

SACRED HEART CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL



Religious Education Policy

"Education is not merely the transmission of content but an apprenticeship in virtue."

Drawing New Maps of Hope, Pope Leo XIV

Context of this Religious Education Policy

In the nineteenth century, St John Henry Newman passionately defended the principle that Catholic universities become places where dialogue between academic disciplines was encouraged and celebrated as essential in the pursuit of truth. To dialogue means to reach out to others by actively listening to them.

In our times and circumstances, we strive to extend this principle to our schools, and the religious education curriculum needs to lead the way, offering everyone the opportunity to speak openly and with true freedom so that minds can meet in the pursuit of truth.

St John Henry Newman said, 'I wish the intellect to range with the utmost freedom, and religion to enjoy an equal freedom; but what I am stipulating for is, that they should be found in one and the same place and exemplified in the same persons.'

Furthermore, our task is to make that place the Catholic school, with religious education at its heart.¹

The Importance of Religious Education

Religious education is the *core of the core curriculum*² in a Catholic school. (Pope St John Paul II). Placing religious education at the core of the curriculum helps the school to fulfil its mission to educate the whole person in discerning the meaning of their existence

A Catholic education is "*focused on integral formation of its students and at the same time prepares them for full participation in civic life. It forms the Catholic student as 'both human and a person of faith, the protagonist of culture and the subject of religion.'* It teaches subjects with methods proper to them and at the same time imbues the whole curriculum with a Christian outlook. It is established for Catholic students and at the same time draws others to its doors. In short, the Catholic school reflects the apparent paradox of the incarnation that is resolved in Christ: it is both fully Catholic and really a school. Religious education in a Catholic school also bears witness to the same mystery: it is both fully religious and genuinely educational."

³ (Religious Education Directory p9).

Aims for religious education

Religious education is at the heart of our school life. We aim to ensure that all students will have the opportunity:

To engage in a systematic study of the mystery of God, of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the teachings of the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold, the basis for them and the relationship between faith and life.

¹ *To know You more clearly*, Religious Education Directory for Catholic Schools, Academies and Colleges in England and Wales, June 2023, p4-5

² Address to Bishops' of Great Britain during *ad limina* visit to the Vatican, Pope St John Paul II, 1992

³ *To know You more clearly*, Religious Education Directory for Catholic Schools, Academies and Colleges in England and Wales, June 2023

To enable students continually to deepen their religious and theological understanding and be able to communicate this effectively.

To present an authentic vision of the Church's moral and social teaching to enable students to become religiously literate with a sure guide for living and the tools to critically engage with contemporary culture and society.

To give students an understanding of the religions and worldviews present in the world today and the skills to engage in respectful and fruitful dialogue with those whose worldviews differ from their own.

To develop the critical faculties of students so to bring clarity to the relationship between faith and life, and between faith and culture.

To stimulate students' imagination and provoke a desire for personal meaning as revealed in the truth of the Catholic faith.

To enable students to relate the knowledge gained through religious education to their understanding of other subjects in the curriculum⁴

The Curriculum

At Sacred Heart Catholic High School, religious education in Key Stage 3 is based on the Religious Education Directory (RED) "To Know You More Clearly". In line with the bishop's mandate, the RE curriculum is delivered through carefully adapted lessons designed to meet the diverse educational needs of all students. At Key Stage 4, all students follow the Eduqas Route B GCSE Religious Studies specification. The course provides a rigorous and systematic study of Catholic Christianity, enabling students to deepen their understanding of Catholic beliefs, teachings, practices, and sources of authority. Students also study Judaism as a second religion, developing their knowledge and understanding of Jewish beliefs and practices.

Throughout the course, students engage with a range of theological, philosophical, and ethical issues, including questions relating to origins and meaning, good and evil, life and death, and sin and forgiveness. They are encouraged to apply religious teachings to contemporary moral issues, consider contrasting viewpoints, and develop well-reasoned responses supported by appropriate religious teachings and sources of wisdom and authority.

The curriculum is designed to build upon students' prior learning at Key Stage 3 while developing the knowledge, subject-specific vocabulary, analytical skills, and evaluative skills required for success at GCSE and for further study at Key Stage 5.

At Key Stage 5, students who choose to study A Level Religious Studies follow the AQA specification. The course provides an academically rigorous study of Christianity alongside key areas of philosophy of religion and religious ethics. Students explore a wide range of theological, philosophical, and ethical issues, developing their knowledge and understanding of Christian beliefs, teachings, and practices, as well as engaging with differing scholarly perspectives. The course also develops students' ability to analyse arguments, critically evaluate contrasting viewpoints and construct well-reasoned, evidence-based responses.

⁴ *To know You more clearly*, Religious Education Directory for Catholic Schools, Academies and Colleges in England and Wales, June 2023

In recognition of the importance of religious education in our school, we devote 10% of the teaching cycle to religious education lessons. Key Stage 3 and 4 students receive 5 RE periods per fortnight. In Key Stage 5, we devote 5% of the teaching cycle to Core RE.

The Religious Education Curriculum Directory has a clear framework for learning:

- **Knowledge lenses**
Hear, believe, live, and celebrate, indicate what should be known by the end of each age phase.
- **Ways of knowing**
Understand, discern and respond are the skills through which student progress and develop their thinking during the curriculum journey.
- **Expected outcomes**
Set out what students should be able to know, remember, and do in each year group.
- **Curriculum branches**
Divide the model curriculum into half termly units of study which repeat annually, giving a spiral curriculum which allows students to build progressively on the prior knowledge and develop their understanding year by year.

