Religious Education Policy

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Otley

Policy owner	Luke Gilhooly
Headteacher	Luke Gilhooly
RE leaders	Grace Middleton, Olivia Tremlett and Andrew Prowse
Approved by	Academy Council (September meeting)
Date adopted	September 2026
Review cycle	Annual
Next review	September 2027 or sooner if guidance changes

Be Kind • Show Respect • Work Hard

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

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Our Mission

As a family with God in our hearts, we love, laugh and learn.

Our three consistencies

Love of others • Love of self • Love of learning

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff, volunteers, contractors and visitors to share this commitment.

Purpose and scope

This policy explains how St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Otley provides high-quality Religious Education from Reception to Year 6. It establishes the curriculum, teaching, assessment, inclusion, leadership and accountability arrangements that enable every pupil to develop religious literacy and engage thoughtfully with Catholic faith, other religions and worldviews.

Our mission and curriculum intent

St Joseph's is a Catholic school in the Diocese of Leeds. Our mission, 'As a family with God in our hearts, we love, laugh and learn', shapes the purpose and daily practice of Religious Education. We recognise every pupil as unique, made in the image and likeness of God, and entitled to a curriculum that nurtures wonder, reverence, reason, dialogue and spiritual growth.

Jesus Christ is the foundation of the educational experience we provide. Religious Education enables pupils to know and understand Catholic belief and practice, connect faith with daily life, encounter Scripture and Tradition, and respond to the call to love God and neighbour. It also equips pupils to engage respectfully with religious and non-religious worldviews and to contribute to the common good.

Rationale for Religious Education

Fully religious and genuinely educational

The Catholic school is a community of faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Religious Education is where faith seeks understanding. Its subject matter is the mystery of God and everything in relation to that mystery as source, life and destiny. It is therefore central to Catholic education and informs the vision, values and wider curriculum of the school.

Religious Education is also an academic discipline. It draws on theology, philosophy and the human and social sciences, and requires the same rigour, sequencing, enquiry and quality assurance as other core subjects. Its quality is judged educationally: by what pupils know, understand, remember, discern and communicate.

Dialogue and encounter

The Religious Education classroom is a safe place for respectful dialogue. Pupils learn the Catholic faith authentically and study other Christian traditions, religions and worldviews on their own terms. This develops knowledge, counters stereotypes and prepares pupils to live responsibly in a diverse society.

The primacy of Religious Education

1. Religious Education is the core of the core curriculum and contributes to the Catholic character of every aspect of school life.

2. It is organised, led, taught, assessed, resourced and quality assured with the status and rigour of a core subject.
3. It is taught within a broad and balanced curriculum and makes meaningful links with other subjects without losing its distinct disciplinary identity.
4. At least 10 per cent of curriculum time is allocated to Religious Education in each repeating cycle of the regular timetable.

Aims

- study systematically the mystery of God, the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the teachings of the Church and the relationship between faith and life
- deepen pupils' religious and theological knowledge and enable them to communicate it accurately
- present the Church's moral and social teaching as a guide for living and critical engagement with contemporary society
- develop knowledge of other religions and worldviews and the skills needed for respectful dialogue
- develop pupils' critical faculties so they can explore relationships between faith, life and culture
- stimulate imagination and a desire for personal meaning as revealed in the Catholic faith
- enable pupils to connect learning in Religious Education with other areas of the curriculum

Intended outcome

The intended outcome is religiously literate and consciously engaged pupils who possess age-appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills; can reflect spiritually and think ethically and theologically; and recognise the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.

Curriculum entitlement and compliance

The curriculum follows the Religious Education Directory 2023 and the model curriculum. From September 2026, **Lighting the Path** is the school's principal Religious Education programme across EYFS and key stages 1 and 2, in line with Diocese of Leeds expectations. Teachers use the programme as the main vehicle for curriculum delivery while exercising professional judgement to adapt teaching, deepen learning and respond to pupils' needs.

The curriculum is reviewed against current diocesan and Catholic Education Service guidance and the Catholic School Inspection framework. Medium-term planning identifies the knowledge, vocabulary, Scripture, outcomes and assessment opportunities pupils will encounter.

