

St. Peter's Catholic School

CATHOLIC LIFE POLICY

“True education is directed towards the formation of the human person in the view of his final end and the good of that society to which he belongs and in the duties of which he will, as an adult, have a share.”

Vatican II (Gravissimum Educationis, 1)



St. Peter's School, through its Mission Statement, Aims and Policies, seeks to realise the ideals of “true education”, firmly rooted in the Christian tradition. In partnership with home and community, we strive to nurture the religious instinct with which we believe all human beings are endowed, thereby helping each young person to reach his or her full human potential. Our staffing policy is consistent with these aims and acknowledges that everyone contributes in some way to the religious character of the School. Our aims fully respect the faith of Christians of other denominations, whose contribution to St. Peter's is highly valued. They also respect members of other world faiths, affirming that “the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions.” (Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate* 3). Our aims have much in common with all people of goodwill who seek truth and justice.

The Catholic Life Team

The team consists of members of a range of departments and the Leadership Team. They meet regularly to plan liturgies and to review aspects of the Catholic life of the School.

The Mass

The celebration of the Eucharist is at the centre of the spiritual life of the School. We aim to provide a variety of opportunities and experiences attuned to the different stages of development of our young people. The timetabling of Masses is carefully planned in advance by the Catholic Life Team, in consultation with colleagues.

Mass is celebrated weekly, in the Chapel, usually the Mass of the Day. Holy Days of Obligation and major feasts are celebrated by the whole School community, e.g. All Saints/Souls, St. Peter and St. Paul.

With the change to the school day, form groups now take responsibility for the planning of weekly mass on a rota basis. The Form Tutor is supported in this by a member of the Catholic Life Team.

Over the year each form group will have participated in a mass.

Other special Masses include:

- Masses in memory of deceased members of our school community
- Masses to celebrate the retirement of long serving teachers in Catholic Education.
- An annual Mass for staff of St. Peter's and its partner Primary Schools, which is very well attended.
- The celebration of mass or reflection on inset days.
- Induction and Thanksgiving Masses to which parents are invited, Y7, Y11 and Y13.

Members of other denominations are welcomed at Mass and contribute as far as their individual consciences and the norms of the Catholic Church allow. Those who wish to receive a blessing at the Eucharist are invited to come forward.

Reconciliation

Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we aim to nurture a growing appreciation of the joy of forgiving and being forgiven, the gradual formation of conscience and the infinite mercy of God. Our young people should encounter adults who seek to live in accordance with the ideals of this Sacrament and the quality of relationships within the School should bear witness to this.

- Our pupils and students are given the opportunity of receiving the Sacrament in School by arrangement with our feeder parish priests. Special arrangements are made during Advent and Lent with the assistance of visiting Clergy.
- The voluntary nature of individual confession is always made clear.
- We strive to provide young people with quality preparation and meaningful celebration of the Sacrament, fostering a relationship of trust, enabling them to discuss difficult areas of their lives in complete confidence and encounter Christ's redemptive love.

Other Celebrations/Liturgies

The liturgical seasons are marked by means of special assemblies and a variety of liturgical and para liturgical celebrations.

- On Ash Wednesday all pupils are able to attend Mass or a Liturgy of the Word in which ashes are distributed and the season of Lent is explained.
- Members of the R.E. Department organise voluntary devotions for staff and students, e.g. Rosary during October, Stations of the Cross during Lent.
- Weekly devotion to the Rosary on a Friday morning
- Student designed School Christmas card.
- An annual Advent Service for pupils, parents, Governors and staff is held towards the end of the Autumn Term.

Prayer and Assemblies

Throughout the week our pupils have various experiences of prayer. Assemblies are given a high priority in timetabling allowing for form and year assemblies.

- The Catholic Life Team reviews the calendar of assemblies, incorporating major feasts and the liturgical seasons, as well as a rota of staff to prepare the larger assemblies. Form Tutors use the online/VLE resources for daily prayer and examples of assemblies are on the 'H' drive. Other resources for preparing assemblies are held in the RE Department.
- Form and Tutor group assemblies are the responsibility of the Form or Group Tutor. These generally take the form of a short reading, reflection and communal prayer. There is a weekly prayer sheet that follows the readings for weekday masses and promotes the 'Prayer Intentions of the Holy Father'
- Prayers are led either by the teacher or by pupils or a combination of both.
- Large assemblies are always led by a Senior Teacher or Lead Tutor and provide an excellent opportunity for shared prayer and community building.
- The achievements of individuals and groups are regularly celebrated in this forum and notices and announcements enable pupils to grow in their appreciation of and affinity with the values and aspirations which form the basis of our School Community.
- Great care must be taken in creating an atmosphere conducive to prayer, giving time for reflection, so that young people may learn to raise their hearts and minds to God in prayer.
- Prayer intention envelopes on each form Prayer Board.
- Bede Roll in the Chapel.
- Catholic Life induction for NQT's and new staff.

