



The Spiritual and Moral Life of the School

Formulated by:	Mr B Davies, Assistant Headteacher
Approved by:	Full Governing Body 31.01.2012
Review:	Every 2 years or subject to changes in statutory guidelines or legislation
Next Review:	Spring 2021

Date of any amendments made to policy and brief points:

Date	Section

The Mission Statement of the school sets out the aims of the school in terms of the spiritual and moral development of its members. This document seeks to set out ways in which the school attempts to fulfil this aspect of its mandate.

Introduction

It is, and has been from her beginning, the belief of the Church that she has an obligation to provide an education for her children by which their whole lives may be inspired by the Spirit of Christ.

A Catholic school is not just an environment for providing a series of lessons: it operates out of an educational philosophy which aims to meet the needs of the young people of today in the light of the Church's faith in Jesus Christ.

The Second Vatican Council declares that it is the religious dimension that makes the Catholic school distinctive. This religious dimension can be found in:

- a) the context in which education is delivered
- b) the means by which the personal development of each student is achieved
- c) the relationship established between culture and the faith of the Church in the message of Christ
- d) the fact that all knowledge is informed by and derives its ultimate meaning from the faith within whose context it is pursued.

As the Church develops her response to the command from Our Lord Jesus Christ to proclaim His message, she strives to make more effective the means by which people come to know Him and about Him, and by which people are formed to become more completely human. The Catholic school is one of these means, and its specific task is to bring faith and culture together: keeping the freshness of the challenge of Christ's message to human living today while, at the same time, respecting the autonomy and methodologies proper to human knowledge.

It is very important to realise that the Catholic identity of our schools is not exclusively related to religious education and the integration of academic studies into a unified whole. The Catholic school has a single Christian vision and an integrated concept of what makes a fully authentic and mature human being. The educational process is not confined to the curriculum, nor to the academic, technical, artistic and sporting achievements of the school. The Catholic school should be seen as offering the possibility not only of exploring the mystery which God is, but also of demonstrating the Gospel in action. It

must be consistent throughout and in every aspect reflect the Christian faith which is its soul, its inspiration and its justification.

The curriculum, in all its aspects, must reflect the fact that the person of Christ, and the message which the Church has received from him, is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school. Although it may be convenient to speak of the 'religious' curriculum and the 'secular' curriculum in the Catholic school, as though these were separate and distinct, in the reality the curriculum as a whole, and every part of it, is religious, since there is nothing which does not ultimately relate to God. For the school to be truly Catholic, this vision must be shared by all connected with its work.

All discovery and research is an exploration of the mind of God; all knowledge is a share in the infinite life of God. In all that is true, good and beautiful the mind glimpses a marvellous reflection of the reality which we call God. It is fundamental to our religious tradition to regard all reality as God-given and therefore to rule out in advance any possibility of contradictory truths. Religion and knowledge of every kind can never be in conflict. There is an important consequence of this vision of a single, God-given creation. We have a moral and social responsibility for the way we treat the world around us. It is a concern that is rooted in our theology of creation and should be an intrinsic element in Catholic education.

Throughout the whole of the curriculum, topics arise which raise specific moral and religious issues for which an adequate response will need to be planned in the light of the teaching of the Church. The response should ideally be given within the context of the particular curriculum area, since the underlying values and attitudes should be present in all we do.

The Spiritual Life of the School

'You created my inmost self,
Knit me together in my mother's womb.
For so many marvels I thank you;
A wonder am I, and all your works are wonders.'

(Psalm 139:13-14)

As a Catholic school, we believe that:

- God's spirit is alive in each person from the first moment of being
- this is God's gift, freely bestowed on each person
- spiritual growth occurs with the free response of each human heart to this gift
- it is not confined by religion, creed or culture, for the Spirit moves freely over the whole earth:

'The wind blows where it wills and you hear the sound of it but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes, so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.'

(John 3:8)

This inner response of the human mind and heart is the most significant of all human activity, for it is bound up with growth towards full personhood and integrity.

