

St Thomas More Catholic School Sunshine Beach

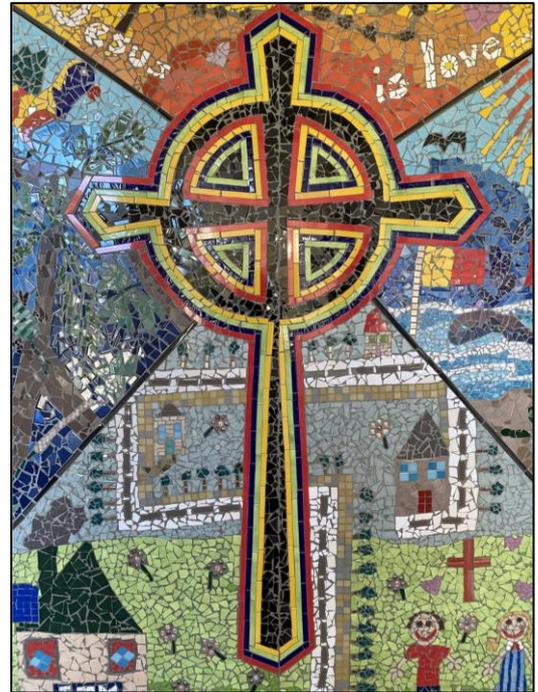


Religious Education Program 2022

Students and Community

School Story

St Thomas More is a Catholic, co-educational, four-stream school offering placements from Prep to Year 6. Our parish school began in 1990, under the leadership and spiritual direction of the Marist Brothers. St Thomas More School came about following a strong desire from parishioners to have a Catholic school within the Noosa District Parish. After starting with 92 students in 1990, the school grew rapidly, with sustained growth in the school population in the early years, building it to a three-stream campus. St Thomas More currently has an enrolment of 618 students, which includes 462 families. There are 87 staff members, with many staff having a long connection with the school and parish community.



The Parish remains in partnership with the school, with our Parish Priest being supportive of the prayer and liturgical life of our community. The St Thomas More Centre acts as a school chapel and hall during the week, and then as an additional Parish Church on Sundays. St Teresa's Catholic College in Noosaville, provides a place for many of our students to continue their Catholic education. The common Marist Charism provides links between our two schools. Although the Marist Brothers no longer have a day-to-day presence within the school, the Marist Charism continues to guide and underpin the spiritual life of our community. Fr Bill Selden represents the local Marist community by joining with our community for significant school celebrations. The presence of the Marist Charism provides a rich platform on which to express our Catholic faith and identity. This is reflected in the five characteristics of a Marist school being - Presence, Simplicity, Family Spirit, Love of Work therefore developing a love of Jesus through our strong connection to Mary. Our membership of Marist Schools Australia provides support and resourcing to help animate the Marist charism as part of our Catholic story.

With our current enrolment, St Thomas More offers a broad and rigorous educational program that promotes equity and excellence for all its students. We promote a schooling experience that encourages all members of our community to flourish and achieve their potential in a community where we are called to live out the Gospel values of Jesus guided by the Charism of St Marcellin Champagnat and inspired by the values of St Thomas More.



Our Students and Community

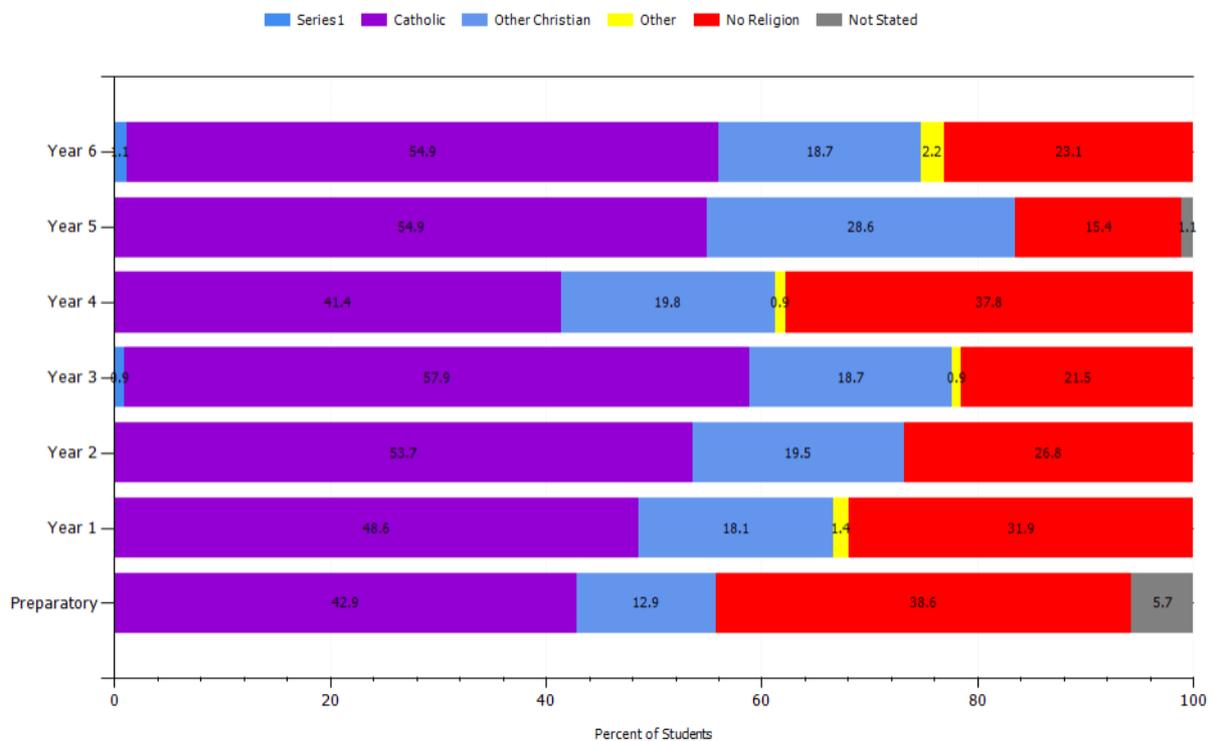
Teaching and learning in Religious Education at St Thomas More is responsive to the needs and religious backgrounds of students and the contemporary contexts for learning in the Religion classroom.

