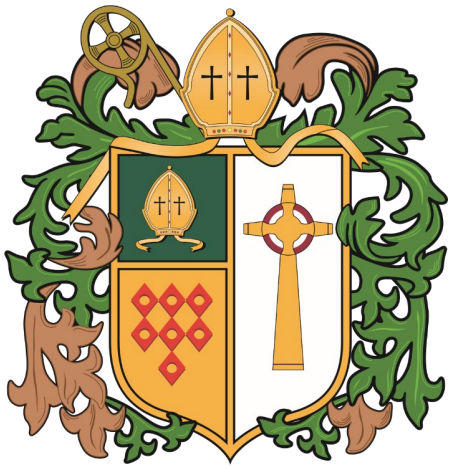
DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

Secondary Religious Education Policy





School mission statement:

We strive for every pupil to realise their God-given potential, become the very best version of themselves, and leave us equipped with the knowledge, character and skills needed to thrive in society.

1. 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]

2. 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 fulfill 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).

3. Aims for religious education

Religious education is at the heart of our school life. We aim to ensure that all pupils 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.
- To enable pupils 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 pupils 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 pupils so to bring clarity to the relationship between faith and life, and between faith and culture.
- To stimulate pupils' imagination and provoke a desire for personal meaning as revealed in

[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

the truth of the Catholic faith.

- To enable pupils to relate the knowledge gained through religious education to their understanding of other subjects in the curriculum[4]

4. **The curriculum**

At St Wilfrid's Catholic College, 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 taught through a bespoke curriculum and resource package developed by the department, fully aligned with the knowledge, understanding and disciplinary lenses of the Religious Education Directory, and delivered through evidence-informed, high-quality teaching and learning strategies.

In Key Stage 4, religious education is based on the Eduqas GCSE Religious Studies Route B specification, through the study of Catholic Christianity, Judaism, philosophy and ethics. In Key Stage 5, religious education is based on the OCR A Level Religious Studies specification, encompassing Philosophy of Religion, Religion and Ethics, and Developments in Christian Thought. The curriculum is delivered through a bespoke curriculum and resource package developed by the department, building upon the knowledge, understanding and disciplinary lenses established through the Religious Education Directory. Through evidence-informed, high-quality teaching and learning strategies, students develop theological literacy, philosophical reasoning, ethical awareness and critical thinking skills, enabling them to engage confidently with religious and non-religious worldviews and contemporary issues.

In recognition of the importance of religious education in our school, we devote 10% of the teaching week to religious education lessons*. In Key Stage 3 this is 5 hours every two weeks and in Key Stage 4 this is 5 hours every two weeks , not including Collective Worship. In Key Stage 5*, we devote 5% of the teaching week to the teaching of Core *RE, this includes 1 hour every week and gives students the opportunity to engage fully with the curriculum*. *In addition, we offer A-level religious education; this includes 10 hours across two weeks.*

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**

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

Understand, discern and respond are the skills through which children progress and develop their thinking during the curriculum journey.

- **Expected outcomes**
  Set out what pupils should be able to know, remember and do in each year group.
- **Curriculum branches**
  Divide the model curriculum into *6-week/termly units* of study which repeat annually, giving a spiral curriculum which allows children 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 children'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) A 25% study of Catholic Christianity as the primary religion.
b) A 50% study of Catholic Christianity, covering all four topics:
    i. Beliefs and Teachings,
    ii. Practices,
    iii. Sources of Wisdom and Authority,
    iv. Forms of Expression and Ways of Life.
c) 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.

The content which is covered includes the following units:

	Year 12	Year 13
Unit 1	What is Ethics?	Prejudice and Discrimination
Unit 2	What is secularism?	Civil Disobedience
Unit 3	Human Nature	Peace and Reconciliation
Unit 4	Business Ethics	

At Key Stage 5, students study OCR A Level Religious Studies (Specification A – H573). The A Level is assessed through three compulsory written examination papers, all taken at the end of Year 13:

a) Philosophy of Religion (H573/01)
b) Religion and Ethics (H573/02)
c) Developments in Christian Thought (H573/03)

This course offers an academically rigorous programme of study, encouraging students to explore profound philosophical and ethical issues, analyse religious thought in depth, and develop highly transferable skills in argument, critical analysis and essay writing.

