

## **St. Michael's RC Primary School and Nursery**



### **Religious Education Policy**

#### **School Mission Statement**



**St Michael's RC Primary School is a Catholic family of faith, following the teaching of Christ. We strive to create an environment where all members of our school community become caring, independent and resilient individuals who fulfil their potential.**

**"I came so that you may have life, life in all its fullness" John 10:10**

#### **Values**

We believe that the purpose of St. Michael's Catholic Primary school is to:

- help pupils to live and learn in a Catholic Christian environment leading to acceptance and respect of others in a diverse school community and wider world
- provide an environment in which high expectations will lead to a striving for excellence in all areas of school life
- educate and develop each member of the school community by building on their strengths and supporting their weaknesses
- foster purposeful relationships with those who learn in, work in and visit our school where diverse views and backgrounds are respected

#### **Introduction**

St. Michael's School is a voluntary-aided Roman Catholic School, in the trusteeship of the Diocese of Southwark.

As a school founded by the Catholic Church, St. Michael's School bases its teaching on the Gospel message of God's immeasurable love for us, and invites the children to respond by loving God and by loving their neighbour as themselves. So the children are encouraged to take Jesus as their model.

St. Michael's School achieves this by teaching the children to know and love God and His creation. This teaching permeates all aspects of the curriculum and the daily life of the school. This teaching is celebrated in the worship and liturgies, rites and rituals of the Catholic Church. Parents are encouraged to uphold and reinforce the fundamentals of the Catholic faith that are taught in the school.

St. Michael's School demonstrates openness to all children. It endeavours to see that all children present in the school may learn happily with others, and are given the opportunity to develop their full potential. To this end, St. Michael's School encourages the children to develop self-esteem, self-respect and self-discipline as well as a tolerance of and respect for others.

St. Michael's School provides a warm and welcoming environment to all.

### **The Place of R.E. in the School**

St. Michael's School fully believes that Religious Education is the foundation of all our teaching and the entire educational process. The Christian Catholic beliefs and values inspire and unify every aspect of our school life. They are the basis and essential influence on our school curriculum.

Religious Education is linked to all our teaching and the key areas of the children's learning. This is because we see education as being God's work, and so education is religious in that it concerns discovering the breadth and depth of God's creation and His creatures. Hence, whatever area of the curriculum children are studying they are actively learning about:

- the mysteries and wonders of God's creation
- the challenges and discoveries that are presented to them
- the uniqueness and dignity of individual people
- how they can enjoy God's world.

The C.I.R.C.L.E values form the backbone of our approach to Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development:

- Care and Concern
  - Independence
  - Resilience
  - Church
  - Learning
  - Enjoyment
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- These values now permeate the school and awards are issued at our weekly C.I.R.C.L.E assembly every Friday when parents are invited to the school to see their child receive an award.
  - The Behaviour policy covers rewards as well as sanctions. The school rewards pupils who promote the C.I.R.C.L.E values through C.I.R.C.L.E awards on a Friday at assembly Golden Tie awards – the golden tie is presented to a child from each class for outstanding behaviour in any aspect of our school mission statement.
  - The school council are visible in the school through the introduction of the blue tie and meet on a regular basis to discuss how to continue to develop the school.
  - A school postcard is sent home to pupils who demonstrate good behaviour in any aspect of our school life.

The planning of our faith teaching, which is at the centre of our curriculum, becomes the foundation for the National Curriculum, with its aims to promote

*“the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils . . . and prepare such pupils for the responsibilities and experiences of adult life.”* (Education Reform Act 1988)

### **Leadership of Religious Education**

Religious Education is the responsibility of the R.E. subject leader and the Head teacher. Their role is to monitor and assess the R.E. curriculum throughout the school to ensure continuity and progression. They also ensure that the aims and learning outcomes in the Curriculum Directory are identified and fulfilled. A governor has specific responsibility for R.E. and liaises closely with the staff of the school to fulfil their monitoring duties.

### **Curriculum Content**

R.E. is a core subject in our school, alongside English, Maths and Science, and therefore we devote the required time to its delivery. We adhere to the Curriculum Directory guidelines and learning outcomes. This provides a cohesive approach and opportunities for whole school assemblies and celebrations as well as displays which are relevant to every child. The core of our curriculum is based on the programme “The Way, The Truth and The Life”. The content of this R.E. programme is based on the four major Constitutions of Vatican II; these are related to the Church's teaching on Revelation, the Church, Celebration and Life in Christ. These themes are treated and developed each year, though children are introduced to the theme through a variety of different "Life Topics" related to it. [The Bishops' Conference Curriculum Directory for R.E. (January, 1997) follows the same structure of the major Vatican II Constitutions, relating them to study of the Trinity, Creation, the Scriptures, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.]

These themes are developed with greater depth and breadth each year as the child progresses through the school, and will form the core of our R.E. studies.

The purpose of these areas of study is to help the children as follows:

#### **Revelation:** Story, Scripture, Memory and Tradition of the Church

- to explore the importance of story in the human quest for meaning;
- to understand the role of Christian Scriptures as expressions of the ways in which humankind strives to understand the nature of God and the nature of human persons;
- to reflect upon the personal and community response to God invited by Scripture;
- to explore the sacred writings of other faith communities.

