



St Peter's R.C. Primary School

Religious Education and Observance Policy

Updated March 2025



This policy document is a statement of the aims, objectives and strategies for the learning and teaching of Roman Catholic Religious Education at St Peter's School.

Rationale

The particular context for learning and teaching Religious Education takes account of mission of the Catholic school to develop as a community of faith and learning, providing the highest quality of education, and offering formation through

- the promotion of Gospel values
- celebration and worship
- service to the common good.

As a Catholic school, we support all parents in their commitments as the first educators of their children. We try to share the Christian vision in a manner which upholds the dignity of the individual and respects the living experience of all the members of its community. Respect and tolerance are promoted by providing opportunities for pupils to learn about and reflect upon the beliefs and practices on which different members of its community base their lives. Studying Christianity and other principal religions also contributes to the development of pupils' own beliefs, values and sense of identity.

Aims of Religious Education in our Roman Catholic School

Catholic religious and moral education (sometimes referred to as Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools or RERC) is distinctive in that it takes place within the context of faith. Faith can be understood in two ways – faith as content (a body of knowledge) and faith as a personal act (a process of developing personal belief and trust in God). The overall aims of the Religious Education (RERC) programme in St Peter's School are to:

- develop children's knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith and Christianity.



- provide opportunities for pupils to experience spiritual growth.
- develop knowledge and understanding of different Christian denominations and other world religions and nurture respect for these traditions.
- help pupils to acquire the skills of reflection, discernment and moral decision-making.
- provide pupils with opportunities to reflect on their own experiences of life and to ask questions and express their feelings in a safe environment.
- help pupils to develop a sense of conscience, knowing right from wrong, and to help them to make good choices.
- support pupils to commit to beliefs, values and actions in a positive response to God's invitation to faith.

Strategies for implementation

Curriculum

At St Peter's School, we try to build a sense of Christian community, based on Gospel values, encompassing all aspects of school life. Religious Education is central to our curriculum. We take a child-centred approach, exploring beliefs and values, actions and commitments, traditions and practices across a range of contexts.

"This Is Our Faith", the syllabus for Catholic religious education in Scotland, supports the teaching of religious education in Scotland's Catholic schools. It deals with the nature of the Catholic school, the purpose of religious education, the role of the teacher, the eight 'Strands of Faith' and the 'core learning' in faith which young people are expected to experience from P1 through to S3:

- ❖ Mystery of God
- ❖ In the Image of God
- ❖ Revealed Truth of God
- ❖ Son of God
- ❖ Signs of God
- ❖ Word of God
- ❖ Hours of God
- ❖ Reign of God

The "This is Our Faith" document links directly to the Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes for Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools, which can be found on the [Education Scotland website](#). Furthermore, the '[principles and practice](#)' document on the Education Scotland website gives further information about the context of Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools in Scotland.

Effective Learning and Teaching

All Catholic schools are expected by the Bishops' Conference of Scotland to follow guidelines established by the Catholic Education Commission on the provision of

adequate time for religious education within the school curriculum. These guidelines indicate a requirement for a minimum of 2.5 hours per week in primary school. This includes activities which are part of the ethos and life of our Roman Catholic School.

Effective learning in RE takes place in a safe, secure environment where pupils are provided with first-hand experiences of religious traditions. All staff appointed to a Catholic school are expected to support and promote the aims, mission, values and ethos of the school, as illustrated in the [Charter for Catholic Schools in Scotland](#).

Prayer, Scripture, stories, poetry, “chatting,” journalling, music, art, ICT and video are used for active learning experiences. All teaching staff, the school chaplain (our Parish Priest) and visitors to the school bear witness and lead liturgies to promote reflection and spiritual growth. Authentic resources and artefacts are available for children to see, touch and discuss. Learning is also supported through effective use of video clips, digital resources, music and visits to places of worship, including:

- ❖ St Peter’s R.C. Church
- ❖ St Mary’s R.C. Cathedral
- ❖ St Machar Cathedral (Church of Scotland)
- ❖ The Mission Church (Independent / Evangelical Church)
- ❖ King’s College Chapel (multi-faith space)

Teachers adopt a range of approaches to provide coherent and progressive learning experiences which allow pupils to revisit some topics when they have the maturity to explore them more deeply. Most teaching is planned on a whole class basis; independent and collaborative learning is also encouraged. Teaching takes place in different contexts, drawing on liturgical celebrations, contexts for learning, literacy and language activities and the pupils’ own experiences.