‘The word of God is spoken in the depths of my being at my conception, and spiritual growth is my learning to listen to that word of God; it is having eyes and ears for God in all of my living; it is becoming familiar with the ways of God; it is becoming the one absolutely unique person that God wants me to be.’

(John Ball, MHM)

1. **The Role of the Teacher**

Whenever a teacher:

- fills children with enthusiasm for learning
- creates interest in the serious pursuit of knowledge and truth
- encourages depth and range of discovery
- assists the linking of language and ideas, and reflection on these

there is opportunity for spiritual growth.

Whenever the language of teaching is carefully chosen to:

- convey belief in the learner
- encourage and praise the pursuit of truth
- convey the worth of the educational endeavour
- sustain the dignity and confidence of the individual

then personhood is respected, and the inner life can grow.

Whenever teachers help children to:

- be sensitive to the subtleties of colour, sound, movement, pattern and order, the complexity of systems and design
- appreciate the history and scope of human achievement and scientific development

- know the beauty of language and its potential
- foster knowledge and appreciation of music, drama, art and all areas of human excellence
- consider the complex and sustained working of the natural world

then they are pointing to possibilities beyond the day to day routine which challenge thinking and promote inner growth.

2. **The Role of the Community**

The school is aiming to be a place of welcome, where pupils experience a sense of easy familiarity with the things of God. The following elements are focused on in order to try to achieve this aim:

- the Word, available to all, is shared daily in the community via assemblies, voluntary Mass, class prayer and prayer group in the Chapel
- the quality of the environment is sustained so that the school buildings and grounds honour God's creation and convey beauty, achieved via maintaining decoration and furnishings to a high standards and curbing litter and graffiti
- the appropriate use of icons and other images to focus reflection
- the ensuring of familiarity with the liturgical year as the context for celebration, achieved via Voluntary Mass / assemblies, use of the Chapel and the Retreat programme
- the provision of space and time for God, achieved via assemblies, Voluntary Mass and other liturgies, eg penitential services, the use of the Chapel and the Retreat programme

3. **The Role of Religious and Spiritual life of the school co-coordinator**

In broad terms, the assistant head of religious education (with responsibility for the religious and spiritual life of the school) assists in the development of the religious and spiritual life of the school, and of the spiritual and moral development of pupils, specifically with:

- Prayer and worship throughout the school,
- Spiritual development opportunities for pupils,
- Opportunities for the moral development of pupils.

This includes:

- Leading and developing the work of the school's chaplaincy team, including the school's support for charities, justice and peace issues and parish, deanery, diocesan or national events for young people, as appropriate.
- Leading and developing prayer and worship throughout the school, including the daily act of worship, the celebration of Mass and other services.
- Leading and developing the school's retreat programme.
- Providing strategic direction and advice to the leadership team on the spiritual and moral development of pupils.

The Prayer Life of the Community

'To help pupils into a habit of reflection is an essential part of spiritual development' ... and further, 'Only in a safe place will young people open themselves to the truth of their own experiences and feelings. This places real demands on the teachers and on their readiness to offer pupils some 'safe places' in which to begin.'

(Bishop Vincent Nichols)

The school aims to provide:

- an understanding of prayer as expressing relationship with God
- the linking of all our relationships with this friendship with God
- the offering of many different ways into prayer – for the individual, for the community
- the celebration of the sacraments in ways that are full of meaning for the lives of young people

'As long as we love one another God will live in us and his love will be complete in us.'

(John 4:12)

Acts of Worship

Providing a daily act of worship every day is a legal requirement. However, the distinctive nature of a Catholic school requires far more than that. Every member of staff takes every opportunity to root what is learnt and taught in a Catholic school in the revelation of God and in the life of Jesus Christ. Occasions of prayer and worship can naturally occur at any part of the school day because every aspect of human knowledge and understanding ultimately finds its source in God.

Staff are particularly mindful of using prayer in class to:

- draw attention to the wonder and awe inspired by God's creation
- pray for those who are ill or have died
- bring comfort and peace to those who are distressed

Morning Prayer

Each day starts with Morning Prayer, usually in the first period of the day.