Curriculum structure

Six curriculum branches

The curriculum is organised through six branches, one in each half term. These are rooted in salvation history and are revisited with increasing depth:

- Creation and Covenant
- Prophecy and Promise
- Galilee to Jerusalem
- Desert to Garden
- To the Ends of the Earth
- Dialogue and Encounter

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Knowledge lenses

Lens	Curriculum focus
Hear	The Word of God: Jesus Christ, Sacred Scripture and the living Tradition of the Church.
Believe	The Church's profession of faith, including doctrine and the central beliefs Catholics hold.
Celebrate	Prayer, liturgy and sacrament through which the Church celebrates the Paschal mystery.
Live	The impact of faith on Christian life, virtue, conscience, Catholic Social Teaching, culture and the saints.
Dialogue	The Church's relationship with other Christian traditions, Judaism, other religions and non-religious worldviews.
Encounter	Discrete and respectful study of other faiths, religions and worldviews as understood by their adherents.

Ways of knowing

Pupils develop three connected ways of knowing. Understand enables them to gain and explain knowledge. Discern enables them to interpret, evaluate and make reasoned judgements. Respond enables them to consider meaning, personal and communal response, and the relationship between learning and life. Expected outcomes bring together the relevant knowledge lenses and ways of knowing for each age phase.

Early Years Foundation Stage

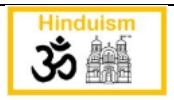
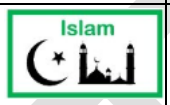
In Reception, Religious Education is taught through Lighting the Path and contributes to the educational programmes and characteristics of effective learning in the EYFS. Pupils encounter Scripture, prayer, Catholic belief, celebration and lived faith through direct teaching, talk, stories, song, art, play, visits, objects and sensory experience. Assessment is based on what adults know about each child through observation, interaction and the child's responses; there are no prescribed RED outcomes for EYFS.

Key stages 1 and 2

In Years 1 to 6, teachers follow the age-related Lighting the Path sequence and expected outcomes. Lessons build secure substantive knowledge and disciplinary skill through carefully selected Scripture, explanation, questioning, discussion, theological vocabulary, retrieval, creative response and purposeful independent work. Teachers identify and address gaps while maintaining ambition for every pupil.

Other religions and worldviews

Dialogue and Encounter are planned systematically through the school curriculum. Pupils study other Christian denominations, Judaism, Islam, Dharmic traditions and other religious or non-religious worldviews at an appropriate level. Teaching uses accurate, respectful language and authentic sources wherever possible. Leaders review progression so pupils revisit key concepts with increasing depth and do not encounter disconnected festival-based activities.

	HT1	HT2	HT3	HT4	HT5	HT6
Focus	**Buddhism**	**Hinduism**	**Judaism**	**Islam**	**Sikhism**	**Christianity/ Methodism**
Year						
EYFS	**Wesak**	**Diwali**	**Hanukkah (Chanukah) The feast of the lights**	**Prayer mats**	**Recognising Sikhs**	**Aldersgate Sunday**
1	**The story of the Buddha - Siddhartha Gautama**	**Krishna and Ganesh Raksha Bandan**	**Abraham and Moses**	**Muhammed**	**Guru Nanak**	**Adam and Eve**
2	**Shrines at home and meditation**	**Prayer at home Puja**	**Shabbat**	**Prayer at home**	**Daily life**	**Prayer and Worship**
3	**Temple**	**The Mandir**	**The Synagogue**	**The mosque**	**Gurdwara, langar Amritsar**	**Methodist Church**
4	**The Tipitaka**	**Vedas and Bhagavad-Gita**	**The Torah**	**The Qur'an**	**Guru Granth Sahib**	**The Bible**
5	**The Four Noble Truths and Enlightenment**	**Brahman, belief in one God, pilgrimage**	**Pesach**	**Ramadan and Pilgrimage**	**Baisakhi, the Khalsa, Mool Mantra**	**Importance of Salvation The "Four Alls"**
6	**The Eightfold Path**	**Karma**	**Yom Kippur**	**Guidance for Muslims**	**Guidelines for living, sewa**	**Methodist Quadrilateral**

Teaching and learning

Effective teaching in Religious Education begins with secure subject knowledge and a clear understanding of the intended outcome. Teachers make the learning purpose explicit, model thinking and language, check understanding and give pupils sufficient opportunity to explain, justify, compare, interpret and apply their knowledge.

The school's established 'I do, we do, you do' approach supports explicit instruction and increasing independence. Knowledge Checkers and retrieval practice help pupils remember essential Scripture, vocabulary and concepts. Tasks are selected because they reveal or deepen Religious Education learning, not simply because they produce attractive outcomes.