Every pupil has a jotter to record learning in RE and to respond reflectively to discussions and spiritual experiences.

Pupil achievement is celebrated and recognised through positive oral and written feedback and in displays of work in class, around school and in parish churches. We also celebrate Sacramental journeys through sharing in assembly, sharing in our newsletter and hosting celebrations in school (such as our Communion and Confirmation breakfasts).



Planning and Assessment

Teachers plan using “This is Our Faith” as the overview of the year and prepare medium term plans which identify learning intentions, the core learning and the main learning activities and resources. Knowledge and experience of prayer, the liturgical calendar and preparation for the Sacraments are also included as part of planning processes. Using the principles of curriculum design of “Curriculum for Excellence,” the emphasis in planning is on deepening the learning by selecting relevant contexts and giving scope for personalisation and choice. Medium term plans include details of specific tasks, assessments and next steps.

Effective feedback to pupils is constructive, timely (carried out as children are on task, often through discussion) and appropriate to the child's age or ability. Formative assessment is used to identify the progress of individual pupils and inform subsequent planning.

Particular features of RE make it important to distinguish between what to assess and what not to assess. Knowledge and understanding of most learning outcomes can be assessed alongside skills (for example researching practices associated with Lent or the significance of Easter celebrations). Beliefs, attitudes and moral stances are areas of private concern; they are not assessed.

We report to parents on pupil progress in Religious Education (RERC) twice yearly through our interim and end of year reports.

Staff Development and Training

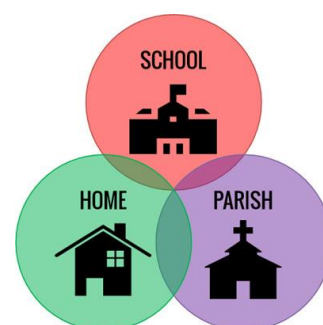
Some teachers at St Peter's hold the Catholic Teacher's Certificate in Religious Education. All teaching staff working in a Catholic School hold approval from the diocese for teaching in an RC school and enter into a commitment to upholding the faith aspects of our school.

The continuing professional and spiritual development of staff is supported through collegiate discussions and attendance at relevant courses organised by the diocese, our trio of Roman Catholic schools in Aberdeen City and the Scottish Catholic Education Service. The Head Teachers of the three Catholic schools meet regularly to share best practice.

Home learning and partnerships with parents / carers

Home learning is occasionally used to support RE learning in school. When appropriate, children may be asked to complete some tasks at home (for example learning prayers or practising a reading for a Mass).

Catholic children who are preparing for the sacraments of Reconciliation (P3) and First Holy Communion (P4) have linked home learning activities to support discussions at home. These are shared through Google classroom to include parents in their child's Sacramental journey.



As P7 children who choose to be confirmed are making their own commitment as confirmed Catholics, they take the responsibility (supported by their families) to contribute to their own journals, documenting their own spiritual development.

Children in P3, P4 and P7 who are not going forward to receive the sacraments participate in class learning activities linked to the RERC curriculum.

Class teachers work closely with parents / carers, the school chaplain, parish priests and catechists to help our learners to understand and enjoy the celebration of the

Resources

The use of liturgical colours reinforces learning about the church's calendar:

White – Easter and Christmas seasons

Green - ordinary part of the year.

The Catholic ethos of the school is promoted in religious displays in the communal area of each building. There is a set of Bibles for use by pupils in the upper stages. Children are taught to treat all sacred texts with reverence. A variety of stories from the Bible and stories of the saints are available in class libraries.

We make use of different resources to prepare pupils to receive the sacraments. In P3, we use the “We Prepare for Reconciliation” for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In P4 we use the “I belong” resource for the Sacrament of First Holy Communion. We have created our own journal for P7 pupils to prepare them for the Sacrament of Confirmation, which uses resources from a variety of sources.

Prayer forms an integral part of the life of the school and there are several opportunities each day for prayer and reflection in the classrooms.

- The morning sessions begin with prayer and end with 'grace before meals', the afternoon sessions commence with 'grace after meals' and end with an evening prayer.

