



## Religious Education (RE) Policy

*“I am the Light of the World, Jesus said. “Whoever follows me will have the light of life and will never walk in darkness.”*

*John 8: 12-18*

*Information for Parents: This policy is available on request.*

The Ursuline Preparatory School does not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

### Introduction

As a Catholic School, our Catholic Faith is of vital importance, underpinning and influencing as it does every aspect of School life.

The fundamental reason for the existence of our school is to lead our children to develop a personal relationship with God, which will be the stronghold of their lives both now and in the future.

Through our academic curriculum and through experiences we offer the pupils in the many varied areas of School life, we seek to affirm the worth of every child as a unique person beloved by God and to whom God has given special gifts, talents and abilities. Furthermore, while promoting the inestimable value of each child, we actively encourage the pupils to consider the great worth of other people as well as themselves. Initially this is done by showing the children a caring responsible attitude which is consistent with our Mission Statement and with all that we say, do and think at the Ursuline Preparatory School. This leads to a happier and more Christ-centred Community and helps prepare the children for their important role as followers and promoters of

Christ and His message in a society that is largely secular; but which is nonetheless part of God's created world.

In short, we aim to establish a community based on love of God and love and care for the individual; ideals which are reflected in our Mission Statement and which are, hopefully, readily and consistently evident to the School's staff, pupils, parents and visitors alike.

## **1 Aims and objectives**

- 1.1 Religious education enables children to investigate and reflect on some of the most fundamental questions asked by people. At the Ursuline Preparatory School we develop the children's knowledge and understanding of the major world faiths, and we address the fundamental questions in life, for example, the meaning of life and the existence of a divine spirit. We enable children to develop a sound knowledge not only of Christianity, and the Catholic Faith in particular, but also of other world religions, especially those that are the main faiths of children within our school. Children reflect on what it means to have a faith and to develop their own spiritual knowledge and understanding. We help the children learn from religions as well as about religions.
- 1.2 As teachers we strive to share our Christian faith with the children and lead them into a deep, active, personal faith which we hope will be kept alive and develop long after they leave the Ursuline Preparatory School. We do this by relating God's message to the children's present lives and also by the example we give in our words and actions.

Religious belief hopefully determines, permeates and supports each and every area of our school life. Through prayer, worship, teaching, reflection and meditation we strive to help children's individual awareness of God's presence and action in their lives which will grow steadily and develop as they mature.

We aim in religious education:

- To give our children a sound knowledge of the Catholic faith.

- to provide by example, commitment and instruction, the opportunity to understand their faith more fully and to respond to God's invitation to have, through the power of the Holy Spirit, a personal loving and trusting relationship with him and his Son, Jesus Christ;
- to help our pupils appreciate the religious, spiritual and moral dimensions of life and develop an understanding of what it means to be actively committed to a religious tradition;
- to provide times for personal searching and questioning when children consider their beliefs in light of their own personal experiences and the insights, knowledge and understanding they gained through them;
- be able to reflect on their own experiences so as to develop a personal response to the fundamental questions of life;
- develop investigative and research skills and to enable them to make reasoned judgements about religious issues;
- develop an understanding of religious traditions and to appreciate the cultural differences in Britain today;
- develop knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major world religions and value systems found in Britain;
- have respect for other peoples' views and to celebrate the diversity in society.

## **2 The legal position of religious education**

2.1 Our school curriculum for religious education meets the requirements of *The Education Act 1996, School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and Education Act 2002, Education Act 2011*. These stipulate that religious education is compulsory for all children, including those in the Kindergarten class who are less than five years old. The religious education curriculum forms an important part of our school's spiritual, moral and social teaching. It also promotes education for citizenship. Our school RE curriculum is based on the Catholic faith as described in the Religious Education Directory (RED).

### **3 Teaching and learning style**

3.1 At the Ursuline Preparatory School all our religious education lessons are centred, with regard to both content and methodology, on a clear framework for effective, systematic and vigorous teaching and learning at least equal to that of other curriculum areas. Thus, we apply the same conditions, enthusiasm, consistency and care to our planning, instruction, assessment, as we would in any other subject and expect the same high out outcome.

Progression and continuity are ensured through appropriate content, styles and expectation, being introduced at each level. We base our teaching and learning style in RE on the key principle that good teaching in RE allows children both to learn about religious traditions and to reflect on what the religious ideas and concepts mean to them. Our teaching enables children to extend their own sense of values and promotes their spiritual growth and development. We encourage children to think about their own views and values in relation to the themes and topics studied in the RE curriculum.

