

# St Francis Xavier Primary School

## Religious Education and Sacraments Policy

### Rationale

St Francis Xavier Catholic Primary School is a faith community, inspired by the love of God, within the Parishes of St Francis Xavier, Montmorency and Our Lady Help of Christians, Eltham. At St Francis Xavier School our Religious Education curriculum underpins all that we do, supporting students to grow and strengthen their relationship with God, responding as active members within their community of faith.

Our Religious Education program values strong connections between Parish, school and parent community so that our sense of partnership in the formation of Religious commitment is fostered by all those involved. We realise that this is both a privilege and an honour.

Our Religious Education program offers meaningful opportunities for students to engage in dialogue, explore, reflect and practise our Catholic tradition. We welcome and encourage a pedagogy of encounter with other faith traditions as we develop our personal and communal Catholic identity.

The Religious Education program from Prep through to Year 6, is developed from the Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Religious Education Curriculum. In the Religious Education Curriculum Framework, the learning structure has three integrated components. These include three strands of learning: Knowledge and Understanding; Reasoning and Responding; Personal and Communal Engagement. Five content areas: Jesus and Scripture; Church and Community; God, Religion and Life; Prayer, Liturgy and Sacrament; Morality and Justice, each having content descriptors, and finally, achievement standards. The learning progression is supported by a Scope and Sequence chart, from P-6. Curriculum units are based on and formed by Scripture.

Learning is supported by REsource, developed by the Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools to provide online educational support for teachers of Religious Education. Designing for Learning tools, such as the Pedagogy of Encounter form the basis of planning documents. In addition, several resources are used to support teaching and learning, including the Understanding Faith Digital Subscription and 'To Know, Worship and Love' developed by the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Catholic Social Teaching Principles from Caritas Australia are referenced. We encourage students to learn about the Church's mission as global citizens and endorse partnership with a friendship school in the Philippines, Buhisan Elementary.

### Sacramental Program

The Sacramental Program at St Francis Xavier School is encompassed by a '**Parish Based-School Supported-Parent Initiated Sacramental Program**' with our Parish schools: Our Lady Help of Christians and Holy Trinity. All students and families, regardless of their faith denomination are invited to be part of our Sacramental Program by the way of Sacrament or Blessing. Our Reconciliation Sacrament (Year 4) and. First Eucharist (Year 5) is celebrated at either St Francis Xavier or Our Lady Help of Christians. Confirmation (Year 6) is celebrated at St Patrick's Cathedral, in combination with our two Parish Schools. Our Parish Moderator: Michael Sierakowski leads these Sacraments in an inclusive manner, and supports the Auxiliary Bishop Rene Ramirez, who joins our Parish for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

In preparation for the Sacraments, students participate in structured classes during class learning time, which is supported by both parents, the school and the Parish. Students are provided with a Sacramental text from Kathy Horan's Becoming Catholic series. This offers an accessible and engaged way for children to prepare for these sacraments at home and school. Families of students in Sacramental years are invited to participate in family preparation nights for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation. These take place each year and are led by Parish and School Staff. Students in Year Four are invited to attend the Reconciliation Faith Formation Night along with their parents, where they participate in a classroom activity led by Year Level teachers.. Students in Year Five are part of a new initiative, a dedicated Eucharist Retreat Day involving the three parish schools, in preparation for the Sacrament of Eucharist. Students making their Confirmation attend a Confirmation Preparation and Rehearsal day at St Patrick's Cathedral. Only students who are baptised Catholics can receive the 3 Sacraments.

### Purpose:

At St Francis Xavier Primary School we:

- work in collaboration to plan engaging units of work for students to be given opportunities to discover more about themselves, their faith and the world around them, supported by the Education in Faith and Learning and Teaching staff leaders.
- Provide opportunities for students and staff to engage in dialogue to recontextualise their understanding of scripture and faith development.
- Develop an awareness of, response to and celebration of the students' relationship with God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the world in which they live.

