



ST JOSEPH'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

BACUP

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Curriculum Policy

“Jesus is the Centre of our lives”

God wants me to be the best me I can be

Our Mission

Through His teaching we aim to value ourselves and each other as unique and precious individuals created by God; we encourage and develop love and respect for each other and for our world; we strive to promote and deepen our Catholic faith through prayer, work and play; we aim to foster a loving, caring environment in which each child can freely learn and develop to their full potential.

2026–2027

Policy information

Document control	Details
Policy title	Religious Education Policy
Subject leader	Rachel Birtwistle
Review date	Autumn Term 2028
Audience	Staff, governors, families and other stakeholders

1. Purpose and scope

This policy sets out St Joseph's approach to curriculum Religious Education (RE) from the Early Years Foundation Stage to the end of Key Stage 2. It applies to governors, leaders, teachers, support staff and others involved in planning, teaching, supporting or monitoring RE and should be read alongside the school's Catholic Life and Mission, prayer and liturgy, curriculum, assessment, SEND and equality documents.

RE is distinct from, though closely connected with, prayer and liturgy, Catholic life and pastoral formation. Curriculum time allocated to RE is used for rigorous, planned teaching and assessment and is not replaced by Mass, collective worship, celebrations or charitable activity.

2. Catholic life, mission and philosophy

Religious Education stands at the heart of the Church's educational mission and the school's conviction that 'Jesus is the Centre of our lives'. Through His teaching, pupils learn to value themselves and others as unique and precious individuals created by God, deepen faith through prayer, work and play, and flourish within a loving and caring community. The motto, 'God wants me to be the best me I can be', expresses the call to grow in wisdom, virtue, service and relationship with God and others.

RE gives pupils a living encounter with the Catholic faith while remaining an educational discipline. For some pupils it may deepen an existing faith; for others it may be an introduction to Catholic belief and practice. All pupils are respected, and learning is evaluated through educational standards of knowledge, understanding, reasoning, reflection and communication rather than personal belief or religious practice.

3. Rationale and status of Religious Education

RE is a core subject in a Catholic school. It is planned, taught, assessed, monitored and resourced with the same seriousness and rigour as other core subjects. Its principal purpose is the systematic study of the mystery of Christ, Sacred Scripture, the teaching and tradition of the Catholic Church, sacramental life, prayer, morality, Catholic social teaching and the relationship between faith and life.

The intended outcome is religiously literate and engaged pupils who know and understand the Catholic faith, use appropriate theological vocabulary, interpret sources, reason and reflect, engage respectfully with questions of meaning and ethics, understand other religions and worldviews, and recognise the demands of religious commitment in daily life.

4. Curriculum aims

- Present comprehensive, accurate and age-appropriate knowledge of Catholic belief, practice and tradition.
- Deepen pupils' religious and theological understanding and enable them to communicate it clearly.
- Develop knowledge and interpretation of Scripture and its relationship with Church teaching and lived faith.
- Present Catholic moral and social teaching authentically and connect faith with contemporary life, culture and the common good.
- Develop pupils' capacity to ask questions, make connections, reason theologically, think ethically and reflect spiritually.
- Stimulate imagination, curiosity and a search for meaning, truth, beauty and goodness.
- Build respectful knowledge of other religions and worldviews and contribute to dialogue and community cohesion.
- Enable pupils to connect RE with other curriculum disciplines without losing its distinctive subject knowledge and methods.

5. Curriculum entitlement and time allocation

In accordance with the expectations of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, at least 10% of taught curriculum time is allocated to Religious Education. This calculation excludes prayer, liturgy, Mass and other acts of worship. Timetables protect the entitlement in every class and leaders monitor actual provision as well as planned time.

RE is taught throughout the year and is not compressed into occasional thematic days. Sufficient lesson length and frequency are provided for explicit teaching, retrieval, discussion, independent application, reflection and assessment. Interruptions are managed so that RE has parity with other core subjects.

6. Programme of study and curriculum structure

The curriculum follows the Religious Education Directory, To Know You More Clearly, using the Diocese of Salford's Lighting the Path resources and current diocesan guidance. The six-branch structure—Creation and Covenant; Prophecy and Promise; Galilee to Jerusalem; Desert to Garden; To the Ends of the Earth; and Dialogue and Encounter—supports coherent progression through the liturgical and school year.