- Prayer focus via the digital displays linked to Liturgical Calendar and raises awareness of other festivals e.g. Diwali, Yom Kippur etc

Retreats

The experience of a Retreat or Day of Recollection can offer a very special opportunity for spiritual growth where the challenges of Christian living can be experienced in a manner that inspires young people.

Annual Retreats or Days of Recollection are incorporated in the School Calendar and major stages are marked in this way. For example:

- The Induction of Year 7 pupils culminates in a Mass which is very well attended by families.
- Year 7 pupils are given the opportunity for a residential retreat at The Briars in their second term.
- Year 9 Vocations Day.
- Retreat Week.
- To mark the end of their compulsory education at St. Peter's, Year 11 students have a Mass to which parents are invited.

Love of Neighbour

Great importance is attached to the priority of educating young people in an awareness of the needs of others (local, national and global) and in fostering a spirit of generosity and compassion. Special emphasis is given to fundraising activities during Lent and Advent. The following features are indicative of the range of activities:

- For Harvest – all members donate food for local food banks. This is repeated during the year.
- Shoebox Appeal/Operation Christmas Child/Mary's Meals Backpacks.
- During Lent – each Form, tutor group or year undertakes a fundraising project.
- A Family Fast Day is organised during Lent with the proceeds being sent to CAFOD.
- The School holds a Charity Fund in reserve to enable an immediate response to be made to particular needs arising throughout the year.
- The pupils/students are consulted on the distribution of such funds. Students in the Sixth Form are encouraged to participate in community service, both within the School and in the wider community. A recent example is the Sparkhill Food Bank which was supported by whole School.
- The School is closely involved with HCPT, both in providing funds and sending students to accompany handicapped people on pilgrimage to Lourdes.
- Prisoners of Conscience Christmas cards supported by staff and KS5 students.
- All Staff are invited to support ANAWIM annually by donating gifts for vulnerable women and children in the Birmingham area.

Visible Signs and Religious Symbols

Every effort is made to provide a spiritually uplifting and aesthetically pleasing environment within the School.

- All classrooms have a crucifix and a form Prayer Board.
- There are displays in the entrance hall and iconography around the school.
- Displays within the Chapel and R.E. classrooms flow from work undertaken in lessons.
- The significance of the name of our School is perennially communicated at assemblies and during the Feast of Ss. Peter & Paul. Original works of art in the entrance hall and Sixth Form depict scenes from the life of St. Peter. Year 7 RE induction lessons focus on this. The school prayer encourages all to say 'St Peter – Pray for us!'
- The Teaching School building is dedicated to the memory of the late Msgr. P. O'Mahony, our distinguished former Chairman of Governors, who was also a true scholar.

The Chapel

St. Peter's is fortunate in having a Chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. Its situation, in the R.E, makes it ideal for the celebration of Mass with class groups and for weekly Mass. Being close to the administrative centre of the School and yet removed from the main thoroughfare; it provides an ideal haven for quiet personal prayer and reflection. Pupils are encouraged to visit the Chapel in their free time for quiet reflection.

The Wider Community

We aim to foster in our young people a growing awareness of the Church in the World and their own dignity and purpose as young Christians. Links with home, parish, diocese, national and global groups are fostered. Examples of some of the activities which help promote this are:

- The parish priests of our neighbouring parishes and others are active in School for example: regularly say weekly mass, involved with confessions, bringing other visitors into School e.g. Polish priests and seminarians.
- Events in the parishes are publicised in School and, as several St. Peter's staff belong to local parishes, reference to parish life occurs naturally in School and our pupils are encouraged to be active parishioners.
- Links with Kenelm Trust are established. Our young people are encouraged to take part in Diocesan youth activities.
- Charitable activities, providing links with groups such as Fr. Hudson's Homes, the Hospice movement, the O'Mahony Trust, CAFOD and Christian Aid broaden the horizons of our pupils/students and speakers from such groups make a valuable contribution to their education.
- Ministers of religion from other Christian denominations visit and contribute in assembly.
- We aim to nurture a sense of vocation in our students, believing that their search for truth, meaning and purpose in life and their search for a fulfilling career are complementary aspects of their growth to maturity.
- At Key Stage 4 and 5, friends and relations of St. Peter's are invited to give talks on their particular professions. This opportunity to encounter men and women of faith living their Christian commitment in different walks of life is greatly appreciated.

FIDES PETRA NOSTRA
FAITH IS OUR FOUNDATION

Our Policy describes some of the practical steps taken in School towards achieving our aims; yet our vision is an idealistic one. St. Paul's prayer to the Father eloquently expresses our hopes for the young people whose education is entrusted to us:

Ephesians 3 v. 16-19

"Out of his infinite glory may he give you the power through his Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, you will with all the saints have strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; until, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God."