



St Mark's West Essex Catholic School

Statement of Religious Life of the School

Date Reviewed: November 2018

Next Review Date: November 2020

Committee: Curriculum, Pupils and Admissions

In St Mark's West Essex Catholic School there should be no division between the religious and secular aspects of the school; the purpose of this document is to outline those areas which can be identified as overtly answering the spiritual needs of the whole school community.

At St Mark's we aim to;

- Live and develop a sense of belonging to a community based on Gospel values
- Provide an experience of worship giving pupils opportunities to develop their own personal faith
- Complement the academic courses that pupils follow
- Recognise that Christ is at the centre of all we do and are
- Develop understanding and tolerance of other faiths

The Taught Curriculum

All pupils in Years 7-11 follow a course in religious education:

- Years 7-9: 2 x 1 hour per week following the agreed syllabus in line with Diocesan guidelines. Pupils in Year 9 will begin the GCSE course
- Years 10-11: 2 x 1 hour per week following Edexcel GCSE syllabus:
 - Catholicity
 - Judaism
- Years 12 & 13: pupils may opt to follow the A Level Theology course. In addition all pupils, develop knowledge and awareness of spiritual, ethical and moral issues through outside speakers, events (e.g. Flame Conference), community service (e.g. paired reading with younger pupils) and charity work.

Liturgy

At St Mark's we see the purpose of Liturgy as:

- Giving praise and glory to God
- Bringing pupils to an encounter with Christ through religious practices
- Making explicit the Catholic characteristic of the school community in its adherence to the principles of the Christian Gospel

1. The Celebration of Mass

Masses will be planned and attendance will generally be of a voluntary nature with the main emphasis on INVITATION AND RESPONSE.

- Weekly Mass is held on Friday morning before school in the school Chapel (voluntary)
- A special "Welcome Mass" is celebrated at the end of the Autumn half-term for Year 7 pupils and their invited guests (full attendance)
- Year and class masses are organised throughout the year

2. Services of Reconciliation

Services are scheduled during Lent and Advent with the opportunity for receiving absolution during a celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation.

3. Non-Sacramental Liturgy

- The distribution of the Ashes takes place where Ash Wednesday falls during the school term
- Annual Leavers' Services takes place in May for Years 11,12 and 13 and their invited guests
- All public events held at the school have prayers and readings as part of their programme.
- Other important events in the school's life eg. Feast of St Mark and the Saint /Martyr that the forms are named for are celebrated. The responsibility for organising and preparing the different forms of Liturgy will depend on their purpose and audience. The Liturgy Group and the School Chaplaincy Team will be involved in most services and Heads of Year, Senior Staff, and the Head of Music might also be asked to assume responsibility or contribute as appropriate. It is essential that pupils should be involved at every level.

It is a legal requirement of the 1988 ERA that all pupils take part in an act of worship each school day. As a Catholic school our reasons for participating in a daily act of worship are:

- offering our day to God
- emphasising our unity as a Christian community
- seeking God's blessing on our work

Assemblies

For practical reasons, and with a view to meeting the needs of particular age groups, the school is divided into different populations for Assembly.

Assemblies take place weekly. The Year group assemblies are the responsibility of the Heads of Year and to enable greater pupil involvement in the planning of and participation in the Year Assemblies classes are invited to lead assemblies during the year. To facilitate this involvement the Form Tutor may seek support from the RE Department.

Assemblies can effectively use cross-curricular contributions to topics/themes.

i.e	English	different forms of literature
	Geography	global issues/areas
	History	sharing thoughts of an important figure from the past; historical development of a principle/organisation
	Music	musical contribution
	Drama	prepared improvisation
	Art	illustration of theme/topic
	PSHCE	issues relating to inter-personal relationships

Assemblies can be occasions for celebrating achievements and thereby fostering respect for others.

Assemblies should be carefully planned taking into account the age and range of experience of the pupils. Where guest speakers are invited to attend the member of staff responsible should ensure the content of the assembly is in keeping with the ethos of the school.

