

St Thomas More High School



Religious education policy

The School's Mission Statement

To inspire, To learn, To achieve,

To keep our Catholic ethos at the centre of our lives,

*To fulfil our educational potential, welcoming all and reaching out to the wider
world,*

To truly be God's servant first.

Commitment to equality:

We are committed to providing a positive working environment which is free from prejudice and unlawful discrimination and any form of harassment, bullying or victimisation. We have developed a number of key policies to ensure that the principles of Catholic Social Teaching in relation to human dignity and dignity in work become embedded into every aspect of school life and these policies are reviewed regularly in this regard.

This Religious Education Policy has been approved and adopted by the Local Governing Committee of St Thomas More High School on _____ 2024 and will be reviewed in July 2027.

Signed by Mr Daniel Cauchi, Chair of the Governing Body:

Signed by Headteacher:

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'RE is the CORE of the core of the curriculum' St Pope John Paul II

Vision Statement

To inspire our children to discover and develop the person God created them to be.

Rationale

As members of our Catholic community, we believe that Christ is at the heart of all learning. We recognise that, in the widest sense, all our members are learners, pupils, parents, teachers, support staff, governors, visitors to our school. We aim to provide a safe, stimulating and challenging environment wherein all are valued and respected and able to fulfil their potential in the acquisition of being 'religiously literate'.

As a good Catholic school, we believe that here at St Thomas More, we are fulfilling the educational mission of the Catholic church to:

- Assist the Church in its mission of making Christ known to all people
- Assist parents with the education and formation of their children
- Strive to be of service to society

'At the heart of that mission is good religious education' (The Religious Education Directory RED) 2023)

Our religious education endeavours to enable all pupils 'to be confident and secure in their religious faith and knowledgeable and respectful of other religions' and so play 'a crucial role in building a cohesive society' (Christ at the Centre 2012 p9)

Aims of Religious Education

- To engage in a systematic study of the mystery of God, of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the teaching of the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold, the basis for them and the relationships between faith and life
- To enable pupils continually to deepen their religious and theological understanding and be able to communicate this effectively
- 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
- 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
- To develop the critical faculties of pupils so to bring clarity to the relationship between faith and life, and between faith and culture
- To stimulate pupils' imagination and provoke a desire for personal meaning as revealed in the truth of the Catholic faith
- To enable pupils to relate the knowledge gained through religious education to their understanding of other subjects in the curriculum

Outcomes 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.

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Purposes

- To achieve consistently high-quality learning and teaching in RE, in all classes which enable all pupils to attain their full potential
- To ensure a shared understanding of the expectations we have regarding the quality of learning, teaching, behaviour, and the environment for RE in all classes and throughout the school
- To ensure quality provision that is appropriate to all pupil's needs, is fully inclusive and has regard to equality of opportunity
- To make clear the role of pupils, teachers, teaching assistants, parent helpers and subject leaders in the learning and teaching process
- To provide a tool by which children are assessed in their RE work
- To provide a tool for School Self-Evaluation and a framework for monitoring
- To provide support and guidelines

Context

Through the centuries, the Church has educated young people and adults. The staff and students of St Thomas More High School witness daily to belief in Jesus Christ and the Catholic way of life.

At the school, religious education is, in the first instance, education in the Catholic Christian faith; students learn about and from the Catholic tradition.

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. And Jesus Christ, the person whose presence the school proclaims, is the Word made flesh, the God who emptied himself and made himself small for our sake, 'small enough to fit into a manger'.³⁴ That is, at the heart of our schools, as at the heart of our faith, there is a commitment to a paradoxical wisdom that can seem like foolishness to the world (1 Cor 1:23): a person who is fully God and fully human. Such a paradox defies our simplistic binaries, disrupts our complacency, and confounds the world, but finds its resolution in the person of Christ. In him alone, we are able to grasp how it can be that apparent paradoxes turn out to be life-giving truths: where the last shall be first (Mt 20:16), where weakness is strength (1 Cor 12:10), and where death leads to life (Mt 16:25).¹

Religious education enables students to build their sense of identity, which helps them flourish as citizens in a diverse society. Through religious education, students learn about other faiths and beliefs, promoting respect and understanding.

Religious Education is conducted as a partnership with parents: they are the first educators of their children in faith. The role of St Thomas More High School is to support the work begun in homes, parishes and primary schools, to help children explore and develop their faith as they journey through adolescence.

¹ RED – To know you more clearly, Section 2.1, Pg19

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Religious education as a curriculum subject

As a subject in the curriculum, RE is taught, developed and resourced with the same rigor and commitment as any other subject; it has the status of a core subject and is allocated 10% of teaching time across key stage 3 and 4 and 5% at key stage 5.