5. RE in the classroom and beyond

At St Wilfrid's Catholic College, the teaching of Religious Education is designed to be as varied and creative as possible, helping pupils to engage fully with the ideas explored, ask questions, and discern their own thoughtful responses. Learning within the classroom may include:

- Direct instruction and teacher modelling
- Retrieval practice and knowledge recall activities
- Class discussion, debate and questioning
- Independent and collaborative learning tasks
- Reading and analysis of Scripture and theological texts
- Reflection, prayer and liturgical experiences
- Extended writing and evaluative responses
- Use of visual, digital and multimedia resources
- Case studies and exploration of contemporary issues
- Research and enquiry-based learning
- Formative assessment, including live feedback and questioning
- Opportunities to apply theological knowledge through the disciplinary lenses of the Religious Education

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 pupils make links between their learning. We aim to give children the opportunity to connect their formal learning with their wider understanding through regular opportunities to reflect and respond.

Learning beyond the classroom may include:

- Following the example of positive role models at home, in school and within our community.
- Putting faith into action through charitable activities, fundraising and service to others, including The Pantry and our support for the Together Forever Trust.
- Inspiration and reflection through prayer, liturgy, and Mass.
- Guest speakers who share experiences of faith, vocation, and service.
- Conversations with clergy and parishioners, supported by our close relationship with St Peter and St Paul's RC Parish and St Bede's RC Parish.
- Participation in parish life, including catechesis and preparation for Confirmation.
- Engagement with Catholic Social Teaching, through programmes such as Faith in Action and the John Paul II Award.
- Putting faith into action through social justice, care for creation and our journey towards the LiveSimply Award.
- Opportunities for pupils to lead, serve and contribute to the Catholic Life of St Wilfrid's.
- We work closely with parents and with the *parishes* to support children's progress in understanding and developing on their curriculum and faith journey.

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6. 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 children. The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales reiterated that: "***The first educators in the faith are parents."***

In recognition of this, we strive to maintain a faithful partnership with parents, communicating clearly 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.

St Wilfrid's RC College works in close partnership with our families and the parish communities of St Peter and St Paul's RC Parish and St Bede's RC Parish, strengthening the shared responsibility of home, school and parish for the faith formation and development of our children.

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."[5] Religious education in a Catholic school encompasses the whole educational mission of the Church and is not confined to timetabled religious education lessons.

7. Other world views

Catholic education seeks to form pupils 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 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."***[6]

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 pupils' experiences and on real-life encounters with those of other faiths or none, to enable connections and develop understanding. Examples may include*:*

- *Opportunities for families in our community to share their faith and experience*
- *Conversations with invited visitors about their beliefs and experiences*
- *Q&A with faith leaders online or in person*
- *Visits to places of worship*
- *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.

Within the General RE curriculum, students engage with a diverse range of Christian and non-Christian perspectives. This includes the study of other Christian denominations, such as Lutheranism through the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his views on civil disobedience, and Seventh-day Adventism when exploring war, peace and pacifism. Students also examine non-religious worldviews, including atheism and secularism, alongside the beliefs and practices of other faith traditions, such as Islam. Through this broad and balanced curriculum, students develop an informed understanding of religious diversity within contemporary Britain and the wider world.

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 pupils. External

[5] *Religious Education in Catholic Schools* from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 2000
[6] *Meeting God in Friend and Stranger,* Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 2009

Speaker Checklist

8. Feedback, assessment, recording and reporting

Feedback is given in religious education to support children's progress and to challenge their thinking. This follows *the school's feedback policy. Feedback is given in Religious Education to support students' progress, deepen their understanding and challenge their thinking. This follows the school's feedback policy and may be provided verbally, through whole-class feedback, live marking, written comments, questioning, self-assessment, peer assessment and targeted retrieval activities. Students are given regular opportunities to reflect on and respond to feedback, enabling them to address misconceptions, improve their work and make sustained progress within the subject.*

Assessment follows diocesan and national guidelines, assessing against the expected outcomes for each branch in the Religious Education Directory. Pupil attainment is recorded *every cycle 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's assessment 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.

9. 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 *at least termly, and feedback is given to individual staff. Outcomes may inform further training at staff meetings or actions for the subject action plan.*

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 pupils. This process ensures a culture of continuous improvement, so that teaching and learning in religious education remains the best it can be.

10. Staff Formation

All staff support the Catholic ethos of our school and strive to develop children's 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.*

Evidence-informed teaching strategies

Retrieval practice and knowledge organisers

Formative assessment and checking for understanding

Mini whiteboards, cold calling and questioning techniques

Identifying misconceptions and responsive teaching

Effective feedback, live marking and verbal feedback

Curriculum planning, sequencing and implementation

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

Review

The policy will be reviewed as part of the regular cycle of policy review conducted by the local governing committee.

This religious education policy has been approved and adopted by the Local Governing Committee on [*enter date]* and will be reviewed on *[enter date].*

Signed by the Chair of Local Governing Committee_____

Signed by the Headteacher: _____

Person responsible for implementation of policy: _____

Review date: _____