Expected features

- accurate and reverent use of Scripture and Catholic teaching
- clear sequencing of substantive knowledge and subject-specific vocabulary
- purposeful questioning, dialogue and opportunities for extended theological thinking
- appropriate use of art, music, drama, technology, visits and artefacts
- regular checks for understanding and responsive adaptation
- high expectations for oral and written expression
- opportunities to connect faith, Catholic Social Teaching, mission and daily life

Inclusion and equal opportunities

Every pupil is entitled to ambitious Religious Education. Teachers recognise each child's God-given dignity and remove barriers without reducing the intended knowledge. Adaptations may include pre-teaching vocabulary, visual or symbol support, carefully chunked texts, accessible Scripture, oral rehearsal, adult scaffolding, assistive technology, alternative recording and additional processing time.

Resources reflect the diversity of the universal Church and wider society and avoid stereotypes. Leaders monitor the participation and achievement of pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils, pupils known to social care and pupils facing other barriers. Further detail is provided in the SEND and Equality policies.

Assessment and recording

Assessment identifies what pupils know, understand and can do in relation to the Lighting the Path outcomes and the RED ways of knowing. It informs teaching, identifies gaps and supports an accurate understanding of achievement over time.

- Formative assessment takes place through questioning, discussion, observation, retrieval, written work and pupil explanation.
- Teachers make summative judgements at agreed points using a range of evidence rather than a single task.
- Judgements use the school's agreed descriptors and are moderated within school and, where appropriate, with Trust and diocesan colleagues.
- Leaders analyse attainment and progress by cohort and pupil group, identify variation and agree responsive actions.
- Achievement in Religious Education is shared with parents through consultation and the annual written report.

Assessment concerns pupils' educational achievement in Religious Education. It does not judge personal faith, religious practice or the sincerity of a pupil's response.

Monitoring quality and improvement

The Headteacher and RE leaders evaluate curriculum implementation and impact through a proportionate cycle that may include planning and work scrutiny, lesson visits, learning walks, pupil voice, assessment review, moderation and staff discussion. Monitoring findings identify strengths, professional development needs and precise next steps. Actions are recorded through the RE action plan and reported to the Academy Council.

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Professional development

Every teacher of Religious Education requires appropriate theological, subject and pedagogical knowledge. Leaders provide induction, shared planning, coaching, modelling, moderation and formal professional development. Staff are encouraged and supported to engage with diocesan formation, network meetings and suitable qualifications, including the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies where appropriate.

Sacramental preparation

The school works in partnership with parents, Our Lady and All Saints Parish and Father Nicholas to support pupils preparing for the sacraments. Sacramental catechesis is distinct from, but complemented by, curriculum Religious Education. No pupil's attainment in Religious Education is dependent on participation in sacramental preparation or Catholic worship. Sacramental preparation is supported by school through the use of the schools facilities to facility sessions.

Partnership with parents, carers, parish and community

Parents and carers are the first educators of their children. The school shares curriculum information through class communications, meetings and reports and provides appropriate opportunities for families to understand and support learning. Leaders work with the parish, Diocese of Leeds, Saint Carlo Acutis Catholic Education Trust and other schools to strengthen curriculum quality, formation and moderation.

Right of withdrawal

Parents and carers have the legal right to request withdrawal from all or part of Religious Education. This should be understood as a conscience clause rather than a general curriculum opt-out. Requests must be made in writing to the Headteacher. Before arrangements are agreed, the Headteacher will meet the parent or carer, and where appropriate the pupil, to clarify the nature and purpose of Religious Education and the scope of the request. The discussion and agreed arrangements will be recorded, and suitable supervision and alternative provision will be made.

Roles and responsibilities

Academy Council

- ensures that this policy reflects the Religious Education Directory and relevant diocesan requirements
- ensures Religious Education receives at least 10 per cent curriculum time and appropriate staffing, status and resources
- approves the policy, makes it available to parents and receives monitoring information
- ensures consistency with the Catholic mission, SEND and equality duties
- appoints a link governor for Religious Education and participates in monitoring and evaluation

Headteacher

Luke Gilhooly has overall responsibility for implementation of this policy and for liaison with the Academy Council, Saint Carlo Acutis Catholic Education Trust and the Diocese of Leeds. The Headteacher ensures that Religious Education is appropriately led, staffed, timetabled, resourced, monitored and improved.

