insights into their personal existence. It is the experience of love, of goodness and beauty. It is a sense of being taken out of oneself; the sense of wonder, of questioning, of awe, or simply the instinct that there must be more to life than this. We believe that enhancing spiritual development helps children to create increasingly coherent narratives about themselves. Through spiritual development, the children are encouraged to grow in self-awareness and in awareness of their responses to experience, seen especially in the light of faith.

At St Alban's we aim to provide a safe environment in which our children feel confident to open themselves to the truth of their own experience and feelings. We encourage children in their spiritual development by encouraging a questioning and searching attitude about the self which will include "Who am I?" "Where do I fit in?" and "How do I relate to others?"

Staff are also encouraged to develop their awareness of their own spiritual journey and that, like the children, they can experience the excitement of discoveries and should be prepared to risk sharing their experiences with the children.

Moral education at St Alban's is promoted through the R.E. curriculum, E.P.R, core values and all other subject areas. It is promoted in interpersonal relationships, enlivened by the whole school Catholic ethos and is concerned with personal decision making on the basis of what is right and wrong.

Spiritual and moral development is promoted in all aspects of school life, since God is present in all things: curriculum subjects (see Appendix A), extra-curricular activities, interpersonal relationships, collective worship – each are avenues into understanding and experiencing God, thus enabling pupils to make sense of how God is active in our world. Therefore, every member of staff in our school has a role to play. All share in the nurturing of the whole person and by their witness to Christian values, help create the ethos in which all can grow, spiritually and morally, and be formed in the likeness of Christ.

Children's spiritual growth is aided by opportunities for religious experiences, meditation and reflection; collective worship allows pupils to explore and share beliefs, appreciate the discipline of silence and prayer, raise and address moral, personal, social, national and international concern (see Collective Worship policy).

## **15. RESOURCES**

Each teacher has a copy of the appropriate Come and See book for his/her class. Children at both Key Stages have access to Bibles in their classroom. Other resources, including DVDs, topic stories and artefacts are stored centrally.

## **16. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

A wide variety of strategies are used by teachers in order for each child to participate in the learning of RE to the best of their ability. These are outlined in our Special Educational Needs Policy.

## **17. MARKING, ASSESSMENT AND RECORDING**

Each class teacher is responsible for the marking of work. Marking is carried out in accordance with the school guidelines (see Assessment, Marking and Recording Policy).

Assessment is carried out within each topic. This can take the form of observations by teachers and self-assessment by students. One topic per term is formally assessed, levelled and moderated within school. Levels are awarded using the level indicators stated in each Come and See topic, National Levels of Attainment in Religious Education and guidance provided by DABCEC. External moderation of these assessed topics also takes place at the termly Deanery R.E. Co-ordinators meetings. These levels of attainment are recorded on the school's assessment recording system for the core subjects. This allows the progress of each child to be tracked.

Careful consideration is given to children's verbal responses, particularly in class and group discussions, their willingness to contribute ideas and relevant material and the quality of their written work when retelling and interpreting stories. Parents are informed on a termly basis of topics to be covered and comments from parents and pupils are encouraged.

## **18. REPORTING TO PARENTS**

An induction evening early in the Autumn term for each class, provides parents with an outline of the R.E. curriculum and how parents can be involved. A termly curriculum overview is sent to parents providing them with information about the topics for that term and any other relevant information.

There are parent evenings in the Autumn and Spring terms when parents have the opportunity to discuss their child's progress and see their child's work. A full written report is sent home during the Summer term as part of the child's Record of Achievement.

## **19. MONITORING**

The Senior Management Team/ RE co-ordinator regularly take samples of children's work. General feedback and examples of good practice are given at staff meetings. Individual feedback is also given if appropriate.

The Co-ordinator is also responsible for carrying out other monitoring activities such as lesson observations, timing audits and pupil interviews.

## APPENDIX 1 - WHY DO WE PRAY?

### **Why do we Pray?**

It is important to introduce children to different kinds of prayers to help them to understand the different reasons for praying.

#### **1. Traditional Prayers**

It is important to teach children traditional prayers. They hear them at home, at church and in school. These prayers have stood the test of time and they come to us as part of the richness passed down from generation to generation. We should not discard them lightly. The Rosary, for example, is a beautiful family prayer. Of course, there is always the danger that familiar prayers will become so routine that the children might say them without thinking about what they mean. For this reason, it will help very young children if actions are included in prayer. Here are three simple examples that we use at school:

- a) It is always important to get ready for prayer. At school we could say “Join your hands, close your eyes (or bow your heads) and get ready to talk to God,” followed by a short pause. This ensures a still, quiet attitude, ready for prayer.
- b) The Sign of the Cross is one of the first things that children learn. We make the sign of the cross on ourselves to remind us that when Jesus died for us on the cross, He redeemed us. While we make the sign of the cross, we name the three persons of the Blessed Trinity.
- c) The Our Father is one of the first prayers that children learn, even though the very young find it long and difficult to remember. It also has a traditional vocabulary and some very long words.

#### **2. Prayers of Invocation**

Invocation litany means a “calling in”. In prayers of invocation we ask for God’s presence with us.

#### **3. Prayers of Contrition**

We tell God about the wrong things we have done. We tell him that we are sorry and ask for his forgiveness

#### **4. Prayers of Meditation**