



# St Michael's Parish Primary School

## Religious Education Policy

### **Statement of Faith:**

*Our schools are communities of faith, learning and transformation founded upon the person of Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life, where the Gospel is proclaimed and lived within the communion and the rich tradition of the Catholic Church.*

### **Our Mission Statement - to provide excellence in education.**

- *Through quality teaching and learning*
- *By providing a safe and creative learning environment*
- *By challenging students to strive for academic excellence*
- *By being a place where faith and values are enriched and shared within the Catholic Tradition*
- *By creating a valued partnership with staff, parents, carers, parish and the wider community*

## ***Policy Statement***

St Michael's Parish School seeks to develop an appreciation of the Catholic faith and traditions. We focus on the education of the whole person so that students have the opportunity to be informed, formed and transformed in faith working in partnership with the home, the parish and the wider church community. The school will initiate programmes which liturgically celebrate events, enable students to engage with the scriptures and offer a range of prayerful opportunities so that they may participate in the life of the church and experience what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

## ***Religious Education***

Religious Education is associated with the religious life of the whole school. This includes:

- Religious Education Programme
- Prayer
- Professional Development for Staff
- Accreditation of Staff
- Worship (Special Occasions)
- Mission Days
- Sacramental Programmes
- Feast Days
- Masses
- Seasons of the Church
- Making Jesus Real
- Priest involvement with the School
- Service and Outreach to others
- Liturgies
- Prayer Services
- Catholic Schools Week
- Spiritual Formation Opportunities
- Mini Vinnies Initiatives

## ***Religious Education Programme***

St Michael's Parish School uses the curriculum "Sharing Our Story" which has been created by the Diocese of Parramatta. The curriculum provides outcomes for each stage level, clearly states the key ideas and provides formative and summative assessment tasks within each unit.

Sharing Our Story offers the following features within the units of work:

- Its reference point for *content* is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.
- Its reference point for the *curriculum structure* is the NSW Board of Studies curriculum documents; it retains its commitment to a critical and creative adaptation of shared Christian praxis.
- It recognises the essential educational partnership of home, school, parish and diocese, and sees classroom-based Religious Education as one significant component of a broader education in faith provided by all these agencies.
- It is responsive to the particular needs of individuals and groups of students.
- It accepts and recognises the impact on schooling of the cultural and religious diversity of students.
- It gives increased emphasis to the study of various cultural expressions of Catholicism, other Christian traditions and other world religions.
- It is outcome-based.
- It is open to continuing development at school level.
- It uses information technology
- It seeks to reflect the best of current educational theory, research and practice.

There are seven organised strands within the programme which all describe key concepts, outcomes and indicators.

- God
- Jesus
- Church
- Prayer
- Sacraments
- Scripture
- Christian Life
- Religion and Society

The Foundation Statements for each content Strand are organized into topics that reflect the rich heritage of Catholic teaching, culture and tradition and assist the students to come to know about the person of Jesus Christ. This content is underpinned by the Catholic Catechism. A unit of work, including a sample pathway through the unit, has been developed for each topic to be studied in each stage level.

### ***Contents of a Religion Programme***

- Class timetable – allocating 150 minutes of RE during the week, ideally 30 minute lessons each day
- Statement of Faith and School Mission Statement
- St Michael's Sequence of Learning
- Organisational Statement – how Religion is organised in the classroom, what is taught and when is taught, prayer in the classroom, other liturgical celebrations in which the class celebrates and feast days celebrated
- Term Map – a breakdown of learning activities for each religion lesson
- Unit of work
- Assessment Record
- Unit Evaluation

### ***Understanding Faith***

Understanding Faith is a comprehensive online Multimedia Religious Education Resource. Understanding Faith is made up of 106 units covering both Primary and Secondary Schools. This unique multimedia resource incorporates interactive activities, video extracts, radio broadcasts, music, newspaper articles, slideshows, contemporary teaching and learning tasks with scripture study. St Michael's School has a subscription to this great ICT tool and teachers are encouraged to incorporate the resources into the Sharing our Story units. It is a requirement that teachers annotate their learning pathways and where necessary, add Understanding Faith into their religious lessons to provide engaging lessons for students.

### ***Assessment of RE***

As in all other curriculum areas, assessment has an important function in the teaching and learning of Religion. The main areas for consideration are:

1. knowledge
2. skills
3. attitudes and values.

Progress in knowledge and skills is appropriately inferred from what the students can explain, demonstrate, make, and perform. Skills can be assessed by observation or by the quality of the project or performance.

Values and attitudes are the heart of Religious Education and do not lend themselves to precise assessment. Useful observation can be made in values and attitudes shown in class discussions and presentations and day-to-day interactions with others. Assessment in this domain requires particular sensitivity. A student's personal faith is not the subject of assessment or reporting. Stage outcomes and unit indicators provide valuable reference points for assessing students. Approaches to assessment should support and strengthen the commitment to Shared Christian Praxis. Teachers use rubrics that focus on the A-E scale of reporting for accurate results. Student grades are recorded on a profile sheet in programmes. Self-assessment and peer-assessment are also taken into account for formative assessment.