Our school daily prayers can be found in **Appendix 1**.

The teaching of prayer is not a matter of reciting words. A positive attitude to prayer is encouraged and shared prayer time is a time to

- reflect and become more aware of God's presence in all aspects of life
- share joys and sorrows
- show respect for all faiths
- show reverence in sacred spaces.

Other prayers are learned and used in each class (**Appendix 2**) and guided meditations, prayerful silence and spontaneous prayers are features of Religious Education lessons and indeed the daily life of our school.

Mass is celebrated in school on important liturgical feasts which fall within term time. Children learn Mass responses and hymns; children in older children read the Liturgy of the Word, lead the intercessions and take up the offertory procession.

Pupils sometimes visit parish churches for Mass and to learn about the church building as a place of worship. We sometimes join pupils and staff from other Catholic schools for special Masses when they are arranged.

Major Christian feasts / festivals are marked with whole school events such as assemblies and dramatic / liturgical presentations to which parents are invited.

The role of the school chaplain

The role of the chaplain is regularly discussed and evaluated. At the beginning of each session, the chaplain (our school Parish Priest) and Head Teacher meet and agree a timetable of classroom visits, along with the focus areas for the coming year. The dates of school Masses and any other support are also arranged at this meeting.

The school chaplain is the parish priest of St Peter's Church and supports all members of the school community by

- being a resource for the RE curriculum – including to deliver aspects of "This is our Faith" to classes and to provide advice to staff about beliefs, practices, liturgy and traditions
- saying Mass on feast days for the whole school and on other agreed occasions for particular classes / the whole school
- supporting pupils, their families and staff at all stages of the sacramental programme
- providing pastoral care and supporting the spiritual welfare of pupils and staff
- being available at community events in the life of the school
- having a key role at times of extreme difficulty

He promotes good relationships with the school's parish (St Peter's Church) and the other local diocesan parishes. He is a familiar figure to the children, talking with them as a friend, counsellor and confessor.

Religious Observance (including assemblies and Masses)

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 imposes a statutory duty on local authorities to provide "Religious Observance" in Scottish schools.

This is defined in a national Religious Observance Review Group report published in 2004 as comprising: *"community acts which aim to promote the spiritual development of all members of the school's community and express and celebrate the shared values of the school community"*.

In terms of the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence, it is recognised that:

"Religious observance has an important part to play in the development of the learner's four capacities: a successful learner, confident individual, responsible citizen and effective contributor. It should also provide opportunities for the school community to reflect upon and develop a deeper understanding of the dignity and worth of each individual, and their contribution to the school and wider communities."
([Curriculum for Excellence: religious observance, Scottish Government, 2017](#)).

In this 2017 guidance, it is acknowledged that Catholic schools take a distinctive approach to the provision of Religious Observance:

The Scottish Government welcomes the tradition that, in Roman Catholic denominational schools, Catholic Liturgy will largely shape the nature and frequency of religious observance activities in the classroom and in the wider school community. So, at times, children and young people will be invited to participate in, and sometimes to lead, prayer and reflection in classrooms and at assemblies. At other times, to honour particular occasions or feasts, chaplains will lead school communities in the celebration of Mass and other forms of liturgical celebration."

Catholic schools follow the customs and practices of the Church in order to nourish the spirituality and faith of pupils and staff.

Our Catholic tradition is enriched by ancient rites, prayers and devotions which help young people to become aware of, and show reverence to, the sacred presence of the living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Guided by this tradition, we celebrate various seasons and special feast days to honour God, Mary his Mother and the Saints.

Religious observance is evident in the following school activities:

- Pupils are invited to pray with their teachers at times in classrooms and assemblies, as well as in liturgical services.
- All classrooms display a crucifix on the wall
- In all classrooms and in some other areas of the school, a sacred space will feature a copy of the Bible and will be decorated with signs and symbols that reflect the changing seasons of the Church Calendar Year i.e., Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Pentecost.
- This regular practice of prayer is complemented by religious services conducted, sometimes as part of an assembly, to mark special occasions -

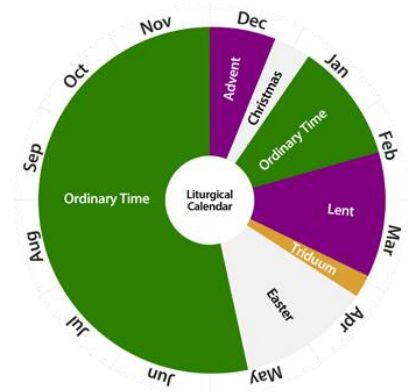
e.g., the distribution of Ashes on Ash Wednesday, the seasons of Advent or Lent.

