

St Thomas More High School

CATHOLIC LIFE AND MISSION 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.

Approved by:	St Thomas More High School LGC	Date: November 2024
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St Thomas More High School

Catholic Life and Mission Policy

Catholic Life and Mission

'When Jesus is asked which is the greatest commandment, the answer is the same in all three of the Gospels in which the question is asked:

To love God with all your mind, heart, soul and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself.

This call to love is at the heart of the educational mission of every Catholic school. It is a mission that is clearly echoed in the Second Vatican Council which teaches that the purpose of an education that is distinctively Christian is threefold (*Gravissimum Educationis* 2).

1. To ensure that all pupils understand the faith that gives the school its identity as a Catholic school.
2. To ensure that all are invited to learn how to worship God in spirit and truth through the prayer and liturgy of the Church.
3. The formation of all to live in conformity with the pattern of human goodness, truth and justice that we find in Jesus Christ.¹

This threefold mission is reflected in the three perspectives of the Catholic School Inspection process. Through religious education pupils are invited to love God with all their mind (*To know thee more clearly*), through collective worship with all their heart (*To love thee more dearly*), soul and strength and through the Catholic life and mission of the school to love their neighbour as themselves (*To follow thee more nearly*).

This policy on Catholic life and Mission complements the [Religious Education policy](#), the [Prayer and Liturgy policy](#) and the [Relationships, Sex and Health Education policy](#).

The aim of this policy is to show how faithfully St Thomas More High School responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

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.

The mission statement of St Thomas More High School is highly visible throughout the school environment. It clearly reflects the school's role in the educational mission of the Church, promoting Gospel values and the teachings of the Catholic Church.

¹ CSI Inspection Handbook

Our mission statement is a touchstone of school life so that:

- Pupils have a clear understanding of its meaning and can articulate this at an age-appropriate level
- All staff embrace and implement the statement across daily school life through a range of opportunities e.g. class prayers, whole school liturgical prayers, displays, assemblies, class collective worship, SVP, CAFOD club and other social action groups such as Clubs for Eco Leaders, Animals, Marine Biology and Guardians of the Garden club.
- It is shared with parents and the wider community through school signage, our newsletters, email footers, school policy documents, website and parent's meetings

School Environment

Visitors to St Thomas More are aware of the distinctive Catholic nature of the school through the physical environment, the presence of images and symbols and the recognition of a learning environment that respects the human dignity of all persons as made in God's image and likeness.

At St Thomas More, every effort is made to provide a spiritually uplifting, stimulating and aesthetically pleasing environment:

- All rooms have a crucifix
- All rooms have a copy of the prayer of St Thomas More
- All rooms have a copy of the school Mission statement
- The RE department has a cared for and attractive prayer area.
- The RE Department has good quality religious artefacts
- There are displays with reflections on our Mission Statement, information relating to the current liturgical season
- Focal points for liturgical prayers around the school, reflect the theme and season
- Displays around the school document the activities of the School Council, the SVP committee, the environmental groups, our work with the local community
- Displays within the RE department reflect the topics taught, the liturgical season, work produced by the pupils, key prayers and scripture
- There are student-friendly quotes from scripture around the corridors
- The school grounds have a peaceful prayer garden with the Stations of the Cross, a Millenium Cross at the front of school, a school vegetable patch.

Catholic Curriculum

‘The Catholic vision of education is distinctive and the beliefs it holds, the values and aspirations it has must inspire the whole of the curriculum.’²

Our school is a community of learning with a distinctive educational philosophy which is based on the Gospels. Whilst Religious Education is at the core of the core curriculum, this philosophy permeates all our curriculum and activities as we recognise the needs of each individual member of the community.

At an age-appropriate level children are introduced to the seven pillars of Catholic Social Teaching, using the CAFOD resources. We use child-friendly resources to explore the writings of Pope Francis, such as *Laudato Si’* and *Fratelli Tutti* in the curriculum. In this way we are building pupil’s moral compass and enabling them to respond to social, moral and ethical issues in the world. Our Catholic curriculum leads our charitable outreach and work for social justice.

Relationships and Sex Education is taught in a Catholic context recognising we are all made in God’s image and likeness. See our [RSE Policy](#).

Other faiths are taught as part of the RE curriculum. See our [RE policy](#). 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. It prepares our children for life in modern Britain, giving them an understanding of the beliefs of others.

Charitable outreach

We aim to foster and develop an awareness of the needs of others: locally, nationally and globally, and promote a spirit of generosity and compassion as taught by Jesus Christ. Through timetabled work on Catholic Social Teaching and *Fratelli Tutti* pupils are taught to stand in solidarity with the poor and vulnerable.

