

## English Martyrs' Catholic School

### Religious Education Curriculum Statement

#### Introduction and Rationale

The central aim of our curriculum in Religious Education is to promote the Gospel message in all its fullness and enable each of our students to encounter the person of Jesus Christ as the perfect example of what it is to be human. We adopt a holistic approach as we seek to nurture the spiritual, academic, social and emotional development of each and every one of our students as treasured and unique individuals made in the image of God. We aim to spark a passion for the subject and challenge our students to become true missionary disciples.

Our curriculum is built upon the account of Jesus and His two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-35). We endeavour to meet each of our students at their individual starting points as they join our school community and boast tremendous links with our feeder schools. We are committed to stretching and challenging each student as we walk with and gently guide them towards a deeper understanding of faith, an appreciation for all things and a closer relationship with God. Our schemes of work have been carefully balanced to cater for our students' many learning needs and meet with the expectations of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory.

In our curriculum we include modules on other world faiths including Hinduism, Judaism and Islam. We provide opportunities for our students to visit different places of worship and to engage with leaders from different faith backgrounds. We are proud of religious diversity within our school community and seek to learn from one another as we celebrate different cultures, occasions and faith traditions.

In our delivery of Religious Education we actively seek to promote a culture of tolerance, inclusivity, integrity and sincerity through our hidden curriculum which is instilled each and every day through teacher-student dialogue, warm gestures and positive working relationships.

*'I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly' (John 10: 10)*

#### Year 7 Curriculum (Missionary Discipleship)

Students set out on the theme of 'encounter' taking time to reflect on their personal faith journeys before becoming a part of English Martyrs School community. Students explore the deeper meaning and significance of our school badge and progress on to investigating the lives of the English Martyrs. Students are asked to consider where it is that we might encounter Christ in our world today. The course explores the dignity and worth of each and every human being, particularly those who are marginalised. We promote a healthy interest in current affairs as students consider a plethora of different opinions surrounding controversial issues such as the Afghan refugee crisis and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Students continue on towards the theme of 'missionary discipleship' over a series of modules which also include 'belonging' and 'celebration'. The curriculum is structured around events in the liturgical year which seek to spark renewed interest in the Church's seasons and festivals. Opportunities to draw moral and spiritual lessons from scripture are plentiful as students become increasingly familiar with key Bible texts such as the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan. The sacrament of Baptism is examined within the context of belonging and entering into a true relationship with Jesus Christ.

Our year 7 course is innovative and inspiring. It challenges students to work in a variety of different ways including creatively and collaboratively in exciting new activities such as our popular 'Presepe' project. We encourage our students to be imaginative and highly inquisitive as they search for deeper meaning. Our year 7 course seeks to inspire all students to become true missionary disciples and make a positive impact in a Church which is 'bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets' (Pope Francis *Evangelii Gaudium* 49)

#### Year 8 Curriculum (Journey of Faith)

We offer a rich and informative course to our students in year 8 to instil a deeper appreciation and fuller understanding of the Catholic faith. The course takes students on a deep dive into the Hebrew Bible and wrestles with many timeless questions at the heart of scripture. We encourage students to become critical thinkers and to see beyond the text. Students explore various interpretations and discern hidden meanings.

Our year 8 modules have been designed to stretch all of our students. They are packed full of classic stories spanning from Genesis and the Exodus all the way to the hard truths spoken by the prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah. Students are asked to consider whether modern day activists such as Greta Thurnburg and members of Extinction Rebellion deserve the title of 'prophet.' Students are challenged to dissect the meaning of key texts and understand how they link together to form one greater story of an evolving salvation history.

In sync again with the liturgical year students return to the person of Christ at Christmas time and come to a deeper appreciation of who Jesus was in light of the Old Testament. The third unit explores the Mass together with the themes of sacrifice and thanksgiving. Students make judgements as to the significance of the Mass giving consideration to; covenant, sacrifice, the Last Supper, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Students are taken through the momentous events of the Church Reformation and consider the importance of the Eucharist according to different Christian denominations. Time is afforded to Catholic Church teaching on this topic as 'the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life' (Lumen Gentium; 11).

The year 8 course continues with the theme 'journey of faith' as it moves on to 'pilgrimage.' We encourage students to perceive their lives as a pilgrimage as we strive together to become closer to God. The course then culminates with a module on 'after life' as our final destination and resting place in the eternal presence of God.

### **Year 9 Curriculum (Life to the Full)**

Our course in year 9 is designed to prepare our students for the challenges they will inevitably face in later life. Embarking on the initial themes of 'philosophy' and 'ethics' our students are presented with some of the greatest philosophical questions, challenges and arguments of all time. Students are encouraged to draw upon empirical evidence and employ reason as they ask questions and seek to justify their own beliefs.

In our post-truth era of relativism and individualism we teach students to critically assess different ethical approaches including utilitarianism, situation ethics and deontology. Students examine Catholic Social Teaching and the Natural Law in this wider context and make ethical judgements in the light of real case studies such as the Nuremberg Trials, the execution of Rudolf Hoess and Churchill's controversial order to sacrifice the battalion at Calais ahead of Dunkirk. Students critically evaluate competing ideologies and explore complex moral issues including former Archbishop George Carey's recent change of heart towards assisted dying and the controversial Texas Heartbeat Act which came into force this year on 1<sup>st</sup> September.

The year 9 course evolves into relationships and sexual ethics. We promote a culture of inclusivity, tolerance and understanding as students embark on exploring these sensitive topics together. Students are taught to recognise the signs of being in a healthy relationship and are made aware of coercive and abusive behaviour. The case of Sarah Everard is scrutinised in light of increasing levels of sexualisation and access to online pornography. Students ask questions as to whether society itself needs to change. Difficult questions surrounding gender and sexual identity are openly discussed as we reflect upon the treatment of Alan Turing. Scripture is analysed from a range of denominational perspectives as students are encouraged to make judgements surrounding the use of contraception and choices leading to promiscuity and open relationships.

Our KS3 curriculum comes to its culmination with vocation. We believe this to be wholly consistent with the overarching aim of our curriculum to develop each of our students holistically and provide them with the necessary tools and resilience to live their lives to the full. The words of our school prayer resonate 'help me to find my true vocation in life so as to find happiness myself and bring happiness to others.'

*'Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire'  
(Catherine of Siena, Letter 368 to Stefano Maconi)*