

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School

Policy for Spiritual and Moral Development

Mission Statement

St. Mary's school community follows the teachings of Jesus Christ, working together to develop the whole child in a spiritual, moral, academic, physical, social and emotional way, within a caring and supportive environment.

Ethos

We recognise that there is a challenge in creating an enriching environment for all those involved at every level of school life. We take our lead and inspiration from Christ with regard to Gospel values: the belief that all human beings are uniquely created and loved by God and worthy of respect. This challenge manifests itself in the way we treat and value:

- ❖ Our relationships with each other and the wider community.
- ❖ Our respect for one another.
- ❖ Our welcome to and interest in all those who visit our school.
- ❖ Discipline inspired by forgiveness, healing and reconciliation.
- ❖ Our school environment.

Spiritual Development

Spiritual development across the curriculum is concerned with the individual's growth in faith through their deepening knowledge of creation and revelation. (page 10, paragraph 13. Spiritual and Moral Development Across the Curriculum. C.E.S 1995)

As a Catholic school we believe that the human and divine are inseparable, all belongs to and comes from God our Creator through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. God builds on human nature. We have the highest expectation of each member of the school community. Since everyone is made in the image and likeness of God and they may rightly expect that our school will offer opportunities for spiritual, moral and personal development.

We aim to help our pupils think, appreciate, question, struggle, suffer, wonder, love, reflect and work in a way that goes beyond themselves. Spiritual development is about the quest and love of what is true and good, of sharing in the life of God, which each person has within himself or herself.

In all teaching there is an awareness of the relationship that exists between faith and human culture. When teaching any subject teachers aim to help pupils to see beyond human reality.

In Catholic education we are aware that all knowledge and understanding comes from God. We desire to seek opportunities and capitalise on moments of experience and understanding which takes pupils beyond themselves. For example:

Religious Education – this subject plays a central role in spiritual, moral and personal development, *‘It is the foundation of the entire educational process’* (Paragraph 4, Religious Education in Catholic Schools, Bishops’ Conference 2000). It promotes spiritual and ethical thinking.

Prayer and worship allow pupils to express and experience the presence of God in their lives.

Literacy – not just a text but an opportunity to reflect on and be moved by the experience of another.

Science – opportunities are used to seek for meaning, to wonder at connections and pattern, to appreciate and care for life and the world, and God the Creator.

Mathematics / ICT – pupils are invited to wonder at the interconnectedness of the universe, of its laws and principles and the pupils’ own skills: to think logically and to appreciate some concept of infinity.

Art / Music – pupils have opportunities to marvel at the inventive and creative vision of the human person, to acknowledge God as its source, to be moved to appreciate beauty and what is beyond. *‘Good art puts us in touch with the transcendent’* (Wendy Becket).

P.E. / Games – pupils can appreciate the beauty of line and form, can marvel at their own skills and abilities and those of others. They are given opportunities to appreciate the value of working together as a team.

History – pupils learn how humankind developed and can question and search for meaning.

Geography – this presents an opportunity to wonder at the creation of the world and how humans have helped to shape it.

Conditions for Spiritual Development

A number of our pupils come to school without a sense of trust, of self worth or security. We try to provide a safe, sensitive and secure environment where pupils feel respected and valued and are able to express their deeper desires and have self respect.

'The Council (Vatican 2) summed this up by speaking of an environment permeated with the Gospel spirit of love and freedom. In the Catholic school, everyone should be aware of the living presence of Jesus the 'Master' who, today as always, is with us on our journey through life as the one genuine 'teacher', in whom all human values find their fullest perfection.' (The Religious Dimension of the Education in a Catholic School. CTS 1988).

Spiritual development is a mystery, but it is possible to take time and use silence, to pause and reflect, listen, become aware, to question, ponder, to wonder and be amazed.

Evaluation

No judgement can be made on pupils' spiritual development, but where appropriate the opportunities which are offered will be noted in planning, and pupils responses will be recorded and assessed (again where appropriate).

Moral and Personal Development

The Catholic school community of St. Mary's has at its heart the call of a greater good; it seeks to establish a place of love, trust, safety, respect and generosity.