Assemblies should be intentional and informative experience contributing in the widest sense, to the religious education of all pupils, and including some form of prayer.

Finally, Assemblies should be enjoyed by the deliverer and by recipients.

Prayer

Prayer is an essential part of the life of the school and opportunity is given during the day for staff and pupils to pray together or for individual prayer.

It is expected that when pupils are not involved in formal Assemblies, an environment for prayer or quiet reflection be provided by their Form Tutor during Tutorial time; this may be led by the Tutor or pupils.

Where it is felt to be appropriate lessons may begin or end with a prayer, i.e at the end of the day. Morning Briefing should begin with a prayer.

Traditional prayer may be said, meditations, or reflections or those composed by pupils or staff. i.e. Tutors might wish to collate class prayer books containing contributions from class members. Alternatively it may be felt that a period of silence for individual prayer is more appropriate. Prayers for the week are also published in the weekly staff Bulletin.

Prayer should be nurtured in an atmosphere conducive for meaningful expression to take place. In all instances the correct atmosphere should be created; one of respect, peacefulness and without distraction.

Chaplaincy

Chaplaincy has a special role in promoting the Catholic ethos of the school, and for providing opportunities for the celebration of the Eucharist and Reconciliation. Concerned with encouraging the growth of the spiritual life of the community and of its individual members. The Chaplain, Father Bernard, also offers in addition to the scheduled Masses, morning Mass most Fridays before school commences. Deacon Duncan Whitehouse and Deacon Michael Smith, assist Fr Bernard with the Liturgy. The school also aims to foster links with local Anglican ministers, particularly those with whom pupils will already have a relationship i.e. Churchgate Street; St James' & St Stephen's. St Mark's will support and participate in the Chelmsford Synod, which is held at the school.

Chapel and Spiritual Garden

The Chapel, at the centre of the school, is used for Mass as well as other forms of collective and individual worship. Pupils and staff will also be offered the opportunity to make use of the Chapel and /or the Spiritual Garden at break times for private reflection.

Social Action

Social action is an important part of the life of the school. It is essential that pupils are aware of the needs of others and that they are educated in the reasons why these needs exist. This awareness raising may come about in a variety of curriculum areas i.e. Geography; the Third World Development; RE: study of a named charitable organisation, as well as through Assemblies and the Tutorial system. The school's links with the parish of Regina Coeli in South Africa are important.

Year Council/School Council representatives nominate a particular charity to be adopted for the year. In addition to fund raising activities pupils are encouraged to raise awareness of the work of the charity via assemblies and display. A number of fund raising activities take place each year, organised by Year / House groups, which support local, national and international charities.

Working with their peers and members of the staff on these projects, also reinforces the sense of belonging to a community based on Christian values.

Pupils in the 6th Form also participate in supporting projects such as Foodbank; Macmillan Coffee Morning; Shoe Box Appeal.

A Multi-faith Community

St Mark's welcomes the richness of other faiths which contribute to its community and believes knowledge and awareness of other faiths will best prepare pupils to take their place in 21st century Britain. Major non-Christian festivals are marked via Assemblies, events / activities and display as relevant. There is provision for pupils of other faiths to observe religious practices as required. e.g. a prayer room is made available to /Muslim pupils during Ramadan.

Sex and Relationship Education (SRE)

SRE is taught via PSHCE, RE, Science and Curriculum Days. All aspects of the programme are taught within the framework of Catholic doctrine and following consultation with Brentwood Religious Education Service. In addition guidance and advice is given via the pastoral system and support services. All external agencies involved in the delivery of services are made aware of, and required to support, the Catholic ethos of the school in their provision.

Conclusion

At St Mark's opportunities are provided through a variety of means for members of our community to address their spiritual needs through reflection, prayer, liturgy and sacrament and social action.

Whilst this is provided from a Catholic standpoint sensitivity is shown towards members of other Christian traditions or other faiths – particularly those of pupils/staff within the school. Active celebration of these diversities is encouraged and where appropriate linked to Catholic tradition i.e. Advent>Christmas; Ramadan> Eid.

The religious dimension of St Mark's school is part of its daily character.