There are various fundraising events and charitable outreach activities throughout the year co-ordinated by the Chaplaincy Team:

- Harvest – children are encouraged to bring in food for local foodbanks and the school is a permanent collection point for donations throughout the year.
- Human Dignity, Anti-bullying & Black History Month
- At Remembrance, we sell poppies and related merchandise to raise funds for the Royal British Legion.
- In Advent, a charity of the pupils’ choosing is supported, as well as collecting gifts for families in need
- Odd socks day campaign for Anti-Bullying week
- During Lent we raise funds for CAFOD through activities chosen by the pupils.
- We also raise funds for a variety of causes through the year such as CAFOD, SVP and MacMillan through cake and biscuit sales and other initiatives.

² [NBRIA The Distinctive Curriculum of the Catholic School](#)

- Each House nominates a charity each academic year. These are chosen by the House captains and checked that they are in line with our Catholic ethos. The premise used is that the charity chosen should alleviate immediate human suffering. Local Essex charities are encouraged but National or International charities can be chosen. Examples of House charities from the last year have been:
 - Andrew's - Supporting Children with Diabetes
 - David's - White Ribbon
 - George's - The Brain Charity
 - Patrick's - Carli Lansley Foundation
 - Sebastian's - Make a Wish
 - Vincent's - SCBU, Butterfly Suite & Spotlight Radiotherapy Appeal at Southend Hospital
- A full list of charitable work is included in the annual Catholic Life report for Governors

Pupils are always encouraged to help each other as well as their parents, teachers and other people in the community. It is our aim that our whole school ethos is one that will foster and nurture a generous giving of self, and an appreciation and respect for others.

Working for Social Justice

Pupils are also taught the importance of standing up for social justice as an important aspect of Christian life. There are planned opportunities for pupils to engage in campaigns for social justice:

- Writing to our MP for the 'Send My Friend to School' campaign
- Visiting our MP in Parliament to lobby on behalf of CAFOD
- Marking Refugee Week
- Climate change activities e.g. Switch off fortnight & Earth Day
- Supporting Fairtrade Fortnight
- Reduce, reuse, recycle awareness

Chaplaincy

The spirituality and prayer life of the school are an evident part of its Catholic life and mission. The Prayer and Liturgy policy details the school provision. Chaplaincy provision at St Thomas More plays an important role in the spiritual and moral development of the whole community.

Our Chaplaincy Team consists of a school lay chaplain and the senior leadership team working with Chaplaincy leaders from each class in Years 7-13.

Their role is to support each member of the school community to grow in their faith and to be part of the pastoral care system in school. They do this by:

- Maintaining and developing communal prayer areas
- Collaborate with students and staff in the writing and leading prayers during whole school acts of worship
- Offering opportunities for pupil led prayer before school, during break, lunch times and after school
- Working with members of the RE department, organise retreat days, days of recollection
- Coordinate and support other staff undertaking large projects such as developing the Stations of the Cross in the prayer garden
- Coordinate and support other staff keeping the pupils updated with information about donations to charity, such as for foodbanks and CAFOD
- Being a role model to others by modelling reverence and joy where applicable
- Support the leading of whole school acts of worship
- Accompanying members of the school community, especially in times of need

School Community

St Thomas More is a welcoming place for children, families and members of staff from all faiths and none. Recognising that Christ is at the centre of our school we strive to support and value each member, especially the most vulnerable.

Our behaviour policy is driven by our belief that all are unique and made in God's image and likeness. See our [Behaviour Policy](#).

Children and staff are encouraged to engage with a range of awards that recognise the work that we do to implement Catholic Social Teaching. The school has worked to achieve the CAFOD 'Live Simply' Award. At the time of writing this policy, the receipt of this award is pending.

St Thomas More recognises that it is part of a family of Catholic schools and works collaboratively with local Catholic schools in the Assisi Catholic Trust and across the diocese. Through our work in RE children learn about the Universal Church and how we belong to a global family.

At St Thomas More, all are encouraged to live life to the full and reach their full potential. Members of staff have opportunities to take part in the diocesan continuing professional development and formation programme. New teachers are enrolled on the Diocesan Early Careers Programme as part of their induction to teaching in a Catholic school.

Parents

Parents are the first teachers of their children, and we work in partnership with them. They are encouraged to support Religious Education lessons by helping their children complete homework tasks and discuss with their children work being completed when preparing to receive the Sacraments.