The curriculum branches are:

Branch 1	Creation and Covenant
Branch 2	Prophecy and Promise
Branch 3	Galilee to Jerusalem
Branch 4	Desert to Garden
Branch 5	To the Ends of the Earth
Branch 6	Dialogue and Encounter

The curriculum is firmly founded on building Student's knowledge and understanding of Scripture, while providing opportunities to make connections to other faiths and cultures, as well as to their daily lives.

Religious education in Key Stage 4 conforms with the decision of the Bishops' Conference in 2016, our GCSE in religious education is based upon:

A 25% study of Catholic Christianity as the primary religion.

A 50% study of Catholic Christianity, covering all four topics:

- Beliefs and Teachings,
- Practices,
- Sources of Wisdom and Authority,
- Forms of Expression and Ways of Life.

a) A 25% study of Judaism as the second religion.

Every student in our sixth form, Key Stage 5, is timetabled for Core RE on a weekly basis; we devote 5% of the timetable to the teaching of Core RE. This is a compulsory, non-exam subject which develops students' spiritual, moral, and intellectual growth while fostering religious literacy and

ethical understanding. These lessons provide time and space for students to think and reflect and are designed to encourage them to develop their own beliefs, opinions, and ideas.

1. RE in the classroom and beyond

At Sacred Heart, the teaching of religious education is designed to be as varied and creative as possible, to help students to engage fully with the ideas explored, to ask questions and to lead their own learning in discerning their response.

Learning within the classroom may include:

- Whole class discussion and teaching
- Group discussion and feedback
- Independent research
- Reflection

Learning in religious education cannot always be recorded and does not begin or end in the classroom. Learning from religious education will flow into other curriculum areas as students make links between their learning. We aim to give the opportunity to connect formal learning with wider understanding through regular opportunities to reflect and respond.

We also work with parents and with the wider faith community to support student progress in understanding and developing on their curriculum and faith journey.

2. The importance of the role of parents in Religious Education

Our school community recognises the central role parents have in the religious education of their students. The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales reiterated that: *"The first educators in the faith are parents."*⁵

In recognition of this, we strive to maintain a faithful partnership with parents, clearly communicating both the curriculum and the wider spiritual opportunities offered to families and warmly inviting parents to share their knowledge and experiences with the school community.

The General Directory for Catechesis confirms, ***"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."***⁶ Religious education in a Catholic school encompasses the whole educational mission of the Church and is not confined to timetabled religious education lessons.

3. Other world views

Catholic education seeks to form students who are well prepared to play a positive role in society and to follow Jesus' teaching to "love your neighbour." We therefore embrace learning about other

⁵ *Religious Education in Catholic Schools* from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 2000

⁶ *Religious Education in Catholic Schools* from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 2000

world views with ***“a willingness... to try to understand better the religion of one’s neighbours, and to experience something of their religious life and culture.”***⁷

The Religious Education Directory includes the branch ‘Dialogue and Encounter’ which focuses specifically on exploring other world views and recognising the connections with the Catholic faith. Opportunities for dialogue and encounter are sought throughout the academic year and especially focus on broadening students’ experiences and on real-life encounters with those of other faiths or none, to enable connections and develop understanding. Examples may include:

- Conversations with invited visitors about their beliefs and experiences
- Guided exploration of artefacts from other faiths
- Independent reading, research, and discussion

Within our GCSE syllabus, students will study the faith of Judaism; this will be a study of the beliefs, teachings and practices of Judaism and their basis in Jewish sources of wisdom and authority. They will refer to scripture and/or sacred texts where appropriate. Students will study the influence of the beliefs, teachings and practices studied on individuals, communities, and societies.

Students are given opportunities to hear directly from external speakers representing a range of faith traditions. These visits allow students to deepen their understanding of different religious beliefs, practices, and lived experiences, while providing opportunities to ask thoughtful questions and engage respectfully with people of faith. This supports the RE curriculum by bringing learning to life, challenging misconceptions and promoting dialogue, mutual respect and understanding within a diverse society.

External speakers are always checked in line with the CES checklist for external speakers, to ensure safe and constructive dialogue and encounter opportunities for our students.

4. Feedback, Assessment, Recording, and Reporting

Feedback is given in religious education to support student progress and to challenge their thinking. This follows school policies and may be given verbally.

Assessment follows diocesan and national guidelines, assessing against the expected outcomes for each branch in the Religious Education Directory. Student attainment is recorded on the school’s assessment recording system and progress is tracked regularly by the Head of RE and Senior Leadership Team in line with the school policy.

The Head of RE will moderate outcomes in religious education both internally and with other Catholic schools, to ensure consistency of expectations with other schools in the diocese.

Outcomes for religious education are shared in line with other core curriculum subjects, both during parent consultation meetings and in end-of-year reports.

5. Monitoring and Evaluating

The Head of RE and Senior Leadership Team monitors every aspect of religious education in line with other core curriculum subjects. Monitoring is conducted via our Quality Assurance where outcomes inform further training at staff meetings or actions for the subject action plan.

⁷ *Meeting God in Friend and Stranger*, Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, 2009

Self-evaluation of religious education is the responsibility of the Headteacher, the Head of RE, Governors and the Senior Leadership Team, with further input from all teachers of religious education, from families and from students. This process ensures a culture of continuous improvement, so that teaching and learning in religious education remains the best it can be.

6. Staff Formation

All staff support the Catholic ethos of our school and strive to develop student progress and understanding in matters of faith. There are regular opportunities for all staff to engage in personal prayer and reflection which may support their professional role.

Teachers involved in planning and delivering religious education lessons receive regular school-led, Diocesan and Trust level training.

The Head of RE attends termly subject leader meetings with the Diocesan Department for Education and BBCET Curriculum Leads to ensure they have the most up to date information, as well as attending Trust moderation meetings on a yearly basis.

Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy is monitored by our Assistant Headteacher for Ethos and is evaluated and reviewed by governors annually.