*Diagnostic Assessment* - Year 4 students are assessed using the Online Religious Education Assessment. All students receive an analysis of their results and a certificate of achievement is issued. The school receives an overall analysis of their performance for diagnostic purposes.

### ***Prayer***

Prayer at St Michael's Parish School is relevant and meaningful for the student's perceived level of faith. The use of symbols is introduced to students and traditional prayers are taught throughout the grades. Students are involved in class and whole school prayer throughout the day. Students and teachers pray in the morning as a whole school, before each meal and at the end of the day before dismissal in classrooms. As a school, we stop at 12pm to pray the Angelus, this is a diocesan initiative. Infant classes use morning rhyming prayers, the Hail Mary and the Lord's Prayer during the morning followed by their own special prayers. The primary classes use the resource "Daily Prayer Under the Southern Cross" to promote deep reflection and learn more about the scriptures. Students also have the opportunity to share their own personal prayers as well.

Students will be familiar with the traditional and liturgical prayers of the Church. The following prayers and responses are taught:

- Sign of the cross
- Our Father
- Hail Mary
- Responses for Mass
- Grace before and after meals
- Glory to the Father
- Rosary
- Gloria
- Angelus
- Apostles Creed
- Nicene Creed

### ***Professional Development for Staff***

As a Catholic school, concern for personal and spiritual development is extended to all. The Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes provides ongoing Professional Development opportunities for staff to attend each year to further their faith journey. One Professional Development Day per calendar year is dedicated to a Spirituality Day. This day is organised by the School.

Provisions are also to be made for staff to engage in personal reflection and faith development. Each member of staff shares in the responsibility of creating and participating in staff prayer and liturgy. On occasions, staff meeting time may be used for adult faith development topics, RE maintenance of the school or spiritual reflection opportunities.

## ***Accreditation of Staff***

All permanent teachers without formal qualifications in Religious Education need to gain accreditation to teach in a Diocesan school. This is a condition of appointment for teachers employed in or after 1987.

There are 5 categories of Accreditation;

- Level 1 – Accreditation to Work in a Catholic School (all newly appointed teachers, support staff and CEO staff)
- Level 2 – Accreditation to Teach in a Catholic School (all teaching staff, including those who may not be teachers of Religious Education)
- Level 3 – Accreditation for Leadership in a Catholic School (Coordinators)
- Level 4 – Accreditation to teach Religious Education (all RE teaching staff)
- Level 5 – Accreditation for Senior Leadership (Principals, AP's and REC's)

There is an obligation for all employees to obtain accreditation within a specific timeframe and there is an obligation to maintain ongoing currency of accreditation.

## ***Worship***

Worship is an integral part of the daily life at St Michael's Parish School. Staff and students are encouraged and assisted to develop their own personal prayer life. St Michael's Parish School also worships special occasions within the calendar year that call us to pray:

- ANZAC day
- Reconciliation Week
- Remembrance Day
- Mission Days - St Vincent De Paul, Project Compassion
- NAIDOC Week
- Shrove Tuesday
- Book Week
- Catholic Schools Week

## ***Feast Days***

St Michael's Parish School also celebrates the following Feast Days through Mass or a Liturgy:

- Ash Wednesday (First day of Lent)
- Saint Patrick (17<sup>th</sup> March)
- Our Lady Help of Christians (Patron Saint of Australia, 24<sup>th</sup> May)
- Our Lady of Perpetual Help (Patron Saint of the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes, 27<sup>th</sup> June)
- Blessed Mary MacKillop (Founders of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, 8<sup>th</sup> August)
- Assumption of Our Lady (Holy Day of Obligation, 15<sup>th</sup> August)
- Mary's birthday ( 8<sup>th</sup> September)
- The Annunciation (25<sup>th</sup> March)

## **Masses**

Each class is required to lead a Mass once a month and will attend Mass at least 3 times a term. Students have the opportunity of participating by altar serving, offertory, readings, prayers of the faithful, singing, helping on the computer and being a part of the congregation. Where possible, Masses are chosen on feast days otherwise classes design their Mass around a theme in relation to the unit they are currently studying. Most class Masses are held on a Friday. It is the class teacher's responsibility to organise the Mass with their students. The REC will organise whole school Masses.

## **Seasons of the Church**

At St Michael's Parish School, a strong emphasis is put upon the Seasons of the Church. During prayer time, liturgical colours are discussed and students follow the liturgical calendar. Every class displays the liturgical calendar near their prayer table. Lent, Advent and Christmas are all studied as separate units, highlighting their importance.

It is not the responsibility of the school, to provide the Easter Triduum for the students and their families during Holy Week. Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil are to be celebrated in the parish church with the parish community on the appropriate day. Students and parents should be encouraged to participate in the parish celebrations.

During the school term in Holy Week it is still the season of Lent. Students will learn about the events of Holy Week in the topics covered in Sharing Our Story. Schools may pray and enact the Stations of the Cross, but not ritualize the Easter Triduum. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to hold an Easter Hat Parade during Holy Week.

## **Service and Outreach to Others**

Religious Education provides an opportunity for students to understand their responsibility, as disciples of Jesus, to reach out to others and to work for the promotion of justice in their world.