3.2 Our teaching and learning styles in RE enable children to build on their own experiences and extend their knowledge and understanding of religious traditions. We use their experiences at religious festivals such as Easter, Diwali, Passover etc. to develop their religious thinking. We organize visits to local places of worship and invite representatives of local religious groups to come into school and talk to the children.

3.3 Children carry out research into religious topics. Children prepare presentations based on our scheme of work and share them with other children in assemblies.

3.4 We recognise the fact that all classes in our school have children of widely differing abilities, and so we provide suitable learning opportunities for all children by matching the challenge of the task to the ability of the child. We achieve this in a variety of ways, for example, by:

- setting common tasks which are open-ended and can have a variety of responses;
- setting tasks of increasing difficulty (we do not expect all children to complete all tasks);

- grouping the children by ability in the room and setting different tasks for each ability group;
- providing resources of different complexity, adapted to the ability of the child;
- using classroom assistants to support the work of individuals or groups of children.

#### **4 Curriculum planning in religious education**

- 4.1 We plan our religious education curriculum in accordance with the RED Scheme. We ensure that the topics studied in religious education build upon prior learning. We offer opportunities for children of all abilities to develop their skills and knowledge in each unit, and we ensure that the planned progression built into the scheme of work offers the children an increasing challenge as they move through the school.
- 4.2 We carry out the curriculum planning in religious education in three phases (long-term, medium-term and short-term). The long-term plan maps the religious education topics studied in each term during Key Stages One and Two. The RE Curriculum Co-ordinator may discuss this plan with teaching colleagues. We teach religious education topics in conjunction with other subjects, especially at Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2 we place an increasing emphasis on independent study of religious themes and topics.
- 4.3 Our medium-term plans give details of each unit of work for every term. The Curriculum Co-ordinator keeps and reviews these plans.
- 4.4 The class teacher uses the plans for each lesson which include specific learning objectives. S/he keeps these individual plans and may discuss them on an informal basis with the RE curriculum co-ordinator.

#### **5 Early Years Foundation Stage**

- 5.1 We teach religious education to all children in the school, including those in the Pre-Reception Department.
- 5.2 In the Pre-Reception Department, Religious Education is an integral part of the topic work covered during the year. As the Kindergarten class is part of the Foundation Stage of the National Curriculum, we relate the religious education aspects of the children's work to the objectives set out in Development

Matters, the non-statutory curriculum guidance which underpins the curriculum planning for children aged three to five.

5.3 The Pre-Reception Department uses a variety of well produced materials that are introduced orally to examine topics such as the prayers we say in school, common prayers such as The Our Father, Bible Stories from the Old and New Testament, and areas of interest based on their own experience. Links are made with the current liturgical feast day, school celebration or assembly theme. Song, dance, drama and interactive whiteboard materials are involved. Because RE is taught as part of the EYFS it follows the children's Personal, Social and Emotional Development. Certain strands of Understanding of the World section, for example People, Cultures and Communities are also applicable to the teaching of RE.

Many aspects of RE are obviously revisited at a deeper level in the Pre-Reception, Reception and Kindergarten classes, using the RED scheme, and resources such as story bags, dolls and artefacts suitable for this age group.

## **6 Contribution of religious education to the teaching of other subjects**

### **6.1 English**

Religious education contributes significantly to the teaching of English in our school by actively promoting the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Some of the texts that we use in our scheme of work have religious themes or content, which encourages discussion, and this is our way of promoting the skills of speaking and listening. We also encourage the children to record information in various formats in order to develop their writing ability.

### **6.2 Information and communication technology (ICT)**

We use ICT where appropriate in religious education. The children find, select and analyse information, using the internet. They also use ICT to review, modify and evaluate their work and to improve its presentation.

### **6.3 Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship**

Through our religious education lessons, we teach the children about the values and moral beliefs that underpin individual choices of behaviour. So, for example, we contribute to the discussion of topics such as smoking, drugs and health education. We also promote the values and attitudes required for citizenship in a democracy by teaching respect for others and the need for personal responsibility. In general, by promoting tolerance and understanding of other people, we enable children to appreciate what it means to be positive members of our pluralistic society.

6.4 At the Ursuline Preparatory School considerable emphasis is placed upon the fostering of moral and spiritual values of the children in care. This we do with the aim of teaching all pupils a respect for God, for themselves, for one another and for property and the environment.

