



SAINT NORBERT'S CATHOLIC VOLUNTARY ACADEMY

Mission Statement: To live, love and learn in the footprints of Jesus.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

As a Rights Respecting School, we acknowledge our role as 'duty bearers' in promoting and protecting children's rights.



We respect the dignity and worth of every child. We believe that children have the right to choose their own religion and beliefs and that they should be helped to decide what is right and wrong and what is best for them.

Philosophy of Catholic Education

The statement which follows is based on quotations from Vatican documents, statements by the Bishops of England and Wales and a speech by Cardinal Hume to teachers in 1998.

It has been, from her beginning, the belief of the Church that she has an obligation to provide an education for her children by which their whole lives may be inspired by the spirit of Christ.

A Catholic school is not just an environment for providing a series of lessons; it operates out of an educational philosophy, which means to meet the needs of the young people of today in the light of the Church's faith in Jesus Christ.

The Second Vatican Council declared that it is the religious dimension that makes the Catholic School distinctive. The religious dimension can be found in (a) the context in which education is delivered, (b) the means by which the personal development of each student is achieved, (c) the relationship established between the culture and the faith of the church in the message of Christ, (d) the fact that all knowledge is informed by, and derives its ultimate meaning from the faith whose context is pursued.

As the Church develops her response to the command from Our Lord Jesus Christ to proclaim His message, she strives to make more effective the means by which people come to know Him and about Him and by which people are formed to become more completely human. The Catholic school is one of these means, and its specific task is to bring faith and culture together, keeping the freshness of the challenge of Christ's message to

human living today while, at the same time, respecting the autonomy and methodologies proper to human knowledge.

It is very important to realise that the Catholic identity of our schools is not exclusively related to religious instruction and the integration of academic studies into a unified whole. The Catholic school has a single Christian vision, an integrated concept of what makes a fully authentic and mature human being. The educational process is not confined to the curriculum, or to the academic, technical, artistic and sporting achievements of the school. The Catholic school should be seen as offering the possibility not only of exploring the mystery which God is, but also of demonstrating the Gospel in action. It must be consistent throughout and, in every aspect reflect the Christian faith, which is its soul, its inspiration and its justification.

The curriculum, in all its aspects, must reflect the fact that the person of Christ, and the message, which the Church has received from Him, is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic School. Although it may be convenient to speak of the “religious” and the “secular” curriculum in the Catholic School, as though these were separate and distinct, in the reality the curriculum as a whole, and every part of it, is religious, since there is nothing which does not ultimately relate to God. For the school to be truly Catholic, this vision must be shared by all connected with its work.

All discovery and research are an exploration of the mind of God; all knowledge is a share in the infinite life of God. In all that is true, good and beautiful, the mind glimpses a marvellous reflection of the reality, which we call God. It is fundamental to our religious tradition to regard all reality as God-given and therefore to rule out in advance any possibility of contradictory truths. Religion and knowledge of every kind can never be in conflict. There is an important consequence of this vision of a single, God-given, creation. We have a moral and social responsibility for the way we treat the world around us. It is a concern that is rooted in our theology of creation and should be an intrinsic element in Catholic education.

Throughout the whole of the curriculum, topics arise which raise specific moral and religious issues, for which an adequate response will need to be planned in the light of the teaching of the church. The response should ideally be given within the context of the particular curriculum area, since the underlying values and attitudes should be present in all we do.

References:

“Gravissimum Educationis”- Document of the second Vatican Council on Education. 1965

“The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School.” The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome. 1998

“The Future for Catholic Schools.” Address by Cardinal Hume to Catholic Headteachers at London Colney, 19th of September 1988.

“Evaluating the Distinctive Nature of the Catholic School.” Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, 1999.

The school’s understanding of spiritual development from our Catholic perspective

A person is a physical being. A child is hungry and needs to eat, has a grazed knee and needs healing, needs to know and care for his body.

A person is an intellectual being. A child is hungry for knowledge and needs to read, to write, to communicate, to know about how things work.

A person is a moral being. A child needs to develop his conscience, to know right from wrong, to recognise what he needs to give us his part in addressing the needs of others.

A person is a spiritual being. A child has an eternal destiny. God gives every moment of life, death and eternity. A child needs to come to know his God in life and death. God is in all things and therefore all things have the capacity to speak of God.

Our purpose and aim is the full integral development of our children. We seek to help them grow into healthy, fulfilled, educated adults. We see fulfilment as having physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual dimensions. We seek to address each of these areas and recognise each as vitally important.