The school's long-term plan adapts the programme carefully for mixed-age classes while preserving the expected content, sequence and progression for each age phase. Diocesan and published materials support rather than replace teacher subject knowledge, responsive planning and attention to pupils' prior learning. Any transitional arrangements are documented and reviewed so that pupils do not experience gaps or unnecessary repetition.

7. Curriculum content and progression

Curriculum planning identifies the knowledge, concepts, Scripture, sources, vocabulary, theological questions and expected outcomes to be taught. Learning develops cumulatively across knowledge lenses such as hear, believe, celebrate and live, and through pupils' capacity to understand, discern and respond. Teachers make progression visible through increasingly rich content, precise language, independent connections and disciplined reasoning.

Important content is revisited in new contexts rather than repeated at the same level. Retrieval and recap activate prior knowledge; explicit explanation and modelling secure new learning; and purposeful tasks enable pupils to interpret, compare, explain, evaluate, create and apply. Teachers identify and correct misconceptions sensitively and accurately.

8. Scripture, theology and religious vocabulary

Sacred Scripture is central and is encountered with reverence and intellectual seriousness. Pupils learn the location and context of passages, important genres and authors, connections across Scripture and the way the Church reads Scripture within tradition. Teachers distinguish the biblical text from simplified retellings and select translations and resources suitable for the age group.

Theological and religious vocabulary is taught explicitly, pronounced accurately, displayed selectively and used in speech and writing. Pupils are supported to move beyond vague personal response by drawing on Scripture, doctrine, liturgy, art, music and other sources to explain and justify ideas.

9. Teaching and learning

Teaching combines clear subject explanation with questioning, discussion, close engagement with sources, storytelling, art, music, drama, reflection, structured writing, research and creative response where each approach serves a defined RE objective. Lessons balance teacher guidance, collaborative learning and increasingly independent thinking.

Teachers establish ambitious success criteria, check understanding throughout learning and provide opportunities for pupils to revisit and improve. Prayerful reflection may enrich a lesson, but pupils are not assessed on participation in prayer, strength of belief or conformity of personal response. The subject's integrity is maintained by assessing what pupils know, understand and can do.

10. Early Years Foundation Stage

In the EYFS, RE is taught through the age-appropriate expectations of the Religious Education Directory and Lighting the Path. Children encounter Scripture, prayer, signs, symbols, celebrations, stories, people and places through talk, play, art, music, movement, role play, objects and carefully planned adult-led teaching.

Adults develop accurate vocabulary and religious understanding while connecting learning with children's experience. Observation and purposeful interaction reveal what children remember, understand and communicate. Continuous provision may reinforce learning, but it does not replace the protected and intentional RE curriculum.

11. Other religions and worldviews

Dialogue and Encounter and the wider curriculum enable pupils to learn about Judaism, other religions and non-religious worldviews as set out in the Religious Education Directory and diocesan guidance. Teaching is progressive, accurate and substantial enough to develop genuine understanding rather than a sequence of festivals, food and artefacts.

Pupils explore beliefs, texts, worship, practice, identity and diversity within traditions and make respectful connections and distinctions. Teachers avoid stereotypes, tokenism and language that presents one member or practice as representative of an entire community. Visitors and visits are prepared carefully and complement planned curriculum learning.

12. Catholic social teaching and lived faith

Pupils learn how belief is lived through vocation, virtue, prayer, sacrament, service and Catholic social teaching. Human dignity, the common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, participation, care for creation, the preferential option for the poor, peace and the dignity of work are taught through appropriate Scripture, Church teaching and contemporary examples.

Charity, social action and courageous advocacy are connected to knowledge and reflection rather than presented as isolated activities. Pupils consider causes as well as responses, evaluate choices and understand that service arises from faith, love and justice. RE provides a foundation for action while Catholic life gives opportunities to live it.

13. Inclusion, SEND, equality and belonging

Every pupil, regardless of faith, background or ability, is entitled to the full and ambitious RE curriculum. Teachers identify barriers and adapt through explicit vocabulary, pre-teaching, visual and concrete supports, accessible sources, chunked explanation, reduced copying, alternative recording, assistive technology, guided rehearsal and carefully targeted adult support. Adaptation retains the important theological idea and promotes independence.

Pupils with particular strengths receive depth through richer sources, connections, theological reasoning, independent enquiry and precise communication rather than simply more work. Resources and examples reflect the universal Church and wider society and challenge racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, disability discrimination and other prejudice. Pupils are never expected to represent a whole faith, culture or worldview.

