

Religious Education Policy

The context in which Religious Education is taught at Stella Maris

Stella Maris was built to serve the two parishes of Our Lady Help of Christians, Folkestone, and St Joseph, Cheriton. Its commitment to serving the local faith community is central to its purpose – and the role of Religious Education within that context is crucial to its success.

The school's Teaching and Learning policy recognises that education takes place at school in many ways – both in the classroom and during the many events and routines that go to make up each school day. Consequently, the Religious Education that takes place in the classroom must be supported and experienced by the children in other aspects of their daily life here:

- when they are taught to love one another as Christ has loved them, they should experience that from other members of the school community;
- when they are taught about the forgiveness of a loving God, they should experience such forgiveness at school;
- when they are taught that God's goodness to us is a cause for rejoicing, they should experience such joy at school.

Parents send their children to Stella Maris because they want them to share in the experience of a faith community. Our Religious Education programme provides them with both the knowledge needed to become an active member of that community and the experiences that will help their faith take root more firmly in their lives. In so doing the school acknowledges a shared mission with the wider faith community.

The governors, staff and pupils have worked together to prepare a Mission Statement for the school which reflects its priorities:

Our school mission is what God sent us into the world to do – to help build His kingdom through learning, playing and making friends together.

The tools we will use to do this are:

- Caring
- Sharing
- Love
- Trust
- Respect

All of these values are reflected in the Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy, and the Policy for Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education thus ensuring that the spiritual values of the school are echoed throughout all teaching on moral issues.

Aims and Objectives

The 'learning outcome' for every aspect of Religious Education at Stella Maris is to improve the religious literacy of every pupil. This means developing their knowledge, skills and understanding so that – appropriate to their age and capacity – they can think spiritually, ethically and theologically, and are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.

Consequently, our programme of religious education aims to promote:

- knowledge and understanding of Catholic faith and life;
- knowledge and understanding of the response of faith to the ultimate questions about human life, its origin and purpose; and

- the skills required to engage in examination of and reflection upon religious belief and practice.

More specifically, our objectives in delivering the scheme of work are:

- to develop knowledge and understanding of the mystery of God and of Jesus Christ, of the Church, and of the central beliefs which Catholics hold;
- to develop awareness and appreciation of Catholic Belief, understanding of its impact on personal and social behaviour and of the vital relationship between faith and life, life and faith;
- to encourage study, investigation and reflection by the pupils;
- to develop appropriate skills – for example, the ability to listen, to think critically, spiritually, ethically and theologically, to acquire knowledge and organise it effectively, to make informed judgements; and
- to foster appropriate attitudes – for example, respect for truth, respect for the views of others, awareness of the spiritual, of moral responsibility, of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life and especially the challenge of living in a multicultural, multifaith society.

The organisation of Religious Education at Stella Maris

Religious education is a shared responsibility. It is based on a partnership between the school, the parishes and the home. The Governors recognise, however, that the nature of this partnership may differ from family to family – for some children religious education at school is a form of catechesis, as they are already be firmly committed to their faith journey through the home, while for others it is a form of evangelisation, an early opportunity to hear the good news of the gospel.

With this in mind, we have adopted the published scheme, *The Way The Truth and The Life*.

Time allocation

At Stella Maris we are committed to making Religious Education a priority in the curriculum offered to the children. This means that sufficient time must be allocated to specific RE lessons at each Key Stage.

It is acknowledged, however, that time alone is not adequate to judge the appropriateness or effectiveness of the Religious Education we provide. While dedicating 10% of the taught week to RE, we believe that *quality* is just as important as quantity – some teachers may choose, for example, to organise their RE lessons into longer blocks, more widely spaced, while others may opt for 30 minutes more frequently. The emphasis should always be on providing quality learning opportunities for the children, and they should be helped to understand that this part of the curriculum has a special priority for all of us.

Creating the atmosphere

In the same way that teachers ‘model’ ways of working in other subjects (handwriting in English, for example, or addition methods in Maths), care is taken to ‘model’ appropriate behaviour and attitudes with regard to Religious Education:

- Each classroom is organised to have a focal point for prayer: this can consist of a statue, a candle, flowers for example, and should be linked in some way – perhaps through the existence of a display close by – to the children’s work.
- Time is made available within lessons for reflection and prayer – this is used either as a stimulus at the beginning or as a ‘plenary’ to close the lesson.
- The attitude of the teacher is open-minded and honest.
- Respect is shown for other points of view and other faiths, while acknowledging our belief in Catholic doctrine.

Spiritual Development

Spiritual Development is an implicit part of our teaching, especially but not exclusively in RE. The responses sought from the children require them to consider carefully the questions put to them and to take the answers they discover into their own lives. Equally, assemblies seek to promote consideration of many questions which enrich the spiritual lives of the children.

Wherever possible, links are made in all curriculum areas to the responsibility held by us all to act continually in a truly Christian manner.

Pupils are encouraged to develop a sense of awe and wonder through the widening of their horizons, which in turn allows them to be to realize the extent and wonder of God's creation and care for us.

Along with Independence, Interdependence, Creativity, Challenge and Thinking, Spirituality is one of our 6 Learning Values and this has been embedded into all areas of our teaching and learning.

Stella Maris is a community school. It is not by accident that we know our children and their families well. Parents and carers are encouraged to become a part of the team which seeks to educate, care for and guide each child. Whenever parents or teachers feel that additional help is required the trust which exists enables help and guidance to be given.

