

The Contemporary Contexts of Religious Education:

The St Thomas More Catholic Primary School Religious Education Program identifies and articulates that the four contemporary contexts of Religious Education are identified as having a significant impact on Religious Education in our contemporary Catholic school. These include the Societal Context, Ecclesial Context, Educational Context and Digital Context. At our school we have developed school-wide expectations, in which these contexts are embedded and underpinned by Gospel values and promoted and voiced throughout the daily life of the school.

Societal Context



Our school Religious Education Program seeks to reflect a Catholic Christian worldview that enables us to integrate faith, life and culture in a contemporary and multi-faith context. St Thomas More is a place where students and their families encounter the mission and outreach of the Church, especially through pastoral care and the experience of Catholic Christian community grounded in the life and words of St Thomas More and through the Marist characteristics of Presence, Simplicity, Love of Work, Family Spirit and In the Way of Mary.

It is recognised at St Thomas More that while many parents want their children to be immersed in the Catholic values and traditions, some do not fully understand the foundational nature and central importance of the religious and spiritual dimension of Catholic Education.

At St Thomas More we respond to the societal context of Religious Education by-

- Acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture at the beginning of liturgies and school assemblies.
- Engagement with Marist Mission, Catholic Mission, Caritas, St Vincent de Paul resources to inform students about global needs.
- Using census information about the religious and cultural backgrounds of families to inform and develop units of work and naming this in our planning.
- Raising funds and awareness through Project compassion, Marist Solidarity, St Vincent de Paul and Catholic Mission.
- Use of universal symbols when gathering for prayer.

Ecclesial Context

Although St Thomas More has a significant number of students who are baptised Catholics, there is an increasing number of students who are not Eucharistically affiliated with the Catholic church community. In order to respond to this challenge, our aim is to support students and their families to develop stronger connections with the Catholic Christian tradition and to engage families in developing a deeper understanding of the traditions, culture and language of Church life.

At St Thomas More we seek to support families in connecting with the Catholic Christian tradition and its spiritual richness by;

- Weekly prayer focus at assembly
- Classroom sacred spaces to support class prayer rituals
- Year level liturgies and Masses
- Student involvement in Parish Masses – altar serving , offertory, readers, choir
- Open classrooms to enable sharing of student learning – Grandparents' day, Opening Liturgy, Graduation, weekly assemblies
- Varied prayer opportunities are shared and available to staff through weekly staff prayer, Marist retreats and Marist prayer
- Weekly staff meetings always commence with a prayer reflection
- Marist Mums prayer each month
- Connection to Parish activities with Year 6 attendance at Parish anointing Masses, combined Parish and School Masses for feast days and school celebrations
- Making information about the school Religious Education program available to parents through;
 - ~ RE section in the newsletter
 - ~ Class term newsletters and term overviews
 - ~ Throughout the enrolment and orientation process for Prep – at interview, during school tours and parent information sessions

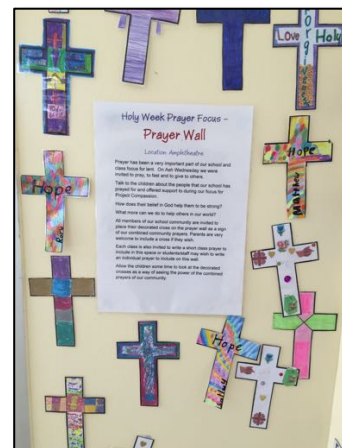


Educational Context

St Thomas More Catholic School values the academic expectation of Religion in alignment with other learning areas. Teachers are expected to follow the Mandatory BCE requirement for planning, teaching, assessment and reporting of Religion, which is collaboratively monitored and supported by the school leadership team. Teachers are encouraged to teach Religion in a way that is inspiring, educational and transformational. As educators in a Catholic school, they are expected to recognise and respond to the needs of learners and embrace pedagogies that support quality learning and teaching to enhance the learning experiences of our students.

The Religious Life of the School is integral in supporting the formation and skills of students within the school and classroom context. This educational context is evident through;

- Development of a rigorous approach to planning, teaching and assessing the Religion Curriculum
- Exploring and implementing innovative and creative pedagogies to improve the teaching and learning of the Religion Curriculum – e.g. focus on building teacher capacity in the area of scripture, assessment
- Linking our School Vision for Learning and our Vision for Religious Education documents
- Continuing to learn more about the story of the Catholic Christian faith by creating links between stories about the Jewish faith, our Parish history and the story of the school community
- Exploring Meditative prayer practices to help create moments and opportunities for prayer at an individual, class and whole school level – for example Holy Week prayer spaces, Marian prayers, assembly prayers, staff prayer
- Responding to contemporary issues in meaningful, prayerful and active ways
- Allowing the Marist Charism to impact on our schoolwide practices



Digital Context

At St Thomas More we seek to provide opportunities for students to engage with digital tools in a creative and purposeful way, with a particular focus on enabling students to develop knowledge and skills to help them become a responsible digital citizen. We recognize that students enter our learning environment with much experience and confidence in using digital technologies and this impacts on learning and teaching experiences used in our classrooms. At St Thomas More, we have identified that we need to be committed to developing innovative and creative ways to meet these learning needs.

Our school community supports students and their families in connecting the school to the wider community in a global context.

This is evidenced by:

- Use of online Bible resources – Bible Gateway, iPad apps, access to YouTube clips to support the teaching of scripture in classrooms
- Use of songs and hymns in more creative ways through site licences for musicians – (Andrew Chinn, John Burland)
- Assessment tasks that allow students to present their learning using digital tools and programs
- Religious Education Learning Bytes
- School Portal – Life Blogs for reflection and sharing
- STM Resources page on Pinterest
- Reflection on data available through the BI tool
- KWEB online resources – Ways to Pray Calendar