The key principles for Morning Prayer are:

- i) Participation. Pupils are encouraged to name prayer intentions, to lead prayer and to prepare prayer time.
- ii) Structure. Prayer begins and ends with the sign of the cross, which is a reminder that we are gathered together in the name of God and that God is present. Prayer time contains opportunities to:
 - hear the Word of God
 - reflect prayerfully in silence
 - respond in thought, word or action
- iii) The Church's year. As far as possible the school's cycle of prayer follows the Church's year of feasts and seasons in order for the school to be united with the prayer life of the whole Church.

These principles inform all acts of worship. The weekly Prayer Sheets are offered as guidance to help staff and pupils prepare the morning prayer.

Assemblies

Assemblies, for year groups, key stages or the whole school, as acts of worship, take place during learning coach time as required. The principles of good practice described above are also implemented in assemblies.

Voluntary Mass

The Eucharist is the source and symbol of unity. Each Mass is planned by pupils. This encourages a sense of ownership and active participation. The Church's year is followed throughout as the school witnesses to its oneness with the mission of the Church.

RE Lessons

As per the RE Department's policy statement, groups of children use the Chapel for prayer and liturgy.

The Chapel

The Chapel is opened each day for prayer and reflection. Paraliturgies such as the Rosary are prayed at appropriate times.

The Retreat Programme

The school provides a residential retreat programme for pupils throughout the school. Although other centres are used, the main retreat centre is St Cassian's Centre, Kintbury. 4 days of prayer, meditation, reflection and sacramental participation deepen and sustain pupils' prayer life.

Other Liturgical Events

Whole school Masses and Penitential Services, for example, provide opportunities for the whole community to give thanks and express sorrow. All Holy Days of Obligation are celebrated in school with a whole school Mass.

'Our prayer is God's work, God's creation.
As you kneel there, sit there, walk about
Or whatever you do when you pray,
You are saying 'Yes' with your whole being
To his will
That you should be
That you should be you
That you should be united to him.'

(Maria Boulding, OSB)

Special services during the Church's Seasons are provided as part of our commitment to nurturing prayer and spirituality on every possible occasion.

The Moral Education of the Pupils

Introduction

To be human is to be engaged in moral thinking and decision making. As the human person develops, so to does this capacity and the awareness that the individual's actions have consequences for others and for oneself. Individually and collectively, all people are caught up in (even if not implementing) the search for moral integrity, and are able to recognise the maxim pointed out by Thomas Aquinas as the heart of the natural law:

'Do good and avoid evil.'

This 'natural law' is accessible to all people, and each person must respond to it if he / she is to grow. Despite the damage that human beings inflict on one another and on their children, the call to moral growth is inexorable, for it is bound up with the very notion of personhood. It may involve struggle, hardship, self-denial, as well as the joy of sharing with and loving others. No-one is outside or excluded, either from the search or its fulfilment.

For Christians, this moral searching takes on new meaning as they recognise the significance of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus for their own lives,

and listen to his teaching. Gradually, they come to understand that Jesus invited all people freely to share in the divine life itself, to go with him and through him to the Father.

‘I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.’

(John 14:6)

Individuals who accept this invitation accept Jesus as friend, brother, life-giver. They choose freely to live the Christian way of life. They pursue understanding of this through the Scriptures, through prayer and the sacraments, and in sharing the life of the Christian community. They proclaim their faith through the way that they live.

This school is called to manifest this Christian way of life, both in its teaching and in its day to day life. Only by being truly faithful to this call will a school fulfil its responsibility to assist pupils to know Jesus Christ and understand his message.

The moral life of a Christian, then, proclaims faith, for it is a life which aims always to give witness to Jesus Christ. It may fail many times, for human weakness is great, but in the struggle and recognition of failure and the resolution to continue comes strength, wisdom and growth. The development of the human person, enhanced through suffering and struggle, is focused beyond the self, on others and on God. It is guided by the hope which is love and faith, experienced in the Community of Christ, his Church.