The school is involved in the following outreach activities:

- Project Compassion
- Regular fundraising for Catholic Missions
- Regular visits to the Home and Community Care groups
- Visits to Orana
- Reading with the Gulpa Preschool
- Organising fundraisers for unwell students in our community
- Participation in Mini Vinnies

## **Liturgies**

Teachers and students should be aware that the Catholic Church has certain regulations concerning liturgy. It is essential that all school staff members have formation in liturgy.

The *Ordo* is the reference book to be used for the preparation of all liturgical celebrations. It is an indispensable aid in the preparation of good liturgy but is not a complete guide to liturgical celebrations. Teachers are urged to study the liturgical documents upon which the *Ordo* is based, especially:

- General Instruction of the Roman Missal, *Sacramentary*, p. 19.
- General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, *Sacramentary*, p.64.
- Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass, *Lectionary*, vol.1, p.xv

- The Church's Liturgy is based on the founding event of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This event is the **context** of all our liturgical celebrations.
- School liturgical celebrations **must follow** the liturgical year.
- Liturgical celebrations have already been planned in the Church's rituals for each day of the Liturgical Year. The school's role is **to prepare** the liturgy from the **Church's liturgical publications**, thereby taking away the unnecessary hours of preparation for school liturgies.
- Schools are to use **the Ordo** and follow the readings and prayers for the Mass/Liturgy of the Word, **of the day**.
- It is desirable that the preparation of the liturgy is carried out in conjunction with the priest.
- Children should also be taught the skills of reverence in order to participate prayerfully and meaningfully in all liturgical celebrations.
- All children are actively involved as participants in the gathered assembly, whilst a few may have special ministries such as altar serving, or reading. Others may be involved in reading the Intercessions and the Presentation of the Gifts.
- In preparing the liturgy the following principles need to be kept in mind:
  1. The rhythm of the liturgy must be respected ie. the liturgy must flow.
  2. The proper hierarchy of the structural elements of the liturgy must be maintained (not everything in the liturgy is of equal importance. The high points of the liturgy should be emphasised.)
  3. If schools choose to highlight a particular part of the liturgy e.g by having a gospel procession, this should be the only part that is highlighted in that particular celebration.
  4. Musical elements of the liturgy must be integrated in accordance with the proper rhythm of the liturgy.
- If liturgical celebrations are during the week in the absence of a priest, they must present a Liturgy of the Word.
- The school has a subscription to Liturgy Help to easily locate readings of the day and to ensure they are accurate.

### ***Sacramental Programmes***

Sacraments of the Church emphasise a different dimension of a relationship with God. St Michael's sequence of learning includes incremental and developmental teaching of the sacraments. St Michael's uses the "Celebrating Our Lives" books for Sacramental preparation, the Broken Bay Diocese Sacramental Preparation books and Sharing our Story units. Preparation is completed in RE lessons during school time and runs for a four week period in the lead up to receiving the Sacrament. Students who do not attend St Michael's have the opportunity of preparing for Sacraments with a nominated parishioner and communication between the REC and Parish organisers occurs throughout the preparation.

*Sacramental year levels restrictions:*

Year 4 and above – Sacrament of Penance

Year 3 and above – Sacrament of Confirmation

Year 4 and above – Sacrament of Holy Communion

One of the important tasks of Religious Education in the Catholic School is working with the family and

the parish in providing the child with the opportunity to understand and take part in the Church's Sacramental life. This is a task which is part of the Religious Education Program throughout the years of schooling.

### ***Catholic Schools Week***

Each year St Michael's Parish School participates in Catholic Schools Week. A liturgy is run by the student leadership team and each year, the school participates in different activities (for example: Open Nights, Family Picnics, Night time Mass, Guest Speaker, Family BBQ, Open Classrooms).

### ***Spiritual Formation Opportunities***

As a Catholic school we have the responsibility to provide, for our members, community faith experiences beyond those which constitute a part of the classroom religion program. The students should be offered further opportunities whereby they can consider ways to apply what they have learnt through the religion program to their personal life e.g. retreat days or reflection sessions.

These experiences should encourage the student to reflect on their moral growth, their spiritual growth and their membership of the faith community.

- Students in Stages One and Two have two reflection sessions incorporated into the teaching and learning program.
- Students preparing for Sacraments will experience reflection time prior to receiving the Sacrament.

### ***Making Jesus Real***

Making Jesus Real aims to provide a quality, Christ-inspired education for students so each will gain a strong relationship with God through Christ and his Church. MJR is a holistic approach so that all who encounter the MJR philosophy will be inspired by the words, actions and teaching of Jesus Christ. It provides the opportunities and resources to students so they can discover the values, qualities and attitudes necessary for a faith filled, positive life. In turn, at St Michael's we hope MJR provides a positive outlook for students for their future so that they can take their place in society and demonstrate compassion for the marginalised. MJR is incorporated into everyday life at St Michael's with the language we use and reference to MJR. It is not a separate program, resources are used during Health lessons. MJR weekly awards are also given out to students who show the "Spirit of Jesus"