St Thomas’ Primary School Religious Education Curriculum Overview

The current Religious Education Curriculum was published in September 2013. It was ‘redesigned’ to closer align with the Curriculum P-12 and the Religious Life of the School. It also aligns with structure and content of the Australian Curriculum.

Four contexts have been identified as having a significant impact on Religious Education in contemporary Catholic and ecumenical schools. These contexts are: societal, ecclesial, educational and digital.

Societal Context: Our world has many diverse cultures, religions and belief systems. While there is very little cultural diversity at St Thomas’ most students would have some awareness of the many differences and commonalities. Therefore Religious Education in St Thomas’ has a focus that will challenge, engage and reflect a Catholic Christian worldview that integrates faith, life and culture.

Ecclesial Context: Among the St Thomas’, families there is very little religious diversity a large percentage of our families are actively engaged in parish life, well connected with Catholic Christian tradition and its spiritual richness. At St Thomas’, staff work through the religious life of the school and through the Mission and Justice sub-strand, to make the school a place where students and their families do encounter the mission and outreach of the Church.

Educational Context: St Thomas’ school is primarily a place for learning and teaching therefore one of the aims of religious education is to develop religious literacy in the light of the Catholic tradition, so that students may participate critically and effectively in the life of their faith community and wider society. The Religious Education Curriculum has been organised into four strands: Sacred Texts, Beliefs, Church and Christian Life. Through these strands students develop their understandings of the knowledge, skills, technologies and processes specific to Religious Education.

Digital Context: The fast pace of development and increased use of technology has had an almost over-whelming effect on delivery of teaching and learning in school today. At St Thomas’ the administration and teaching staff have been proactive in the area of the implementation of digital technology to ensure its impact is not detrimental to students’ learning. This enables the students to engage in new ways of learning with a world of ideas and knowledge literally at their fingertips. This digital context, while providing opportunities and challenges, also allows for new ways of promoting religious development and spiritual formation.

Structure

Sacred Texts: This strand comprises of three distinct yet interrelated sub-strands of the Old Testament, New Testament and Christian Spiritual Writings and Wisdom. Students engage in a formal and systematic study of the Bible, its nature, structure, formation, content and contexts. Students learn how scripture is used by the Church to form and inform individuals, communities and traditions, assist personal and communal prayer and provide insights into life and guidance for living. They are encouraged to show respect and reverence for the Bible as a sacred book and the scriptures as The Word of God.
Beliefs: This strand comprises of three interrelated sub-strands of Trinity: God, Jesus the Christ, Spirit; Human Existence and World Religions.

Church: This strand consists of the three interrelated sub-strands of Liturgy and Sacraments, People of God and Church History.

Christian Life: This strand consists of three interrelated sub-strands of Moral Formation, Mission and Justice and Prayer and Spirituality.

Mandated Scripture Texts

At each year level there are certain mandated core scripture texts which will be explicitly taught and other possible texts that could be used to support the teaching of particular concepts. As an example, these are the core texts for year three: Jesus’ mission: Luke 4:16-21; The Beatitudes: Matthew 5:3-11, Luke 6:20-26; Images of God: Isaiah 49:15-16; God’s promise to Jacob: Genesis 28:10-22; Prayers of thanksgiving and praise: Psalm 23, Psalm 28:1, 6-9; Birth of Jesus the Messiah: Matthew 1:18-2:12.

Teachers use the ‘Three Worlds of the Text’ approach when teaching these texts. The first is a study of the ‘world of the text’: what is actually in the text, is there a particular structure, who are the characters and what happens? The second is a study of the ‘world behind the text’: what is the context, the historical and cultural world of the author at the time, the geographic considerations and the community for whom it is written? The third approach is an exploration of the ‘world in front of the text’: what meaning is there for us today, what does God want to say to us through this text and what does the Church say about the meaning of this text?

Explicit Teaching about Prayer

At each year level particular prayers and meditative prayer practices are explicitly taught, as identified in the content descriptions of the Prayer and Spirituality sub-strand. Teaching about prayer is complemented by opportunities for staff and students to engage in prayer on a daily basis. In the course of their years at school, students will experience a variety of formal and informal expressions of prayer appropriate to their age and development.

The Religious Education Curriculum is authoritative. The curriculum has been promulgated by the Archbishop for use in all Catholic and ecumenical schools in the Archdiocese of Brisbane.