Areas to be Considered

- The self-understanding and approach of the individual teacher.
- The values manifested within the subjects of the curriculum.
- The explicit values made evident in the community.
- Opportunities for responsible decision-making by all pupils.
- The moral consciousness of the community and evaluation of its activities against the ‘Way of Jesus’.
- The explicit communication (ie, teaching) of Christian moral values.
- The recognition of ways in which cooperation and team activity can assist the growth of moral decision-making.

One’s moral life is faith in action, for it proclaims God.

This proclamation is made:

- a) Through centring our lives in God:

‘I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.’

(Psalm 104)

- b) Through our responses to the physical needs of others:
 - to feed the hungry
 - to clothe the naked
 - to give all that is needed for persons to be truly themselves
- c) Through our response to the personal and social needs of others:
 - to let people know they are wanted and esteemed
 - to believe in people and give them the power to grow
 - to enable people to take part in society, to make responsible choices and to help forge the development of that society

The call to Morality, then, in the 'Way of Jesus', means:

- protecting life
- promoting life
- nurturing life

Raising Awareness and Raising Funds

Opportunities are taken to raise funds and raise awareness wherever possible.

- Speakers from organisations (CAFOD, SPUC etc)
- Share in National Fundraising events (CAFOD Family Fast Days, Comic Relief, Children in Need)
- Respond to requests (eg convoys to Albania)
- Discuss, plan and develop fundraising activities, particularly in Advent and Lent

Scripture

In assemblies and more thoroughly in RE lesson time and on retreat, the insights developed from an examination of the Commandments and the Beatitudes are shared with the pupils.

The words of Scripture are offered to humanity in love and the Christian moral educator must seek to understand them fully.

Note

- a) that the Commandments are phrased in direct speech; that is, they are addressed to each of us as individuals. We need to recognise that they are part of God's revelation which involves always personal invitation and response.
- b) that for the Hebrew people, each commandment conveyed positive guidance for human conduct as well as rules. We have to perceive this guidance offered by a loving Father.

The following interpretation is provided by Father T Burke, a moral theologian. He seeks to show how the commandments can be for us 'Windows into God's Kingdom'.

With the understanding it provides, we can see how the Commandments are then complemented and enriched by Jesus' words in the Sermon on the

Mount. Both the Commandments and the Beatitudes assist us to understand the nature of God's call.

Jesus reminds us: 'I came not to abolish the law but to fulfil it' (Matthew 5:17).

Against this background, each of the Commandments and the Beatitudes enriches and promotes our sense of Christian identity.

Understanding the Commandments for Our Time

1. **I am** the God who created you and created this whole world for you. I am the God who guards and protects you. I invite you to live and work for Me, as My child, to help build My kingdom upon the earth.
2. **I alone** know what My Kingdom is like and so alone can guide this work. Listen then when I speak to you and honour My words, as you honour Me.
3. **My Kingdom** is a place where people gather together regularly to listen to My Word, to receive comfort and encouragement and to grow in understanding of My Kingdom and their task within it.
4. **My Kingdom** is a place where all honour parents, recognise the great task I have given to parents to work with Me in bringing children into this world and teaching them to live as My sons and daughters.
5. **My Kingdom** is a place where all life is honoured as holy, for all comes from Me, and where people do not turn on each other to kill and maim, but to offer help and support to one another, so that all may grow in wisdom and grace.
6. **My Kingdom** is a place where all recognise the holiness of fidelity in the bond of marriage and where there is no adultery, no betrayal, but all bear with each other, supporting one another in good times and in bad.
7. **My Kingdom** is a place where there is no stealing, for all know that I have given the world for the benefit of all and so My children strive so that all may receive what they need for life and happiness.
8. **My Kingdom** is a place where all people stand in their full dignity as My sons and daughters; where there is no denigration of one by another, 'no harking back to past mistakes', but all honour each other and help one another grow in grace.
9. **My Kingdom** is a place where all My people are wanted and cared for, where all have the things that they need, and so there is no jealousy of one against the other, for all share together and work together for My Kingdom.

10. **This is what My Kingdom is like:** I have given you talents, gifts and unique opportunities to work with Me, to establish My Kingdom here on earth in your place and your time, and to take responsibility for what comes to be. Go out and build!