RE leaders

The RE leaders are Grace Middleton, Olivia Tremlett and Andrew Prowse. Working with the Headteacher, they:

- lead curriculum design, implementation and evaluation across EYFS to Year 6
- secure compliance with the RED and effective use of Lighting the Path
- support planning, teaching, assessment and moderation
- monitor curriculum quality and pupil outcomes and agree improvement actions
- manage resources and maintain essential subject documentation
- coordinate induction, coaching and professional development
- attend diocesan and Trust networks and communicate current guidance
- report to the Headteacher and Academy Council and contribute to Catholic self-evaluation
- work with families, parish and external partners to enrich Religious Education

Teachers

- teach the planned curriculum with fidelity, accuracy and appropriate ambition
- use assessment to adapt teaching and address gaps
- make reasonable adjustments while maintaining the intended curriculum
- participate in moderation, training and monitoring
- communicate concerns, resource needs and professional development needs promptly

Parents and carers

Parents and carers support pupils' religious formation and education through dialogue with the school, engagement with curriculum information and encouragement of thoughtful discussion at home. The school respects the differing faith journeys and backgrounds represented in its community.

Resources and curriculum time

Religious Education is allocated at least 10 per cent of curriculum teaching time. This excludes prayer and liturgy. The school provides suitable Bibles, teacher guidance, pupil resources, artefacts, digital materials and professional development. Leaders audit resources to ensure theological accuracy, accessibility, cultural breadth and value for money.

Related policies

- Prayer and Liturgy Policy
- Relationships Sex and Health Education Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy
- Equality Information and Objectives
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Catholic Life and Mission documentation

Monitoring review and approval

The RE leaders monitor this policy with the Headteacher. The Academy Council reviews the policy annually, or earlier when legislation, diocesan guidance, the Religious Education Directory or school practice changes.

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Date implemented	September 2026
Next review	September 2027
Chair of Academy Council	Colleen Jackson
Academy Council member responsible for RE	Father Nicholas Hird
Headteacher	Luke Gilhooly

Appendix 1 RE leadership responsibilities

The RE leaders, alongside the Headteacher, support colleagues and provide strategic and operational leadership for Religious Education. Responsibilities are shared appropriately and include:

- monitoring teaching, curriculum planning, assessment and pupil outcomes through a supportive and evidence-informed cycle
- ensuring that findings from lesson visits, work scrutiny, planning review and pupil discussion lead to clear feedback and action
- managing subject resources and facilities
- maintaining liaison with diocesan advisers and attending relevant RE networks
- checking that Religious Education receives at least 10 per cent of curriculum time
- supporting staff formation and encouraging engagement with the CCRS
- ensuring diocesan, Trust and parish initiatives are evaluated and implemented appropriately
- supporting new colleagues with curriculum content, pedagogy and school expectations
- planning and leading continuing professional development
- maintaining full implementation of the Religious Education Directory and Lighting the Path
- facilitating regular internal and external moderation
- analysing assessment information and setting realistic improvement priorities
- communicating with parents, governors and the parish community
- maintaining an organised subject evidence base, including policy, curriculum plans, monitoring, assessment, professional development and action planning
- contributing to the Catholic School Inspection self-evaluation process
- reviewing this policy and related curriculum documentation annually

Appendix 2 Core curriculum overview

Term	Branch	Principal lenses	Core emphasis
Autumn 1	Creation and Covenant	Hear Believe Celebrate Live	Creation, human dignity, covenant, stewardship and relationship with God.

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Term	Branch	Principal lenses	Core emphasis
Autumn 2	Prophecy and Promise	Hear Believe Celebrate Live	Prophecy, Advent, incarnation, Mary and the coming of Christ.
Spring 1	Galilee to Jerusalem	Hear Believe Celebrate Live	Jesus' identity, ministry, signs, teaching and call to discipleship.
Spring 2	Desert to Garden	Hear Believe Celebrate Live	Lent, Holy Week, reconciliation, Paschal mystery and new life.
Summer 1	To the Ends of the Earth	Hear Believe Celebrate Live	Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost, Holy Spirit and mission of the Church.
Summer 2	Dialogue and Encounter	Dialogue Encounter	Ecumenism, religions and worldviews, respectful dialogue and the common good.

Key references

- Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, Religious Education Directory 2023
- Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, Religious Education in Catholic Schools
- Catholic Education Service guidance for Religious Education and SEND
- Diocese of Leeds Religious Education guidance and Lighting the Path materials
- Current Catholic School Inspection framework
- Equality Act 2010

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