- To mark special Feast Days and Holy Days of Obligation, Mass is celebrated by the school chaplain, with the school community, in school buildings or in local parishes.
- At certain stages, pupils are able to participate in retreats and pilgrimages to places of special significance within the Catholic tradition.
- Regular whole school assemblies focus on the Gospel Values, make links to the theme of the previous Sunday's Mass and mark key liturgical events and celebrations. Bible stories are used to support learning here.
- Each class has an opportunity every year to be part of a class assembly. These are based on a Bible story, key gospel value or special time within the liturgical calendar. Parents are invited along to watch their child's class perform their assembly.
- Celebrations are held in classes to mark Sacramental events.

Key liturgical events

Some of the important events in the Catholic liturgical calendar include:

- Advent
- Christmas
- Epiphany
- Lent
- Holy Week and Easter
- Pentecost



As a school, we also celebrate the feast day of our school's Patron Saint (Saint Peter), which falls on 29th June each year.

Masses

As a school, we celebrate the following Masses in school:

- Start of the school year Mass
- All Saints / All Souls Mass
- Advent Mass
- Epiphany Mass
- Ash Wednesday Mass
- Enrolment Mass (for Confirmation)
- Ascension Mass
- End of the school year (and P7 leavers) Mass

We also have occasional ordinary Masses organised by classes, and some of our classes occasionally attend Mass at St Peter's Church. Furthermore, we have a yearly Roman Catholic Schools Mass organised in cooperation with Holy Family and St Joseph's R.C. Schools.

In terms of pupil participation in Religious Observance, current Scottish Government guidance makes it clear that it makes an important contribution to pupils' development and that it promotes the ethos of a school by bringing pupils together and creating a sense of community. However, it also makes clear that parents have the right to withdraw children from participation in religious observance and that this right should always be made known to parents and their wishes respected.

The Scottish Government also recognises that:

Where a parent chooses a denominational school for their child's education, they choose to opt in to the school's ethos and practice which is imbued with religious faith and religious observance. In denominational schools, it is therefore more difficult to extricate a pupil from all experiences which are influenced by the school's faith character.

(Curriculum for Excellence: religious observance, Scottish Government, 2017)

Ecumenism

Learners at St Peter's develop their understanding of different Christian denominations and traditions. They visit local churches and ministers are invited to give talks to the children. They also visit churches of different denominations (see "effective learning and teaching" section). The Harvest Festival in October is a particular occasion for an ecumenical focus.

Other World Religions

In our multi-cultural school, children are aware that other faith communities celebrate special festivals. As a school we focus on learning on Christianity and Catholic teachings from Primary 1 onwards. In addition, pupils are taught about beliefs and practices of different faiths from P3 onwards (as detailed in "This is our Faith").

Pupils learn about the monotheistic religions of Judaism in P3, P5 and P7 and Islam in P4 and P6. In addition, as part of our three-year cycle of contexts, learning is supplement every three years in this area with a special focus on "Our Spiritual World", where all learners from P1-P7 learn about the beliefs and practices of other world religions.

The Curriculum for Excellence: Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools

guidance details the experiences and outcomes covered from P3 onwards for other world religions.

Occasional use of artefacts is made to support learning and teaching in Religious Education, including when learning about other world religions. When religious artefacts are used, they are handled as respectfully as they would be in their actual settings.

Learners of other faiths or no faith

We recognise and celebrate diversity within our school. Importantly, we recognise that children and families coming to our school may be part of another faith or have no faith. As we are a Roman Catholic School, we hold discussions with parents at the time of enrolment to explain about Religious Education and Religious Observance in our school. All pupils and parents are expected to show respect towards the faith dimension of our school and are included in all religious observance activities within our school.

Moral Education

The caring atmosphere and positive relationships that are nurtured in the school should help to develop appropriate moral values and a sense of individual and collective responsibility.

