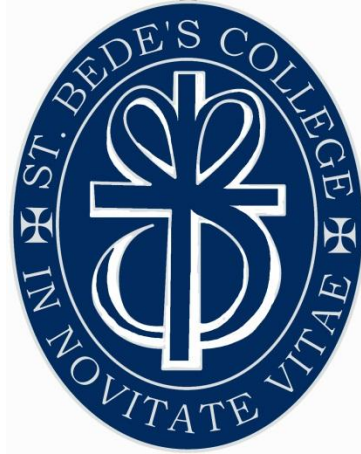


St Bede's Catholic College



Religious Formation Policy



RELIGIOUS FORMATION POLICY

'Religious education is more than just one subject in the curriculum. In Catholic schools, it is the core of the "core curriculum".'

(Pope St. John Paul II, 1988)

Rationale

At the heart of every Catholic school is the person of Jesus Christ. This presence of Christ is in the present tense: it is a real presence, in the here and now. Recognition of it impacts on everything a Catholic school is and does, not least in its religious education.

Religious Formation is the 'core of the core curriculum' in a Catholic school (Pope John Paul II), and placing it at the core of the curriculum helps us to fulfil our mission to educate the whole person in discerning the meaning of their existence. Religious Formation is not only concerned with intellectual knowledge but also includes emotional and affective learning. It is in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of what it is to be human truly becomes clear. Without religious education, pupils would be deprived of an essential element of their formation and personal development, which helps them attain a vital harmony between faith and culture."

(Religious Education Curriculum Directory, p4)

Aims of Religious Formation

The aims of Religious Formation are:

1. 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;
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 to provide pupils with a sure guide for living and the tools to critically engage with contemporary culture and society;
4. 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;
5. to develop the critical faculties of pupils so to bring clarity to the relationship between faith and life, and between faith and culture;
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.¹

¹ *To know you more clearly: The Religious Education Directory (2023), p.13*

In order to achieve these aims we will:

- Make clear the Catholic nature of the school and ensure that Religious Education provides for a lived faith experience through prayer, worship, retreats, assemblies and action for social justice.
- Ensure we are in line with Diocesan policy and guidelines
- Ensure that it is known, monitored and supported by all
- Ensure that it is suited to the age and development of the pupils
- Be sensitive to the religious background and experience of pupils and families to other faith traditions
- Encompass and include all pupils in the school and class
- Reflect cross-curricular links where possible
- Ensure it is reviewed and evaluated regularly by all concerned.

We will ensure that 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.

Content of the Religious Formation Curriculum

Religious Formation has 10% curriculum time at KS3 and KS4. Core RE is taught for one lesson a week at KS5 (5%).

The content for Religious Formation is provided in the Curriculum Directory for Catholic schools which is itself based on the Constitutions of the Second Vatican Council and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

KS3 has a new Religious Education Directory launched by the Catholic Education Service (CES) for Catholic schools. Titled '**To know you more clearly**', the directory sets out the purpose of RE for KS3 and features a programme of study with a model curriculum, which presents the expected outcomes in six curriculum branches. The model curriculum is rooted in the narrative of salvation history. Further information can be found here:

<https://catholiceducation.org.uk/schools/religious-education/item/1000034-religious-education-curriculum-directory>

The six curriculum branches are:

- 1: Creation and Covenant
- 2: Prophecy and Promise
- 3: Galilee to Jerusalem
- 4: Desert to Garden
- 5: To the ends of the earth
- 6: Dialogue and Encounter

In this directory the four knowledge lenses that constitute a study of Catholicism are closer to the four parts of the Catechism of the Catholic Church but are still recognisably related to the historical subsections of the previous two directories. The four lenses are Hear (Section 1 of Part 1 of the Catechism), Believe (Section 2 of Part 1 of the Catechism), Celebrate (Parts 2 and 4 of the Catechism), and Live (Part 3 of the Catechism). The names of these four lenses reflect the language of the Catechism itself which states that the mystery of faith which we hear and receive requires us to 'believe in it', to 'celebrate it' and to 'live from it' (CCC 2558)". **To Know you More Clearly 2025 (published 2023)**

Area of Study	Content	KS3
Revelation	God's Self-Revelation	The first lens: Hear
Church	Communion of life in Christ	The second lens: Believe
Celebration	Living the Christian Mystery in worship and prayer	The third lens: Celebrate
Life in Christ	The search for holiness and truth	The fourth lens: Live

KS4 and KS5 are following The Religious Education Curriculum Directory 2012 which distinguishes four principal areas for study:

Area of Study	Content
Revelation	God's Self-Revelation
Church	Communion of life in Christ
Celebration	Living the Christian Mystery in worship and prayer
Life in Christ	The search for holiness and truth

Programmes of study for all key stages have been written to ensure that pupils are able to develop their knowledge and understanding in these areas.

Religious Formation Teaching Syllabus

KS3

All students follow a structured, progressive and developmental programme that has been approved for use in Catholic Schools by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. The structure comes from 'To know you more clearly'.

Each term, pupils will focus on a particular branch of the Christian faith in relation to: Creation and Covenant, Prophecy and Promise, Galilee to Jerusalem, Desert to Garden, to the Ends of the Earth, Dialogue and Encounter. For each year, pupils will study a Dialogue and Encounter branch focusing on Ecumenism, Abrahamic faiths and Dharmic religions. Other religions and worldviews, including non-religious worldviews are also studied. As a Diocese, it has been agreed that Hinduism will be studied in the Dialogue and Encounter branch in term 6 of Year 7. Islam will be studied in Year 8 and Judaism in Year 9.

