



Archdiocese of Southwark

Diocesan Policy for

Religious Education

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Aim of Policy

This policy has been developed by the Education Service to support the teaching of religious education in Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Southwark. It has been approved by the Diocesan Trustees. School leaders and governing bodies in the Archdiocese, may use this policy as a basis for their own religious education policies. All policies and guidance are reviewed on annually.

Introduction

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 its religious education.

“The importance of ‘good Catholic schools’ has not diminished over time. Whilst their educational and structural forms have had to adapt to political and social changes, the mission of Catholic schools remains unchanged. At the heart of that mission is good religious education. Similarly, while changes in culture and society have presented new challenges for Catholic school leaders and teachers, their role as religious educators remains as vital today as ever to the mission of Catholic schools.”

To know You more clearly The Religious Education Directory for Catholic schools, colleges, and academies in England and Wales

General Norms

According to the Religious Education Directory, ‘To Know You More Clearly,’ religious education in Catholic schools must adhere to the following general norms:

Article 1 – Oversight of religious education

Formation and education provided in schools is subject to the authority of the Church (can. 397, 806). It is for the Episcopal Conference to issue general norms concerning formation and education in the Catholic religion and for the diocesan Bishop to regulate and watch over it (can. 804).

Article 2 – Aims of religious education

The aims of religious education 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.

Article 3 – Outcome of religious education

The outcome of excellent religious education is religiously literate and consciously 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 recognise the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.

Article 4 – Religious education as the heart of the curriculum

1. Religious education is the core of the core curriculum and is to be the source and summit of the whole curriculum.
2. Religious education is an academic discipline with the same systematic demands and rigour as other disciplines.

3. Religious education is to be delivered within a broad and balanced curriculum, where it informs every aspect of the curriculum. Every other subject is to be informed by religious education and have a strong relationship with it.
4. In each year of compulsory schooling, religious education is to be taught for at least 10% curriculum time within each repeating cycle of the regular school timetable.
5. In each year of sixth form schooling, religious education is to be taught for at least 5% curriculum time within each repeating cycle of the regular school timetable.

Article 5 – Compliance with the Religious Education Directory

1. The Religious Education Directory includes the programmes of study approved by the Bishops' Conference for the various age groups. The competence for approving these programmes of study is currently exercised by the Department of Education and Formation, but the Bishops' Conference can delegate this function to another department, commission, or committee of the Conference.
2. Catholic schools are required to comply with the Religious Education Directory.

Article 6 – Implications of the primacy of religious education in the curriculum

1. Religious education is to be properly organised, coordinated, taught, and resourced.
2. In primary schools there is to be a Coordinator of Religious Education who is to have at least parity in status and remuneration with those of any other curriculum area.
3. The religious education department in secondary schools is to have at least parity of status and resourcing with any other subject department. The department is to be given the highest possible status. This is to be reflected in the status and remuneration of the person leading that department.

Article 7 – Interpretation

'School' means a Catholic school as understood in canon 803, and includes all Catholic maintained schools, independent schools (including academies), non-maintained special schools, and sixth form colleges.

Article 8 – Transitional provisions

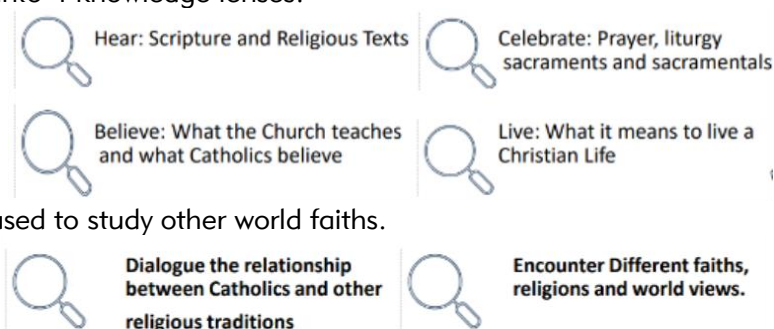
1. This Religious Education Directory replaces all previous norms from 1 September 2025.
2. Until 1 September 2025, in any aspect within the scope of this Directory, schools may choose to comply with this Directory or the Religious Education Curriculum Directory 2012.
3. These transitional provisions do not derogate from any requirements which do not derive from this Religious Education Directory.