Parents are invited to attend a variety of school events throughout the year, which include: Curriculum meetings, whole school Masses and liturgical prayers which take place throughout the year both in school and at St Peter's Catholic Church such as the Christmas Celebration and Prefect Mass.

They are encouraged to participate with their children during Advent, encouraging a time of sharing and reflection and also during Lent. Parents are encouraged to join the Friend's of St Thomas More to help organise and host a range of events for our school community. All funds raised support and enhance the provision we offer for our pupils and families. [Friends of St Thomas More Association \(st-thomasmore.southend.sch.uk\)](http://st-thomasmore.southend.sch.uk)

Parents are encouraged to share their views through questionnaires, as well as at parent curriculum meetings and parents' evenings. St Thomas More High School operates an open-door policy.

Parish Links

Links with the local parish are a vital part of Catholic life in school. The parish which serves our school is St Peter's Catholic Church, Eastwood - [St Peter Eastwood](#). Our parish priest is Fr Jeff Woolnough. As St Thomas More serves a wider range of parishes, links to each parish can be found on our website under our community page - [Parishes \(st-thomasmore.southend.sch.uk\)](#)

Children visit St Peter's in Year 7 to look at the different aspects and features of a church. Fr Jeff also supports the teaching of curriculum RE in school by talking about various topics such as baptism, reconciliation and vocation in his weekly Year group Mass. Links with the priest are further strengthened as he celebrates various services in the school with the children and staff, including Distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday and the commissioning of the Prefect Team at the Annual Prefect's Mass. We support the work of the parish Justice and Peace group through promoting their campaigns and act as a collection point for donations. We also share communications from the parish priest with our school community to encourage attendance at church and involvement in church events.

Leadership of Catholic Life and Mission

The vision for Catholic life and mission is the led by the headteacher, communicated through the school development plan and enacted through a distributed team of staff, students and parents.

Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy is monitored by the headteacher with the senior leadership team and is evaluated and reviewed by the whole school staff and governors every two years. The Foundation Governors in particular will play a most important role.

Appendix 1: The Coordination of Catholic Life and Mission

- Leaders, including chaplains and Governors will formulate a written policy for Catholic life and mission
- The headteacher and senior leaders ensure that there is a development plan for Catholic life and mission included in the school development plan
- Leaders, including chaplains ensure that pupils are able to explain the Catholic life and mission of the school, appropriate to their age, aptitude and faith background
- Leaders, including chaplains organise themes for outreach, timetable of charitable support, involvement in campaigns
- Leaders, including chaplains develop staff confidence and expertise and enabling them to articulate the mission of the school and its impact on life

Planning, recording, monitoring and evaluating

- Leaders, including chaplains maintain and develop effective procedures and documentation
- Leaders, including chaplains plan school involvement in national and local projects e.g. the environment
- Leaders, including chaplains develop an annual assembly plan to ensure relevant days are marked in school e.g. Holocaust Memorial Day
- Leaders and Governors make judgements on outcomes, provision and leadership of Catholic life and mission to inform the ongoing work on the school Catholic Self Evaluation Document

Communication

- Leaders, including chaplains communicate to members of the school community the significance of Catholic life and mission in the life of a Catholic school
- Leaders, including chaplains report to and consult with the governors and the headteacher regarding matters of concern and development
- Leaders, including chaplains act as consultants to colleagues
- Leaders, including chaplains encourage positive attitudes towards Catholic life and mission
- Leaders, including chaplains induct and direct the formation of newly appointed colleagues of school policy regarding Catholic life and mission
- Leaders, including chaplains communicate with parents, governors and the parish community
- The school chaplain and Chaplaincy team are line managed by a member of the school's senior leadership team (SLT) and a link Governor.
- Leaders, including chaplains liaise with the Diocesan Department for Education

Professional development/Ongoing formation

- Leaders, including chaplains lead and organise in service training and ongoing formation on the Catholic life and mission of the school
- Leaders organise key staff to attend appropriate in-service courses e.g. updating Rainbows training, CAFOD CPD, reporting back and leading staff training
- Leaders, including chaplains keep up to date by personal reading

Resources

- Leaders, including chaplains evaluate existing resources and contacts
- Leaders, including chaplains ensure resources are available to promote the Catholic life and mission of the school e.g. resources for Rainbows, SVP, Catholic Social Teaching, Faith in Action
- Leaders, including chaplains ensure the budget is managed efficiently

Consideration will be given to the establishment of a planning group for Catholic life and mission, which might include, the coordinator, the headteacher, deputy, staff, pupils, governors and school chaplain.