

The Religious Education Curriculum at Our Lady's Catholic High School

Religious Education is the “core of the core curriculum” (Pope St John Paul II) at Our Lady's Catholic High School. Our mission is to educate the whole person in discerning the meaning of their existence. Religious Education is concerned with more than just intellectual knowledge as it includes emotional learning. It is through Religious Education that pupils are able to consider what it means to be truly human. Without Religious Education, pupils would be deprived of this opportunity to attain harmony between faith and culture. Religiously literate pupils are able to engage in other subjects, “leading for example, to an understanding of the relationship between science and religion or history, and between theology, sport and the human body.” (Religious Education Curriculum Directory).

The Catholic Education Service makes the purpose of Religious Education in our Catholic school clear. Our primary aim is to "help parents, priests and teachers to hand on the Deposit of Faith in its fullness to a new generation of young people so that they may come to understand the richness of the Catholic faith, and thereby be drawn into a deeper communion with Christ in his Church." (Religious Education Curriculum Directory).

The Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD) makes the aims of Religious Education explicit:

1. To present engagingly a comprehensive content which is the basis of knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith;
2. To enable pupils continually to deepen their religious and theological understanding and be able to communicate this effectively;
3. To present an authentic vision of the Church's moral and social teaching so that pupils can make a critique of the underlying trends in contemporary culture and society;
4. To raise pupils' awareness of the faith and traditions of other religious communities in order to respect and understand them;
5. To develop the critical faculties of pupils so that they can relate their Catholic faith to daily life;
6. To stimulate pupils' imagination and provoke a desire for personal meaning as revealed in the truth of the Catholic faith;
7. To enable pupils to relate the knowledge gained through Religious Education to their understanding of other subjects in the curriculum;
8. To bring clarity to the relationship between faith and life, and between faith and culture.

The outcome of excellent Religious Education is religiously literate and engaged young people who have the knowledge, understanding and skills – appropriate to their age and capacity – to reflect spiritually, and think ethically and theologically, and who are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life (Religious Education Curriculum Directory).

Starting Points and Key Stage 2

Pupils at Key Stage 2 in our family of feeder primary schools follow a variety of learning programmes. Even within the Catholic primary schools there is not a consistent approach to Religious Education. Pupils at Our Lady's, whether they are Catholic, other Christian, other faith or of no faith are part of our community, respected and given opportunities to reflect on faith matters and other ‘big questions’ in life.

Key Stage 3

The Religious Education curriculum is made up of our own curriculum framework based on the guidelines in the Bishops' Curriculum Directory. This programme explores the key elements of Christian belief and

teaching – Jesus Christ, the Human Person, the Church, the Sacraments and the Liturgical Year – according to the Roman Catholic tradition.

Sixteen modules make up the KS3 framework – six in each year lasting approximately six weeks apart from Year 9 who complete four modules and then begin the RS GCSE course.

Key Stage 4

The department follows the EDUQAS Catholic Route B GCSE in Religious Studies with the syllabus options:

- Component 1: Foundational Catholic Theology
- Component 2: Applied Catholic Theology
- Component 3: Study of a World Faith – Judaism

The department also has a number of students who choose to take Religious Studies and Philosophy at A level at Cardinal Newman College when they leave school.

All pupils at Our Lady's follow the Religious Education course from the start of Year 7 to the end of Year 11 with almost all taking the challenging EDUQAS Catholic Route B GCSE in Religious Studies (for example, we plan to enter all but two Year 11 pupils in the summer of 2020). We have equal ambition for all of our pupils in Religious Education, whom all study the full curriculum. The planning of resources is done with appropriate challenge for all; resources are created and adapted by class teachers to enable SEND pupils and high achievers to access the topics appropriately.

Throughout their time in Religious Education, pupils at Our Lady's have a variety of opportunities which enrich their learning experience. For example, a Year 7 class visited the local Hindu mandir in Preston (January 2020), all Year 8 classes spent a lesson with 'Judaism with Jeremy' (September 2019), Year 9 pupils visit one of the mosques in Preston and have spent a lesson with 'Islam with an Imam'. (This did not take place during 2019-20 due to maternity leave.)

Beyond the RE classroom, we also offer opportunities for our pupils to go on retreat to Castlerigg Manor, the Catholic Lancaster diocesan retreat centre in Keswick. Approximately 40 pupils go each year for the weekend in the June of Year 8 and about 50 pupils go each year for the week in November of Year 10. Pupils are also encouraged to participate in diocesan and national youth events such as Flame at Wembley, Embrace in Liverpool and Radiant in Preston. Members of the Castlerigg team visit school each year to encourage Year 10 and Year 11 pupils to participate in the annual youth pilgrimage to Lourdes.

The skills which are needed at GCSE are embedded in RE from Year 7 onwards. Pupils throughout KS3 have opportunities to learn how to best respond to the demands of each skill type of question. This is done in our classroom tasks, homework tasks, summative assessments and during lessons. Each Year 9 academic group spends a day at Cardinal Newman College working with a team of RE specialists and volunteer students. The focus of the day is GCSE skills which are linked to religious topics.

The Religious Education Curriculum Directory is currently being rewritten (RECD 3). The next training update is being presented via zoom by Philip Robinson of the CES on 6/5/20. This should bring us up to date with the current progress of the Directory. The current scheme of work was based on ICONS and the guidelines in the Curriculum Directory.

A structured assessment programme is followed in both KS3 and KS4. Ongoing formative assessment is made during lessons and class teachers respond appropriately to ensure that pupils understand the main concepts. Summative assessments take place either at the end of a unit, in Year 11 mock examinations or during the summer assessment period. All pupils are given the same assessments which allow them to demonstrate

their knowledge and understanding of the topics studied and their ability to use the appropriate skills needed when answering each type of question. Pupils learn how to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including belief, practices and sources of wisdom and authority. They should also be able to analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including their significance and impact. Summative assessment also allows us to analyse the achievement of all pupils and focus on key groups of learners. See the RE Assessment Policy.

Members of RE department are encouraged to continue their professional development. For example, if an RE teacher does not have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS), they are encouraged to complete the two year course to deepen the theological foundation on which their practical expertise can be developed. Whole school development time is responded to both formally in curriculum area development time and informally during ongoing discussions. Staff feedback from any relevant INSET they have taken part in so that we all can learn from it. As a department, we share our expertise. For example, two members of the department work as examiners for EDUQAS as a team leader and marker and we share the training provided each year in the marking of GCSE examinations so that all may benefit. Over the past couple of years, we have invited Jeremy Nicholson (Judaism with Jeremy) to lead RE CPD sessions on Judaism topics we have requested; this initiative has been opened up the other RE departments in the Preston area and in the diocese. The RE departments in the Preston cluster of Catholic schools meet together 2-3 times each year. Our most recent session focussed on moderation of GCSE mock examinations; we collaborated on the mock examination to ensure there was overlap in the questions we set for our pupils. Department development time is sometimes used to read and discuss together a specific work e.g. part of the Catechism relevant to part of the curriculum or Judaism: A Definitive Approach by Clive Lawson).

Literacy is a key part of Religious Education. In order to achieve the aims of RE, pupils need to be religiously literate. Each unit of work, in both key stages, has a list of key concepts which are subject specific terms. Pupils learn the spellings and meanings of these key concepts and are encouraged to use them widely in both spoken and written work. There are displays of key concepts in RE classrooms which pupils use during lessons. Beyond using subject specific terminology, we strive to help pupils to spell and punctuate with consistent accuracy. Pupils are given opportunities to read aloud and independently during lessons. This could be a relevant source of wisdom and authority, from a text book resource or their own work.