However, the 'spiritual' gives form to the physical, moral, intellectual and internal dimensions of the person bringing them into unity. It is therefore of prime importance.

Spiritual well-being is, simply put, the proper development of each unique person, with his gifts and talents, under the grace of the Holy Spirit. It integrates all the above dimensions of the person in his relationship with God, others and himself within the world in which he lives - such that each child may grow as the "new creature" he becomes by Baptism and therefore reach eternal life.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect model of human development, for he is the perfect man who fully reveals us to ourselves and brings divine light to our mystery - making our supreme calling clear. In him all human values find their fullest perfection.

St Norbert's school and parish community is committed to the spiritual well-being of every person who shares in its life. We seek to support the spiritual development of every child and adult, whether pupil, parent, staff, parishioner or visitor. Such development will always be within the beliefs and understanding of the Catholic Church and will seek at all times to be inclusive of every individual and to learn from people of other faiths and of those of no faith.

Spiritual development is integral to the life and mission of St Norbert's School. (See Mission Statement) It will inevitably overlap with worship and with moral, social and cultural development. We are committed to enabling children to express their individuality and response to God, to life and to education through their spiritual development. This will be reflected in St Norbert's School Development Plans.

Pupils' Spirituality is sustained through a variety of means

Everyone is responsible for the spiritual development of the children which is not just restricted to RE or collective worship.

We aim to open up pupils' minds to new possibilities, widening their horizons, enabling them to see beyond the finite, in a high-quality learning environment which emphasises: beauty, awe, wonder and discovery, creativity and imagination.

We encourage reflection, leading to prayer of praise, adoration, thanksgiving and intercession through individual and collective prayer.

We aim to develop our children's understanding of the importance of 'commitment'.

We aim to enable spiritual development by

- Gradually introducing the children into a knowledge of the mystery of salvation, that they may daily grow more conscious of the gift of faith which has been received.
- Bringing the children to an awareness of their spiritual weakness; the need to be forgiven and to forgive, and therefore the need for ongoing repentance with the help of God's grace especially through the means of the Church's Sacramental life and prayer.
- Recognising the need for grace and discipline to prevent a tendency to anger, selfishness, jealousy etc.
- Participating in the Church's liturgy especially the Mass.
- Relating all that the children experience at school to the Good News of salvation, bringing the light of faith to everything that the pupils will gradually come to learn about the world, about life, and about the human person.
- Maintaining a Gospel spirit in the school, evident in a Catholic way of thought and life which permeates all facets of the school life.
- Providing good role models for children through the example of adults in school and using supplementary material, especially through the lives of the saints.

Curriculum response

- The Spiritual Development Lead will work with subject leaders to incorporate appropriate opportunities to explore spirituality in each subject area
- Each class teacher is responsible for providing appropriate spiritual development, on a regular basis and to identify opportunities to explore spirituality
- Prayer is an integral part of school life. Each teacher will ensure appropriate opportunities to pray each day. This will include formal prayer spontaneous quiet reflection; movement, song and various liturgies. There will be extra-curricular opportunities throughout the year including lunch time prayer.

Community spirituality is supported by:

- Developing parental and community recognition of the importance of spiritual growth.
- Parental partnership through school/church literature; termly 'Come and See' Class Worship; the sending home of RE programme details and suggested homework; Travelling Crib, Travelling Lenten Bag; following Diocesan/Bishop-led activities such as Days of Eucharist and Benediction; regular questionnaires.
- Christianity in Action – to develop generosity towards others e.g. through CAFOD, Mission Together, Forge Project, Foodbank, etc.
- Canon Matthew is available to any member of the school community.

Role and Responsibility of Spiritual Development Leader

The Spiritual Development Lead will:

- Develop this area in consultation with Diocesan RE Advisor and Priests.
- Support the spiritual development of each member of the school community within the context of our school's mission statement and its development plans.
- Ensure that subject leaders promote spiritual development.
- Monitor planning to include spiritual development opportunities in lesson plans (all subjects).
- Implement strategies for recording achievements e.g. through Headteacher's Report to Governors or pupil self-assessment.
- Identify and provide appropriate INSET.

Monitoring and Review

The RE Subject Leader, Alex Dawson, is responsible for supporting colleagues in the teaching of Religious Education, advising on assemblies, spiritual development, Celebration of the Word and Liturgies and organising resources needed for teaching different topics and displays.

The Subject Leader is also responsible for providing a strategic lead and direction for the subject in the school with support from our Parish Priest, who is available for the needs of our school family.

The RE Link Governor, Dr Chris O'Mara, meets regularly with the RE Subject Leader to review progress.

Policy updated: October 2024