Pope Francis, in his 2015 encyclical “Laudato Si’”, reminds us of the profound invitation to everyone on the planet to care for our common home. As a school, we work towards maintaining our [Eco Schools](#) green flag. We frequently provide opportunities for all classes to care for our school and local environment. We also often have a gardening extra-curricular group who meet during gardening seasons to care for our school environment.



The school supports many charities and engages in Christian action programmes that respond to the dignity of each person and the needs of the developing world. Children donate money SCIAF (Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund) through ‘wee boxes’ in classes and carry out fundraisers for Catholic charities such as Mary’s Meals. We also support a number of other local and national nominated charities through various activities throughout the year.

Links to health and wellbeing – “God’s Loving Plan”

We follow Church guidance to deliver the aspects of the health and wellbeing curriculum that focus on relationships and parenthood.

We are guided by The Catholic Education Commission’s guidelines, “God’s Loving Plan”, to support learning and teaching here, which focuses on four main themes to organise learning experiences and outcomes:



- God gives me life.
- God delights in me.
- God calls me to love.
- God's loving plan guides my choices.

“God’s Loving Plan” encourages children to develop healthy and respectful attitudes to their bodies and to relationships with families and friends. This important resource connects children’s learning about who they are and how they relate to others, to their learning about God and their relationship in faith. It helps children to understand how love can be at the heart of their lives.

Working with parents, teachers help children to know that their lives are precious and to develop self-respect and self-worth. Drawing on Catholic social teaching, respect for life, self-esteem, self-confidence and a personal sense of responsibility for actions are all developed.

Parents are informed by letter whenever sensitive subjects are likely to be discussed, and they are invited to attend an information meetings with the Headteacher where the content which will be shown to pupils is shared. In P6 and P7, video clips are used to ensure a consistent approach to sex education. Currently, materials come from:

- The “God’s Loving Plan” resources from SCES
- Parts of the “Living and Growing” (Alternative) programme (designed for faith schools)
- “Journey in Love” PowerPoints
- The “All that I am” resource
- Selected materials from the RSHP.scot website

Parents have the right to withdraw their children and make their own arrangements for sex education. However, we always encourage and support parents to facilitate their children actually staying with their peers to learn together. Furthermore, a parental right to withdraw must be balanced with a child’s right to an education and to access information.

All material used in Relationships Education must be approved by the Head Teacher, who is ultimately responsible for determining appropriate content and delivery of all aspects of relationships education. Other professionals who collaborate with teaching staff will be asked to agree protocols based on reciprocal trust and mutual respect and understanding.

More information and guidance on God’s Loving Plan can be found on our [school website](#).

Monitoring and review of policy

The Head Teacher monitors the implementation of the policy through

- An annual audit where all staff use “How Good is our School” indicators and the “Developing in Faith” tool to comment on the implementation of this policy.
- Class visits when RE is being taught.
- Moderation of RE medium term planning and next steps identified each term.
- Informal discussions with staff, pupils and parents.
- Regular meetings with the school’s parish priest.

Policy to be reviewed: March 2028

APPENDIX 1 – Daily Prayers

Morning Prayer

Father in heaven you love
me,
You are with me night and
day.
I want to love you always, in
all I do and say.
I'll try to please you Father,
Bless me through this day.

Amen

Grace Before Meals

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

Thank you, God,
for the food we have eaten.
Thank you, God,
for all of our friends.
Thank you, God,
for everything.
Thank you, God.

Amen

Night Time Prayer

God, Our Father, I 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

APPENDIX 2 – List of prayers learned and used at each stage

Taken from “This is Our Faith”

Title of Prayer	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
Sign of the cross							
Our Father							
Glory be to the Father							
Hail Mary							
Morning and Night Prayer							
Grace before and after meals (Veritas)							
Act of Sorrow (Veritas)							
Simple Mass Responses							
Eternal Rest							
Confiteor							
Gloria							
Prayer to the Guardian Angel							
Mysteries of the Rosary			J	S	G	JSG	L
All other Mass responses							
Creed (Nicene)							
Grace before and after meals (Traditional)							
Act of Sorrow (Traditional)							
Stations of the Cross							
The Angelus							
Prayer to the Holy Spirit (Traditional)							
De Profundis							
Memorare							
Hail Holy Queen							
The Magnificat							