#### **Community:** Church, Community of Believers, Pilgrim People of God

- to reflect on the experience of belonging to community at various levels;
- to reflect on the belief that, as people created in the image of a Triune God, Christians are called to be that community which is the Church;
- to develop a knowledge and understanding of people and roles in the Church and understand that to be the Church is to witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ;
- to explore the relationship between the Catholic Church and other denominations and faiths.

#### **Way of Life:** Lifestyle, Morality, Values, Attitudes

- to explore the values which underpin beliefs and actions in the human family;
- to understand the following of Christ as a call to holiness/wholeness of life;

- to reflect on the values which Christ expressed in his life and teaching;
- to explore the values and way of life of other world faiths.

**Celebration:** Ritual, Prayer, Sacraments, Worship, Liturgy

- to explore the meaning of celebration which marks the growth and development of every human being;
- to understand that spiritual growth and development is rooted in the Church's sacramental life which is expressed in sign and symbol throughout the liturgical year;
- to reflect on the place of prayer in the life of the Catholic community and of individual Christians;
- to develop a knowledge and understanding of prayer in other faiths.  
familiar with the layout of the Catechism.

**Assessment and Recording**

The assessment of Religious Education at our school is designed to assist our children's learning and to enable them to strive for a feeling of confidence and success in their understanding of the Catholic faith.

Progress is monitored through discussion, questioning, posing problems and giving opportunities to present their knowledge to others in a variety of ways, e.g. class assemblies. Attainment level records are completed at the end of each half term to show children's levels of understanding.

**Marking**

In line with the school's marking policy, the marking of children's religious work should always be positive and supportive to encourage the child in his/her faith journey. Marking is done with sensitivity, green marking celebrates their achievements and pink comments deepen their understanding and knowledge.

**Teaching Staff**

All teachers at St. Michael's School are either Roman Catholics or are sympathetic to the teaching of the Catholic faith which permeates all aspects of our school life. Through example, commitment and teaching, the children are encouraged to develop a loving and trusting relationship with God, an experience which it is hoped will influence their attitudes to life and their relationship with other people. All teaching staff have the responsibility of teaching Religious Education to the children in their class.

Discussion of approaches between teachers is vitally important as well as regular discussions taking place at our staff meetings. All staff are encouraged to regularly attend relevant courses.

**Home Links**

The school recognises that it cannot teach our children without the cooperation of the parents and the parish. The parents/carers are the first educators and they are in partnership with the teachers who have the professional skills and training to help parents in the task of teaching the Catholic faith.

We endeavour to do this in an atmosphere of trust and confidence. During the year, parents and friends are invited to join us at many celebrations, masses, liturgies and weekly assemblies.

At the end of the year we hold a Leavers Mass to say farewell to anyone leaving us and to thank them for their contribution and commitment to the life of our school.

Parents are always invited and welcomed to all our school and class celebrations which include school masses, class masses and assemblies.

Every Wednesday, each family is given a copy of the Wednesday Word, which encourages children to explore the upcoming Gospels with their families, this is also followed through in the whole school assembly the following week.

### **Parish Links**

We recognise that the school stands in the midst of the local community. At parish level, we take an active part in the holy days of obligation masses in the parish church, providing music and readers. In addition, a key stage will attend a weekday mass at church every week. St Michael's leads in the education of children from the parish in preparation of their First Holy Communion.

We give regular support to CAFOD and the Catholic Children's Society enabling our children to become aware of the needs of the wider world of children and families overseas. This leads to an appreciation of the diversity of culture, races and faiths within the world.

### **Parish Priest**

The parish priest, who is also a governor of the school, has responsibility for the pastoral care of the school community. The parish priest promotes the spiritual life of the 'school church'. He leads the celebration of liturgies, mass and penitential services. In addition, the parish priest visits the school on a regular basis to reinforce his role with the school community.

### **Prayer**

An essential part of the Catholic ethos of the school is the prayer life. All Governors meetings begin with a prayer. The most important aspect of prayer for children is that they realise it is their way of communicating with God and is first and foremost a personal occasion.

Children are encouraged to pray in different ways according to their age and personal development. The Way, The Truth and The Life programme offers progression for children as they move through the school. Children are introduced to a variety of different ways of praying:

- quiet reflection / meditation
- praying together
- writing own prayers
- prayers through music
- learning traditional Christian / Catholic prayers

Staff are encouraged to pray with children, and to be an example for them. Through prayer, we endeavour to develop our relationship with God.

All classes have a prayer area which has displays of children's work. This area changes with the liturgical year. Class prayers are established throughout the school and each teacher uses prayers appropriate to age and ability of the class. Candles, pictures and objects are also used as a focus for prayer.

Children take part in infant or junior assemblies, and whole school assemblies where children and staff join together to pray. Children are encouraged to pray their own prayers.