Religious Education Curriculum

Programmes of study must comply with the expectations of the RED. The pedagogy of teaching RE has changed to learning about the faith as a world view; rather than, 'We believe...' it is 'Catholic's believe...'. This considers the reality of a decreasing number of Catholic and teachers in our schools. Children come into the classroom with their world view as no one is a blank canvas. The children are then presented with opportunities to respond and reflect on scripture so they can gain a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith and synthesise this into their developing world view.

The RED is based on a model of encounter and dialogue, driven by the ways of knowing, underpinned by this pedagogy. It uses a text centred curriculum with content focused predominately on the bible.

The directory is broken into 4 knowledge lenses:



With two further lenses used to study other world faiths.

It is also broken into Ways of Knowing which identifies the skills children should be developing as they work through the programme of study.

Content	Engagement	Interpretation
Centred in Catholic world view and what the church teaches	Some Catholic believe... Critical thinking Dialogue	Arriving at wise judgments and reflective responses.
Truth-seeking	How do we know that...	Rational Judgment

Primary School

- school governors and leaders are required to ensure that the curriculum content of taught religious education meets the requirements of the RED as well as any additional requirements of the Local Ordinary;
- currently there is one recommended scheme of work: Source to Summit, Lighting the Path an online resource published by Oxford University Press.

Secondary School:

- the diocese expects schools to design a key stage 3 programme of study that fulfils the requirements of the RED;
- at key stage 4, the school's choice of syllabus must reflect the Catholic nature of the school and the needs of the pupils. It is expected that all Catholic secondary schools will offer GCSE specification which has been approved by the Trustees of the Diocese;
- key stage 5 General Religious Education programmes should also be designed to meet the requirements of the RED. Schools must give the Education Commission an overview of their programme of study.

Teaching of Other Religions:

- it is expected that pupils in our Catholic schools learn about and from other faith traditions as this will help to prepare them for living as full members of our diverse society;
- the RED contains an expectation that EYFS, KS1, KS2 and KS3 schools teach other world faiths in the summer term using the Dialogue and Encounter lenses;
- in key stage 4, GCSE, 25% of the specification taught is given over to a different a second religion;
- in key stage 5 General Religious Education it is expected that teaching about other world faiths is included in the programme.

Planning, assessment and recording of Religious Education:

- the Catholic Education Service (CES) and the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA) regularly publish and update documents containing the age-related standard for Religious Education. In addition, the Education Commission produces support documents for the assessment of the subject;
- it is expected that the processes for monitoring pupil progress has the same rigour as those for the other core subjects. In all phases it is expected that planning for curriculum Religious Education follows the framework chosen by the school;
- the recommended schemes of work provide guidance through their web-based resources.

Leadership of Religious Education

The governors and headteacher are responsible for ensuring that Religious Education has a high profile, and is taught as a core subject, within the curriculum of the Catholic school.

Each school/college must ensure:

- that there is a named person who is responsible for leading curriculum Religious Education;
- that the postholder is a practicing Catholic. As the post of leader of Religious Education is a reserved post, the Education Service must be invited to exercise advisory rights on behalf of the Archbishop in the appointment process;

- in the secondary phase, an adviser from the Education Service will support the school in the recruitment process and attend the interviews in an advisory capacity;
- in the primary phase, it is expected that schools appoint a practising Catholic to the post, informing the Education Service of the name of the postholder;
- in all phases, that the leader of curriculum Religious Education should have parity in status and remuneration with the leaders of other core curriculum subjects within the school/college;
- that curriculum Religious Education is well resourced, both in regard to content and the continuing professional development of those teaching the subject;
- that there is regular and comprehensive monitoring of curriculum Religious Education which clearly demonstrates the impact the subject has on the school.