- Highlight the Doctrine of the Catholic Church and issues of social justice as important features.
- View Religious Education as an area in the curriculum which brings together many other disciplines and aspects of life, integrating these in a context of spirituality.
- Foster a sense of belonging in the Church by providing an opportunity for all children to participate in prayer, liturgies and sacramental programs.
- Pursue the objective that all teachers of Religious Education should be or are working towards being accredited to teach in a Catholic Primary School/Accredited to teach Religion in a Catholic Primary School.
- Respect and acknowledge all influences within our faith lives, with an emphasis on parents being the first educators in our students' lives.

### **Implementation:**

At St Francis Xavier Primary School we promote Catholic identity, faith and social justice. Our Religious Education program includes:

- Using To Know, Worship and Love texts as a key resource in planning and teaching lessons as mandated by Melbourne Archdiocese of Catholic Schools for Religious Education.
- Implementing Religious Education Curriculum Framework utilising tools such as the Pedagogy of Encounter.
- Utilising the Caritas and Understanding Faith website resources to support our Religious Education curriculum.
- Addressing the Principles of Catholic Teaching within planning units.
- Planning and teaching Religious Education lessons each week from Prep to Year 6. (2 hours)
- Assessment and reporting is based on the achievement standards, as described in the Religious Education Curriculum Framework for the Melbourne Archdiocese of Catholic Schools.
- In the Religious Education Curriculum Framework, the learning structure has three integrated components.
- Implementation of daily morning prayer.
- Twice weekly whole school Christian Meditation (Tuesday and Friday)
- Class prayer tables that focus on the liturgical season and symbols of our faith.
- Class prayer cloth created by students and used daily as a central focus point for classroom prayer
- Planning and implementation of a comprehensive 'Parish Based-School Supported-Parent Initiated Sacramental Program with our Parish schools.
- Providing opportunities for staff and students to encounter prayer through planning and participating in formal and informal prayer as expression of faith.
- Regular scheduled Year Level or Combined Year Level Masses (once per term, four times per year)
- Attendance at Mass for key Feast Days (eg Feast of St Francis Xavier, Feast of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop)
- Opportunities for classroom based liturgies when holy days of obligation Parish Masses are held at Our Lady Help of Christian (eg Ash Wednesday)
- Acknowledgement of Country at faith formation evenings with parents.
- Celebrating the Sacraments with our Parish schools.
- Providing Sacramental Parent Faith evenings in preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation
- Providing a Eucharist Retreat Day and student attendance at the Reconciliation Faith Formation Night.
- Participation in Social Justice initiatives to reach out to both our local and global communities; St Vincent de Paul Winter Food and Christmas Appeal, Wear it Yellow Day supporting First Nation and Indigenous Children, FIRE Carrier Program, Project Compassion. We also participate with Parish to support the Philippines via fundraising efforts on our Feast Day.
- Providing Liturgical celebrations and instruction for Easter (Lent) and Christmas (Advent)
- Promoting Catholic Teachings and the Church's perspective in Religious Education lessons.
- Professional learning opportunities are facilitated to support teachers to better understand the issues of life, faith and our Catholic tradition via participation in ERO and SRO online workshops.
- Ongoing purchase of Religious Education resources to support classroom learning.
- Weekly opportunities for staff prayer and reflection at Staff Meetings.
- Provide professional learning opportunities to develop teacher's knowledge of Scripture and the Gospels.
- The Catholic identity of the school is promoted in the wider community.
- School values are directly linked to scripture, featured on signs displayed throughout the school.
- The teaching and promotion of Catholic Social Teachings and Principles.
- Year 6 Religious Education Student Leaders and in 2025, Jubilee Leaders.
- Updated St Francis Xavier Primary Vision and Mission 2024.

### **Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the School's Review cycle or as changes are made to the Religious Education Curriculum.