### **Sacramental Preparation**

Through our R.E. scheme, knowledge of all the sacraments is established, with special emphasis upon Baptism, Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation. Years 5 & 6 also learn about the Sacrament of the Sick and Holy Orders. The children are prepared through the school for the Sacrament of First Holy Communion from Year 3. The course of preparation is carried out in our school by the RE lead, the school works in close consultation and partnership with the parish priest. In this way we hope to achieve true partnership between school, family and parish, with the children celebrating their First Communion in their local church.

### **Liturgy and Celebration**

These are important moments in the life of St. Michael's School; when gathered together round the table of the Lord, the community is nourished and strengthened. Our masses will reflect the liturgical year and other notable occasions such as our start of the school year, First Holy Communion celebration and our leavers' mass. All children, irrespective of their church affiliation, are involved with the celebration, have a part to play, and so identify with what is happening. Masses should encourage participation in the preparation, music, processions, gestures, readings and prayers; staff will ensure that the language and symbols used are appropriate to the age group concerned.

Whenever possible, tea or coffee will be available for the families and friends attending some of these celebrations.

Once a term each class leads an assembly to which their parents are invited. Assemblies are occasions for celebrating the children's work and are experiences of worship when all the children are actively involved. The theme of the assembly is usually based on the class topic or on the liturgical year. Class assemblies generally last about twenty minutes and may contain prayers, Bible stories, modern stories with a biblical message, children's prose and poetry, drama, music, dancing and singing.

### **Discipline and Relationships**

We believe that children learn best when they are safe and happy. Good relationships between staff and children are paramount. We encourage open, honest discussion with children. Particular care is taken when teaching R.E. to ensure that there is consistency between teaching and practice.

### **Spiritual and Moral Development**

The religious character of our school is seen as giving shape to every aspect of school life, and especially the spiritual and moral development of our children.

Spiritual development is understood as the development of all those aspects which enable us to appreciate goodness, beauty and truth.

Through our teaching, we hope to enable children to reflect on their experiences of life and grow in knowledge of their feelings, needs and reactions. Through their awareness and

understanding of themselves, they will recognise God's action in their lives and come to an inner peace and contentment. In addition, pupils are taught about the importance of the mission of the Church and the school's contribution to the 'common good'.

Helping children to make their moral decisions is a crucial part of the formation of a moral conscience. Through our teaching, we aim to help children to have an understanding of the Gospel of Jesus and through self-awareness and self-confidence enable them to come to good moral judgements.

### **Multi-Cultural and Multi-Faith**

St. Michael's is a Roman Catholic school and therefore by the very religion that causes its existence, it must be a school that encourages tolerance, respect and care for all people, regardless of colour, race or creed, as St Michael's is beautifully diverse with over half of our school community speaking another language other than English.

Whilst Religious Education at St Michael's is specifically of the Christian Roman Catholic tradition, we welcome input from other faiths and denominations. We appreciate how the beliefs and values of other faith communities can enrich our own spiritual existence. We teach and learn about the other major faiths within our scheme of work, 'The Way, The Truth and The Life'.

### **Environment**

It is our intention that the environment of our school reflects our mission statement and that we are providing a caring, well ordered and stimulating environment that reflects our Christian beliefs.

Work is displayed in a variety of ways throughout the school. Each classroom has an R.E. area with a display board and prayer area. The display board will reflect the colour theme of the liturgical year. There is a Religious Education display of a prayer tree at the front entrance to the school which holds the prayers of children at our school. Bibles, candles, artefacts and pictures are all used to enhance and present our Catholic faith.

### **What every New Teacher needs to know**

- Any questions directly relating to Religious Education should be asked of the R.E. Co-ordinator and subsequently the Head teacher.

It is important that every teacher, when joining the school, becomes familiar with:

- The location of our Parish Church- St. Michael's Church, Chatham
- The story of St. Michael and the class Apostles
- The curriculum, 'The way, The truth and The Life' curriculum

### **Resources**

- Resource books for staff can be found in the PPA room
- Posters and pictures are stored in the RE leads classroom
- The school library has a variety of religious books
- The mass box and altar cloths can be found in the RE leads classroom The following resources can be found within the school:
- A class set of Bibles in each KS2 class
- A selection of candles

- Other faith resources in each class room

### **Special Needs**

The R.E. curriculum, as with other areas of the curriculum, is differentiated to meet the needs of our children through our long-, medium- and short-term planning.

In the classroom we intend:

- to provide a happy, caring environment so that all children can achieve their potential
- that plans should indicate a variety of learning styles for all children
- that children's work should show a variety of recording to suit all abilities
- that teaching should focus on learning outcomes and provide for individual and group work
- to build on the child's strengths to allow maximum participation in all activities
- that all children be allowed to grow spiritually and to develop a strong sense of the value of God's world.
- Children on the Gifted and Talented register are challenged to deepen understanding and reach their full potential.

### **Information Technology**

All classes have access to laptops/ Ipads and other ICT equipment which will be used to enhance R.E. teaching and learning.

sense of wonder and inspiration in the person of Christ; reflect upon our own individual faith journeys; develop the skills of prayer

This policy was reviewed in the **Spring Term 2016**.

**Next Review Date: Spring Term 2017.**

Chair of Governors \_\_\_\_\_

Headteacher \_\_\_\_\_