Guidance to Staff on Moral Issues

The following is offered as guidance to teachers, governors and parents, though some elements may not appear in discrete programmes of study. Their aim is to set out some of the principles involved in particular aspects of Catholic moral teaching.

Helping People to Grow

‘To help one person to grow is to help to build the world.’

(Grail Motto)

Human beings can promote and encourage growth: or they can hurt and diminish one another.

In hurting others, we:

- rob people of respect and dignity
- destroy trust
- harm the community
- diminish our own personhood

A Useful Checklist

Consider:

<i>What Assists Individuals to Grow</i>		<i>What Harms Them</i>	
Love	Equality	Hatred	Denigration
Encouragement	Honour	Cynicism	Derision
Commitment	Trust	Distrust	Indifference
Vocation	Honesty	Blame	Contempt
Hope	Praise	Coldness	Gossip
Welcome	Integrity	Abuse	Pornography
Enthusiasm	Acceptance	Cruelty	Irresponsibility
Tolerance	Generosity	Racism	Sarcasm
Fidelity	Faithfulness	Apathy	Humiliation
Unselfishness	Stewardship	Promiscuity	Destruction
Self-sacrifice	Kindliness	Covetousness	Disregard
Harmony	Respect	Vandalism	Blasphemy
Generosity	Sharing	Greed	Consumerism
Piety	Humility	Sacrilege	Pride
Charity	Warmth	Dishonour	Disloyalty

Environmental Issues

Scripture reminds us that we are the stewards of God's creation, given 'dominion' over it and entrusted with His design (Genesis 1:26,28).

We honour this trust as we educate ourselves and others to:

- a) **recognise** the beauty and order of creation
- b) **act** responsibly, as individuals and with others, to care for the earth and its creatures
- c) **promote** consciousness of this responsibility in others
- d) **accept** that we are co-creators with God and use the gifts of creativity He has given us
- e) **promote** the causes of ecology, not only to ensure humanity's survival but because they safeguard the work of God
- f) **evaluate**, scrupulously, the impact of science and technology on the environment and the implications of each conclusion for human action

The Social and Cultural Development of the Community

Medical Ethics

Christian Moral Education, in terms of medical ethics, takes its central position from the Judaeo-Christian tradition, which celebrates life as **God's gift**. This gift is entrusted to the care of humanity as a sacred charge; the right to life is regarded as the most fundamental of all human rights.

Decisions on the issues of medical ethics are thus based on, and informed by, an acceptance of the two central principles stemming from this recognition of life as a divine gift, viz:

- the Sanctity of Human Life
- the Sanctity of the Person

Such principles are to the fore as Christian moral education focuses on such issues as:

- the beginning of human life
- genetic research and its application

- medical treatments, including organ transplants
- priorities for patient treatment
- euthanasia

Other topics in medical ethics may include:

- the rights of patients and respect for the autonomy of the individual
- the confidentiality of the medical situation

Personal and Social Issues

Christian Moral teaching here focuses on two key concepts:

- the dignity and worth of each person, made in the image of God
- the importance of individuals coming together in mutual support and regard, to live and work for the good of humankind and the glory of God

Specific issues for the school include:

- a) assisting the recognition of each one of these concepts. The educating process must seek to provide appropriate and adequate range and depth of understanding in human relationships and how these may be healthily fostered.
- b) examination of the principles of justice as these contribute to the building up of positive relationships between people within different situations, eg work, school, family.
- c) recognition that success or failure in tasks may not diminish a person's worth.
- d) understanding that success and achievement may not be attained at the expense of other people's needs.
- e) direct confrontation of offences against the dignity of the person and the worth of human endeavours. Obvious examples in school are sarcasm, bullying, stealing, racism.
- f) a comprehensive programme of Sex Education, including AIDS awareness, which is set fully in the context of Christian Moral Education (see the school's Sex Education Policy and Programme).