'Moral development across the curriculum is about how individuals – pupils and teachers – increasingly live that faith within community, in school, home, parish and the wider world.' (Spiritual and Moral Development across the Curriculum. CES 1995)

'The human person needs to live in society. Society is not for her or him an extraneous addition but a requirement of her / his nature. Through the exchange with others, mutual service and dialogue with others a person develops her / his own potential, and responds to their vocation.' (1879 Catechism of the Catholic Church – put into inclusive language publication. Chapman 1994).

As a Catholic school we seek to uphold and transmit the values that the Church teaches, which are those of Jesus Christ.

'The basic elements of a Christian social ethic: the human person, the central focus of the social order; justice, the recognition of the rights of each individual; honesty, the basic condition for all human relationships; freedom, the basic right of each individual and society.' (The Religious Dimension of the Education in a Catholic School. CTS 1988).

As with spiritual development, moral and personal development is found across the curriculum in all subjects, as well as in specific areas. Teachers will use opportunities that

arise to develop the pupils' understanding of moral questions and choices and the effects they might have on others.

Religious Education – this subject gives the pupils an understanding of the teaching of Jesus and the Sacraments of the Church. The teaching of Reconciliation, which includes formation of the conscience, lays the foundation for moral and personal development.

Prayer and Worship – this allows pupils develop an insight into the teaching of Jesus and to reflect on the needs of others in prayer.

Literacy – this offers the opportunity to discuss and reflect on the interaction people have with one another and the choices that have to be made in life and how and why they might be made.

Science and Geography – various ethical questions will arise, especially to do with environmental issues and our stewardship of the earth.

Mathematics – questions may arise about the use of finances for the good of others.
ICT – ethical questions about the use or abuse of the Internet can be examined.

PE / Games – this is an opportunity to live out interactions and relationships with one another, to look at justice and fairness and interdependence.

History – to think about and debate the rights and wrongs of various decisions in the past and the effects of certain actions on people's lives.

Citizenship – all aspects of citizenship are about the role of the person in the social order. It requires thought to be given to the decisions and choices that are made in life. The School Council allows pupils to exercise responsibility, to reflect on rights and duties.

PSHE – this is concerned with moral choices and the understanding of the law of Love given to us by Jesus Christ in his Gospel.

Behaviour Policy – this school starts with the belief that all people are good because they are made in the image and likeness of God. Help and encouragement are given to pupils to strive and make right choices and reflect on the effects of their behaviour on others. It encourages self – discipline. It is applied in a spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness, and the opportunity to start again.

Development of the Conscience

Moral development is about making moral decisions. As Catholics we recognise that is about judgement of conscience. It is about the search for truth.

'The education of the conscience is a life long task.' (1784 Catechism of the Catholic Church – published by Chapman 1994).

We need to help pupils think reflectively, prayerfully and rationally about moral issues. They need to be aware that in order to make moral choices it is necessary to be informed about the teaching of Christ and his Church and why certain acts are to be judged right or wrong. This will enable pupils to act from true freedom and not an immediate emotional response. Choices for good will always respect the freedom and dignity of others.

Conditions for Moral and Personal Development

Spiritual development cannot be separated from moral and personal development. Seeing God in all things strengthens and deepens our understanding of His way of love, which is the basis of sound morality.

Example is always more powerful than words. As teachers we seek to use our authority in a way which respects the dignity and freedom of each person. We hope that pupils will learn from our honesty and integrity. We seek to reward and celebrate good work and good behaviour.

Our school is inclusive. All pupils are given the opportunity to develop their skills and talents according to their ability. There is an attitude of love, care and thought for those who have particular difficulties.

Sometimes moral choices are hard and require generosity and self – denial. It is not always easy to see our own good in relation to that of others. Those choices are made easier if the reason is understood and we keep in mind it is a loving God who calls us to true fullness of life.

'The Lord Jesus came to live among us in order to show us the Father's love. His ultimate sacrifice testifies to his love for his friends. And the Lord's new commandment is at the centre of our faith: 'This is my commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you'. The 'as' is the mode and measure of Christian love.' (The Religious Dimension of the Education in a Catholic School'. CTS 1988).

Evaluation

The staff of St. Mary's has taken time to discuss and evaluate opportunities, which are offered for moral and personal development.

M. Creed, July 2023.