Collective worship and prayer

Through our collective worship and prayer life at Stella Maris we aim to:

- Provide opportunities for the development of a personal relationship with God
- Enable and encourage the spiritual development of each child
- Help the children to become familiar with the traditional forms of prayer used in the Catholic Church
- Provide an experience of good liturgy
- Facilitate growth in a knowledge of the person and teaching of Jesus Christ
- Encourage a social and individual moral consciousness
- Develop a sense of loyalty and belonging to a worshipping Christian community
- Introduce a variety of formal and informal prayer settings and forms of prayer.

We respect the right of any parents wishing to withdraw their child(ren) for the whole or part of collective worship and teachers have the right not to attend acts of collective worship. However, as Stella Maris is a Catholic School, it is expected that parents are in agreement to their children attending acts of worship unless a specific request is made for their child to be withdrawn.

Equally, teachers and teaching assistants are expected to support the Catholic ethos of the school, including their attendance at acts of collective worship.



Collective worship at Stella Maris closely follows the Church's liturgical year. The programme of assemblies also celebrates other major events in the life of the school. The timing of assemblies is,

of course, dependent on changes in the dates of different feast days, but the programme follows this pattern:

Term 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New beginnings – looking forward to our work building God’s Kingdom during the coming year • Class 1 Welcome Assembly • Saints’ feastdays, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ St Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist – 21st September ○ Ss Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, Archangels – 29th September ○ St Theresa of Lisieux – 1st October ○ Guardian Angels – 2nd October ○ St Francis of Assisi – 4th October • Our Lady of the Rosary – 7th October
	<i>Note: October is remembered as the month of the Rosary</i>
Term 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Saints – 1st November (all children to Mass when the feast falls during term time) • All Souls – 2nd November • Remembrance Sunday • Saints’ feastdays, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ St Edmund – 20th November ○ St Francis Xavier – 3rd December • Christ the King – School/Parish Mass • Sundays of Advent • Immaculate Conception – 8th December
	<p><i>Note: November is remembered as the month of Remembrance</i></p> <p><i>During Advent an Advent Candle is used at all Assemblies</i></p> <p><i>During Advent the children take part in fundraising activities for charities such as CAFOD</i></p> <p><i>Christmas is celebrated with Nativity Plays, a Christingle Service and an End of Term Mass</i></p>
Term 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Epiphany • The Baptism of the Lord • Saints’ feastdays, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ St John Bosco – 31st January ○ Our Lady of Lourdes – 11th February ○ St Patrick – 17th March ○ St Joseph – 19th March • The Presentation • Ash Wednesday • Mothering Sunday – School/Parish Mass • The Annunciation – 25th March
	<p><i>Note: During Advent the children take part in fundraising activities for charities such as CAFOD</i></p> <p><i>At the end of Term 3 a Christian Passover is celebrated with the children in Classes 4 and 7</i></p> <p><i>Holy Week is celebrated with three assemblies at the end of Term 3 – the story of Palm Sunday (classes 1, 2 and 3), the Last Supper (Classes 4 and 5), the Passion (Classes 6 and 7)</i></p> <p><i>Lent concludes with an End of Term Mass</i></p>
Term 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saints’ feastdays, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ St George – 23rd April ○ St Mark, Evangelist – 25th April ○ St Catherine of Siena – 29th April ○ The English Martyrs – 4th May • The Ascension • Pentecost
	<p><i>Note:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>May is remembered as the month of Our Lady</i>

Term 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corpus Christi • The Sacred Heart – 12th June • Saints' feastdays, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ St Anthony of Padua – 13th June ○ Ss John Fisher and Thomas More – 22nd June • Ss Peter and Paul – 28th June (all children to Mass when the feast falls during term time) • Year 6 Leavers' Mass
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The celebration of Mass

A school/parish Mass is held at least three times a year at Our Lady Help of Christians church in Folkestone. The children are actively involved in the liturgy through serving on the altar, reading the lessons, singing and conducting the offertory procession. Every child is encouraged to attend, together with their parents and other members of their family.

Whenever a Holiday of Obligation occurs during term time, the children attend Mass together, usually at Our Lady Help of Christians church. End of term Masses are also organised and are celebrated in the school hall. Responsibility for organising these Masses is as follows:

In addition, Classes 4 to 7 take it in turns to attend Tuesday morning Mass at Our Lady Help of Christians church.

Assemblies

Acts of worship are central to the life of our school. We are aware that for some children this is the only way they will gain knowledge and experience of their faith. Assemblies are held daily:

Monday and Friday	Whole school assembly
Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday	Key Stage Assemblies/Class assemblies

Prayers

Throughout the scheme of work opportunities are provided for the children to develop an ability to formulate personal, informal prayers. In addition, they are taught some of the formal prayers from the Catholic tradition:

The Sign of the Cross	From Class 1	
The Hail Mary	From Class 1	
The Our Father	From Class 1	
The School Prayer	From Class 1	Lord, bless our school, so that by working together and playing together we may learn to love one another and serve You, through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen
Grace before meals	From Class 1	Bless us O Lord as we sit together. Bless the food we eat today. Bless the hands that made the food. Bless us O Lord. Amen
Grace after meals	From Class 1	God Our Father, for this day, for our friends, for our food we thank you. Please help all those who have no dinner today. Amen
Home Time Prayer	Class 1	O my good angel, watch over me this night and keep me safe from harm. Amen
Home Time Prayer	From Class 2	God our Father, we come to say, thank you for your love today. Thank you for my family and all the friends you give to me. Guard me in the dark of night, and in the morning send your light. Amen