Finance, Business and Commercial Ethics

The principles of stewardship here include:

- the just and right use of the goods involved
- sensitive consultation with all individuals concerned and openness in dealing with others
- recognition of that which is due, in justice, to all individuals
- orientation of priorities towards people rather than goods or tasks
- selfless and generous attitudes among decision-makers
- clear and just systems of accountability

Specific issues for the school:

- a) to teach the principles of Christian stewardship
- b) to demonstrate them in their day to day dealings

Social and Political Justice

‘God who has loving concern for everyone has willed that all people should constitute one family and treat one another in a spirit of family love.’

Christians ‘are called to be witnesses to Christ in all things in the midst of human society.’

(Vatican II, **Gaudium et Spes** 24 and 43)

1.1 The Concept of Justice

This fundamental ethical concept requires considered attention, for individuals must be able to contribute to the building up of a fair and just society and to recognise (and seek to correct) both local and institutional injustice.

Principles which inform moral teaching include:

- a) the proper interrelating of ‘Freedom’ and ‘Responsibility’, ie promoting the recognition that individuals have both duties and rights
- b) the acceptance and valuing of diversity of viewpoint, culture and human need
- c) the duty to work for peaceful resolutions of difference and conflict

- d) the responsibility of individuals to defend and promote the rights of the weak and vulnerable

1.2 **Usefully Identified Categories of Justice**

These include:

Commutative Justice:

- the giving to individuals or groups their dignity under promises freely given, and in contracts and agreements

Distributive Justice:

- the granting to individuals their share of goods which are essentially public or social (eg water, health care)

Social Justice:

- the requirements to provide for the needy and vulnerable in a way which accords with full human dignity

Legal Justice:

- the obligation on members of the community to comply with the demands of the common good

1.3 **Ethics and the Law**

The distinction between Morality and the Law is a significant one with implications which require some scrutiny. Children and young people may need help in understanding:

- the usefulness, or otherwise, of rules devised to govern in particular situations
- the basis for the compilation of rules
- the purpose of law in any society
- the difference between rules, law and moral principles
- the distinction between laws which promote the good of individuals and laws which do not
- the changing nature of law / the permanence of moral principle

1.4 **Political Justice**

‘A political society is well ordered, beneficial and in keeping with human dignity if it is grounded on truth, justice, love and freedom,’

(Pope John XXIII, **Pacem in Terris**)

To assist understanding here, guidance and information may be required on:

- ways in which a political system can promote and safeguard the dignity, freedom and equality of individuals
- the criteria for distinguishing such systems
- the duty of politicians to promote the good of humankind as well as the resolution of local or national needs

1.5 **Violence and War**

Jesus told his disciples: ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.’

(Matthew 5:4)

St Paul adds: ‘Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.’

(Romans 12:21-22)

The issues of peace, war and violence require firm rooting in the Christian principles which Faith declares, viz:

- all are called to work for peace and the building of God’s kingdom
- reconciliation in disputes must always be sought
- any spirit of retaliation is deplored
- violence in itself is always harmful
- the so-called ‘just war’ must be recognised as the lesser of two evils

Recommended Reading: Moral Education

The Documents of Vatican II, with special reference to **The Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)**.

Educational Guidance in Human Love: Outlines for Sex Education (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education – CTS 1983).

What Have You Done to Your Homeless Brother? – The Church and the Housing Problem (John Paul II – CTS 1987).

Laborum Exercens (John Paul II – CTS 1981).

Populorum Progressio (Pope Paul VI – CTS 1967).

Christe Fideles Laici – The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World (John Paul II – CTS 1988).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994 – published by Geoffrey Chapman).

The Truth in Love – Reflections on Christian Morality (V McNamara – Gill & Macmillan 1988).

The Pursuit of Love (V Gennovese – Gill & Macmillan).

Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (Pontifical Council For Justice And Peace, 2005)

Spiritual and Moral Development across the curriculum (Catholic Education Service, 1995)

Christ at the Centre (Archdiocese of Birmingham Department for Schools)

All that I Am (Archdiocese of Birmingham Department for Religious Education)

Approved by governors:

Signed: _____
Headteacher

Chair of Governors

Date: _____