14. Assessment, recording and reporting

Assessment is aligned with the outcomes and progression of the Religious Education Directory and current diocesan guidance. Teachers use questioning, observation, discussion, source work, independent tasks, front-cover check-in and check-out questions and other purposeful evidence to establish prior knowledge, diagnose misconceptions and judge what pupils know, understand and can do.

Class records and agreed assessment grids support proportionate tracking. Standards are moderated within school each term and through cluster or diocesan opportunities where available. Assessment does not judge faith, spirituality or participation in worship. Progress and achievement are reported to parents and carers annually and to governors at agreed intervals.

15. Feedback, presentation and evidence

Feedback is timely, specific and focused on the intended RE learning. It may correct vocabulary, clarify theology, prompt use of evidence, deepen explanation or enable pupils to make a stronger connection. Pupils are given meaningful opportunities to respond and improve.

Books, floor books, art, drama, discussion, digital work and other evidence may demonstrate learning, but presentation format is chosen for educational value. Decorative tasks and excessive worksheets do not substitute for substantive knowledge and thinking. Recorded evidence is sufficient to support learning and assessment without displacing discussion, reading and reflection.

16. Partnership with parents, parish and community

Parents and carers are recognised as the first educators of their children. The school communicates curriculum content and ways to support learning, welcomes dialogue and celebrates pupils' progress. Home religious knowledge or practice is never assumed, and pupils are supported to access the curriculum fully.

The parish priest and parish community enrich the school's Catholic life and may contribute knowledge, witness and context to curriculum learning. Parish partnership, visits, diocesan links and community engagement are planned with clear educational purpose, safeguarding and appropriate preparation. The school also develops respectful links with people and places from other religious traditions.

17. Right of withdrawal

Religious Education is an essential and compulsory part of the school's curriculum offer; however, parents and carers retain a legal right to request withdrawal of their child from all or part of RE. A request should be made to the headteacher. The school will invite discussion so that the parent understands the nature, content and educational purpose of the curriculum and so that the precise scope and practical arrangements are clear.

The right is respected without pressure or stigma. The school remains responsible for supervision and will arrange suitable alternative educational activity, but is not required to provide another religion's curriculum. Withdrawal from RE is separate from withdrawal from prayer or collective worship and from the distinct rules applying to RSE.

18. Roles and responsibilities

- The RE subject leader, Rachel Birtwistle, develops curriculum coherence, supports planning and subject knowledge, leads moderation, oversees resources, monitors standards and reports priorities to leaders and governors.
- The headteacher ensures RE retains its core status, time, staffing and resources and liaises with governors, the parish, the Diocese and relevant partners.
- Class teachers teach and assess the agreed curriculum with accuracy, ambition and respect and make suitable adaptations for their pupils.
- Support staff use agreed language and approaches, enable participation and promote independence under teacher direction.
- The link governor provides informed challenge and support and participates appropriately in monitoring.
- Governors ensure fidelity to the Religious Education Directory, diocesan expectations, statutory responsibilities and the school's Catholic character.

19. Professional development, monitoring and impact

Professional development reflects diocesan developments, curriculum priorities, monitoring, staff confidence and pupil need. It may include the Religious Education Directory, Lighting the Path, Scripture, theology, other religions and worldviews, assessment, SEND, Catholic social teaching and Catholic Schools Inspectorate expectations. New staff receive timely induction, and the leader participates in diocesan meetings and moderation.

RE is monitored through a proportionate range of planning and curriculum review, lesson visits and learning walks, pupil and staff voice, book study, assessment, moderation and professional dialogue. No single source is used in isolation. Impact is evident when pupils remember and connect substantive knowledge, use religious vocabulary precisely, interpret sources, reason theologically and ethically, reflect with depth, understand lived faith and other traditions, and apply learning to questions of meaning and life.

20. Related documents, approval and review

- Religious Education Directory: To Know You More Clearly
- Diocese of Salford Lighting the Path resources and current guidance
- Catholic Life and Mission and prayer and liturgy policies
- School RE curriculum overview and progression documents
- SEND policy and equality information and objectives
- Safeguarding, educational visits and visitor procedures
- Current Catholic Schools Inspectorate framework and school self-evaluation

This policy will be reviewed by the RE subject leader and senior leadership team on a review cycle or sooner if the Religious Education Directory, diocesan guidance, inspection expectations or school provision changes. Material changes will be communicated to staff, governors and families as appropriate.