RE has its own content, methodology, assessment and culture, covering broad areas such as: God's self-revelation; the Church; celebration; and life in Christ. The subject matter within religious education also gives opportunities to promote an ethos of respect for others, challenge stereotypes, and build understanding of other cultures and beliefs. It is open to inspection and assessment by public examination and at diocesan level. It is an important contributory factor to the passing on of the community's faith from one generation to the next.

The RE curriculum is fully compliant with the [Religious Education Directory, To Know You More Clearly](#) (2023). The GCSE undertaken by students at St Thomas More High School is the AQA Specification B Catholic Christianity and Perspectives on Faith: Judaism and Religious, philosophical and ethical studies themes. Diocesan guidelines have been adhered to with regards to assessment: and we currently use the age-related standards, as directed by the education department at Brentwood Diocese. All schemes of learning are adapted to meet with the demands of the new RED.

The Diocese will support all Catholic schools in their delivery of the requirements of the Curriculum Directory and other norms of the Bishop's Conference and provides guidance in this regard. Diocesan policy relating to schemes of work and programmes of study encourages individual schools to utilise whichever resources best suit the needs of the students in their schools.

Religious Education Curriculum Plan - [re.pdf \(st-thomasmore.southend.sch.uk\)](#)

At St Thomas More, we follow the KS3 curriculum which focuses on the strands set out in the RED. There is a clear sequence of learning across KS3 which mirrors the liturgical calendar.

- Creation and covenant
- Prophecy and promise
- Galilee to Jerusalem
- Desert to Garden
- To the ends of the Earth

At KS4 the students will follow the GCSE, AQA Specification B Catholic Christianity, Perspectives on Faith: Judaism and Religious, philosophical and ethical studies themes, which fully meets the directive of the Bishop's Conference.

At KS5, A level Students study the AQA A-level Specification – Philosophy of religion and ethics and Study of religion and dialogues. The major religion studied is Christianity. In year 12 students study the following philosophy units: the design argument; the ontological argument; the cosmological argument; evil and suffering; religious experience. Year 12 ethics units are: natural moral law; situation ethics; Aristotle's virtue ethics; application of ethical theories. Year 12 Christianity units are: sources of wisdom and authority; God; self, death and the afterlife; good conduct and key moral principles; expressions of religious identity. In year 13 students study the following philosophy units: religious language; miracles; self, death and afterlife. Year 13 ethics units are meta-ethics; free will and moral responsibility; conscience; Bentham and Kant. The

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Christianity units in year 13 are Christianity, gender and sexuality; Christianity and science; Christianity and the challenge of secularisation; Christianity, migration and religious pluralism.

At St Thomas More, we have developed a bespoke KS5 Core RE curriculum delivered by specialists to all students in Year 12 and 13 in 1 lesson per week.

5% of our Sixth Form curriculum time is allocated for Core Religious Education in year 12 and 13. This is 5% of the total number of timetabled learning hours a Sixth Form student is expected to receive in our average sixth form offer. This is typically 37hours (3 A-Levels or equivalent qualifications + 10 hours of Directed Study). This will, however, differ depending on the curriculum route individual students take. We calculate the 5% as a proportion of the number of hours students attend curriculum lessons. This requirement is fulfilled by one period of religious education in each week that a student is on timetable, ending when the public examination season begins in year 13. After Easter of a student's final year of study, the standard timetable cycle is no longer applicable due to the commencement of practical exams etc, and core religious education at St Thomas More is completed to accommodate this. For a 'typical' student Core RE will account for 5.4% of their timetabled curriculum hours.

Lessons use resources developed by Caritas, TenTen (RSE content), Sycamore Programme as well as resources developed in collaboration between R.E teachers and form tutors.

Year 12

- Where am I? (The Catholic identity of St. Thomas More High School)
- Catholic Social Teaching
- Social Action – charities & fundraising
- Do I live an ethical life? (Introduction to Ethics)
- Faith into Action
- Sexual Ethics

Year 13

- STM Virtues
- Catholic Social Teaching
- World religions and their responses
- Do I live an ethical life? (Introduction to Ethics)

In addition to the taught curriculum, students have two opportunities to engage in social justice projects – reading with primary age children at a local Catholic Primary school and volunteering with St Vincent de Paul centre in Southend.

Wider influence

Chaplaincy is at the heart of the day-to-day life of the school and there are close and vital links between the chaplain, Fr Jeff Woolnough, and the RE department. Religious education in its widest sense encourages students to develop their faith through worship, retreats, assemblies and action for social justice. Students develop an understanding and appreciation of diversity within the social, moral, spiritual and cultural curriculum, to which the RE department contributes significantly.

See also:

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Relationships and Sex Education Policy
Prayer and Liturgy policy
Catholic Life and Mission Policy

Definitions

Evangelisation - Introducing people to the Gospel

Catechesis - Teaching people who are already following a faith about their faith in more detail