Summative assessments take place in:

Year 7: Terms 1, 3 and 5

Year 8: Terms 2, 4 and 5

Year 9: Terms 1, 3 and 6

KS4

All pupils follow the Edexcel Specification A GCSE Catholic Christianity syllabus comprising of three papers:

- Paper 1: Catholic Christianity
- Paper 2: Judaism
- Paper 3: Philosophy and Ethics – Catholic Christianity

Home learning is set once a fortnight in line with the college policy and will take the form of weekly exam questions that extend and consolidate the work completed in class. In addition, end of unit tests take place across all three units of study to ensure that pupils are working at least in line with their target grade.

KS5

At A-level, those pupils who study the course follow the Edexcel specification A Religious Studies syllabus. Pupils are taught for 9 hours a fortnight in Year 12, and 9 hours in Year 13. The course is taught by two teachers. Over the course of two years, they study the following components:

- Philosophy of Religion
- Religion and Ethics
- New Testament

All pupils are set regular essays at the end of each unit of study to check their knowledge and understanding. Home learning takes the form of weekly reading and completion of tasks in preparation for the following lesson. They are expected to deepen their knowledge and understanding through independent study and show evidence of wider reading in their written work.

Sixth Form Core RE

All students in the Sixth Form take the Core RE course and are taught two periods a fortnight (5%).

The aims and objectives of the course are as follows:

- To continue to support and advance the religious and moral formation of the students.
- To inspire Gospel values in the hope that all students will be motivated by a positive self-image as they attempt to come to terms with their advancement in wisdom, age and grace.
- To enable all pupils to develop critical thinking skills, independence and moral growth.
- To ensure that the educational rigour of the course is combined with the necessary freedom for spiritual enquiry.
- To provide opportunities to reflect on the ethical and moral dimensions of society and link their learning into their lived experience of the Catholic faith.

Implementation and Monitoring

Governors will ensure that:

- Religious Formation is treated as a core subject and allocated at least 10% of teaching time to ensure it fulfils Bishops' requirements and is exclusive of collective worship, PSHE including RSE and the cross-curricular delivery of SMSC education.
- The Religious Formation curriculum is delivered in accordance with the general norms laid down by the Bishops' Conference: *To know You more clearly: The Religious Education Directory (2023)*; Statement on Religious Education (2000), and Diocesan guidelines.
- Classroom Religious Education is assessed in accordance with school procedures, taking into account the general norms laid down by the Bishops' Conference: Expected end of age-phase outcomes, section 2.3 *To know You more clearly: The Religious Education Directory (2023)*
- Religious Education is inspected according to the current Catholic Schools Inspectorate Framework.
- The teaching of Sex, Relationships and Health Education and other moral issues is in accord with the teaching of the Catholic Church, whilst recognising and acknowledging alternate points of view.
- Appointments to key posts (Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher, Head of Religious Education, Lay Chaplain) will be reserved to practising members of the Catholic Church. All other appointments will take into account the willingness of staff to support and promote the Catholic life and ethos of the school.
- A link governor for Religious Formation is appointed to monitor the provisions of this policy.

The right of withdrawal from Religious Education

Parents of pupils in VA schools and voluntary academies are permitted, by law, to request that their child is withdrawn from receiving all or part of religious education ² and/or collective worship ³ given at the school and any such request shall stand until such time that the parent's request is withdrawn. There is no requirement to provide reasons, written or otherwise, for making such a request. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/schools/religious-education/item/1003623-right-of-withdrawal-from-re>

What the Catholic Church says about the teaching of Religious Education

It is important to remember that the RE curriculum in Catholic schools, which is set by the Bishops of England and Wales, always requires the teaching of other religions. Catholic schools recognise that parents have the right to seek an education which is in conformity with their own religious commitments and, as far as Catholic education is concerned, these commitments include that of educating young people about other religions as well as about Catholicism. For this reason, Catholic schools should always seek to understand the nature of a request to withdraw so that any misunderstandings can be resolved.

Learning about other religions is required both by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, as outlined in the Religious Education Curriculum Directory 2012, and by the magisterium of the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church views the teaching of other religions as very important for several reasons:

(i) Learning about the religion and cultures of those who do not share the Catholic faith is one of the ways in which Catholic schools embody the call to love one's neighbour. As the Church says, "The love for all men and women is necessarily also a love for their culture. Catholic schools are, by their very vocation, intercultural." ⁴

(ii) It is required by the Bishops, who state that the Catholic nature of our schools' entail "a willingness... to try to understand better the religion of one's neighbours, and to experience something of their religious life and culture⁵."

(iii) Many of the children in Catholic schools are practising members of other faiths and so Catholic schools need to be places of hospitality for these children. It is an act of respect and courtesy that a Catholic school's RE curriculum helps them to reflect on the nature of their own religious identity. As the Church says, "All children and young people [including those of other faiths in our Catholic schools] must have the same possibilities for arriving at the knowledge of their own religion as well as of elements that characterise other religions."

It prepares the pupils in our Catholic schools for life in modern Britain, giving them an understanding of the beliefs of others. This in turn will improve social cohesion and contribute to the common good by increasing mutual respect between those of different religions, thereby contributing to the promotion of fundamental British Values in schools.

The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school. The school will review this policy biennially to assess its implementation and effectiveness.

Updated: February 2026
To be reviewed: February 2028

² S.71(1) School Standards and Framework Act 1998

³ S.71(1A) School Standards and Framework Act 1998

⁴ Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools, Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love, Vatican City 2013, para 61

⁵ Meeting God in Friend & Stranger, Fostering respect and mutual understanding between the religions, a teaching document of the Catholic Bishops' para 3