One means by which we help the children to achieve this is by setting them a good example. This involves demonstrating, typically in very practical ways, our own qualities and characteristics, together with the real worth we place on our beliefs and on our principles. Thus, our own personal integrity, our manners, our generosity, our consistency, our reactions, our care of our own and others' property and so forth is under scrutiny and hopefully provides both good guidance and good example. However, although we may regard ourselves as good role models for the pupils, we do not forget that children have their own innate sense of morality and, moreover, what we strive to do in school, should complement and not replace what occurs in the child's own home.

Overtly, we try to develop values and positive attitudes in the pupils by helping them become aware of appreciating their own worth as children loved unconditionally by God. This we emphasise in religious instruction lessons, in our prayer times and in assemblies. Worship occurs daily, taking the form of whole school, departmental or individual class assemblies

We pray at the start and at the end of each day and also before lunch. The children are encouraged to share the love of God with others within and beyond the school community. One way they do this is by recording prayer requests in the box on their class's prayer focus area; and by being aware of others' needs and responding to them as best they can, and also by sharing

their own material goods. Similarly in our assemblies we may refer to situations within our school, at home or in the news in which people have faced or are facing some hardship. Moral issues or dilemmas are also raised, as is appropriate for/to the age of our children. In such assemblies we encourage them to think about the implications of their own and others' actions, right judgements, their reliance and need of others, faith and trust in adversity and so on.

In school we have an agreed Code of Conduct which is imposed for the benefit of all, and poor conduct is not accepted. Each classroom has a poster displaying the School Code for Children, which encourage excellent behaviour and the development of self-discipline as well as the consideration of others, which will be maintained as life-long standards and values.

We feel it is most important that our pupils value and respect life styles and views of people of different faiths, cultures and ages and also of those who are differently-abled or facing other major issues in their lives. Therefore, we provide opportunities to facilitate this by inviting speakers to the School, e.g. CAFOD; visiting places of worship and institutions such as the Beeches Care Home; and by participating in competitions and events where we mix naturally with different people.

Although at the Ursuline Preparatory School we have a shared vision of spirituality which both fosters and feeds a basic human need and do impose a strong moral code, it is nonetheless a clear objective that the children develop their own moral standards and sense of the spiritual. We trust that these standards and beliefs will be based firmly on respect for God, self and other and will serve to guide the pupils both now and as they face many situations and challenges throughout their lives.

## 7 **Charities**

As a Catholic school that aspires to adhere fully to Christian teaching and moreover the directive of Jesus Christ himself to "Love one another as he has loved us" (John 15:12), we place great emphasis on sharing what we have with others.

This takes the form of two kinds of sharing: that of our time and gifts, and also of our financial resources. It involves all members of our School's community and friends and supporters.

## **8 Teaching religious education to children with special needs**

8.1 In our school we teach RE to all children, whatever their ability. The teaching of RE is a vital part of our school curriculum policy, which states that we provide a broad and balanced education for all our children. When teaching RE we ensure that we provide learning opportunities matched to the needs of children with learning difficulties. We take into account the targets set for individual children in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

## **9 Assessment and recording**

9.1 We assess children's work in religious education by making informal judgements as we observe them during lessons. We mark a piece of work in line with our marking policy and we comment as necessary. On completion of a unit of work, we make a summary judgement about the work of each pupil. Each class teacher from Intermediate upwards will make an end of topic assessment using material covered in both class and as part of any homework task. We record the attainment grades in our whole school assessment, which we use as a basis for assessing the progress of each child; for setting new goals; and for passing information on to the parents and the next teacher at the end of the year.

Often the children's own self assessment is sought: as in every RE lesson the opinion, comments and input of the pupil's are both encouraged and valued. This is reflected in the School's Mission Statement and is also a very important aspect of all that characterises all we do and who we are here at the Ursuline Preparatory School.

9.2 The RE curriculum co-ordinator may keep samples of children's work and will discuss the expected level of achievement in RE in each year of the school with class teachers.

## **10 Resources**

10.1 We have sufficient resources in our school to be able to teach all our religious education teaching units. Each class has access to a set of Bibles and a collection of religious artefacts, which we use to enrich teaching in religious education.

## **11 Monitoring and review**

11.1 The RE curriculum co-ordinator is responsible for monitoring the standard of the children's work and the quality of the teaching in religious education. S/he is also responsible for supporting colleagues in the teaching of religious education, for being informed about current developments in the subject, for informing staff about relevant courses and for providing a strategic lead and direction for the subject in the school. The subject is reviewed as part of the monitoring process built into the staff training programme of the school. In addition, the curriculum co-ordinator monitors the child's progress and the curriculum content as part of the on-going monitoring process set up in the school.