Faith and Family Demographics

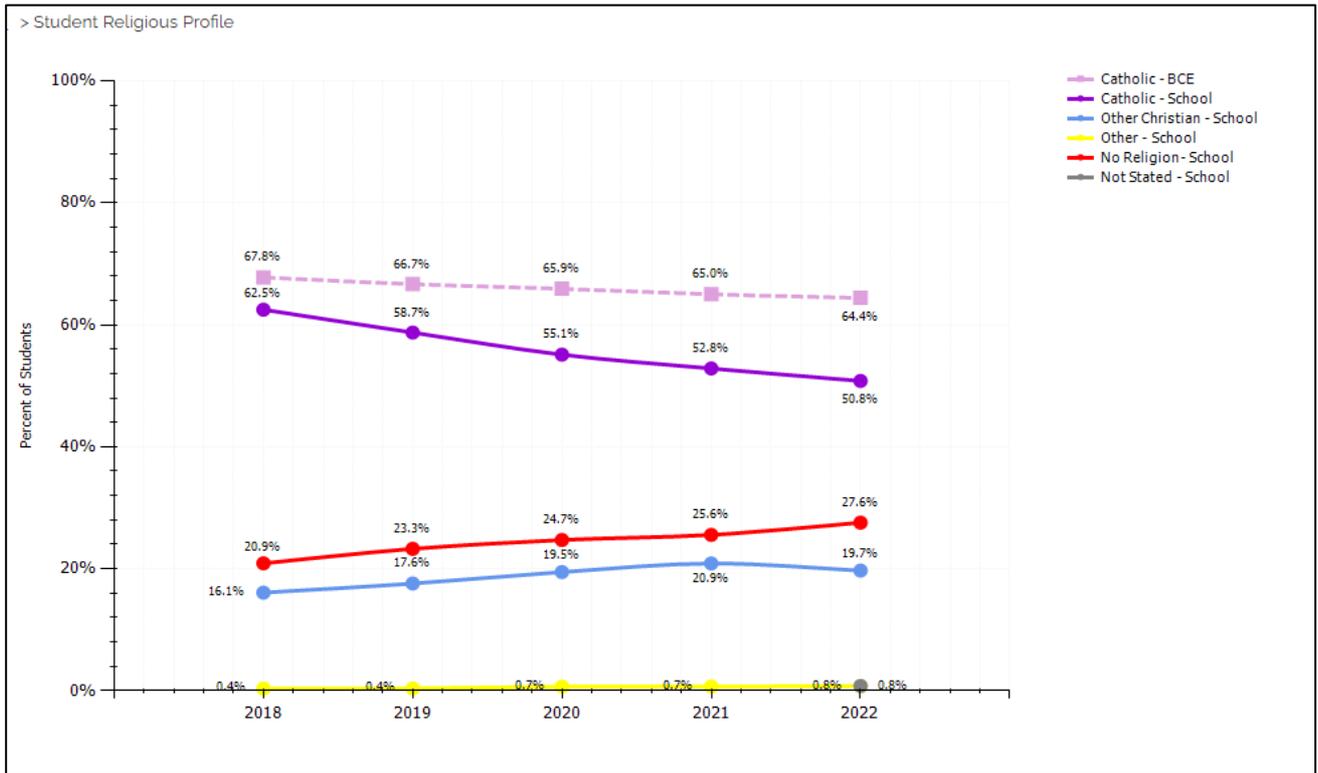
The St Thomas More community has a range of socio-economic backgrounds and a greater diversity of cultural backgrounds represented within the school. As a result of the pandemic, there has been a significant increase in the movement of families from other parts of Australia and from overseas. This has resulted in increased diversity in the religious and cultural backgrounds represented within our school. As a coastal community, movement of families throughout the year occurs due to changes in work opportunities. Our school currently draws from a wide geographical catchment area, with students coming from Noosaville, Tewantin, Peregian, Coolum and from as far away as the hinterland towns of Cooroy, Coran and Pomona.

Of a population of 618 students, 51% are *Catholic*, with 8% identifying as other *Christian* denominations, 13% of the student population being made up either *Other*, *No Religion* and 28% with no religion stated. There has been a significant change in the religious groupings evident within the school over the recent past. This change has translated into less families engaging in children receiving the sacraments and participating in parish life.

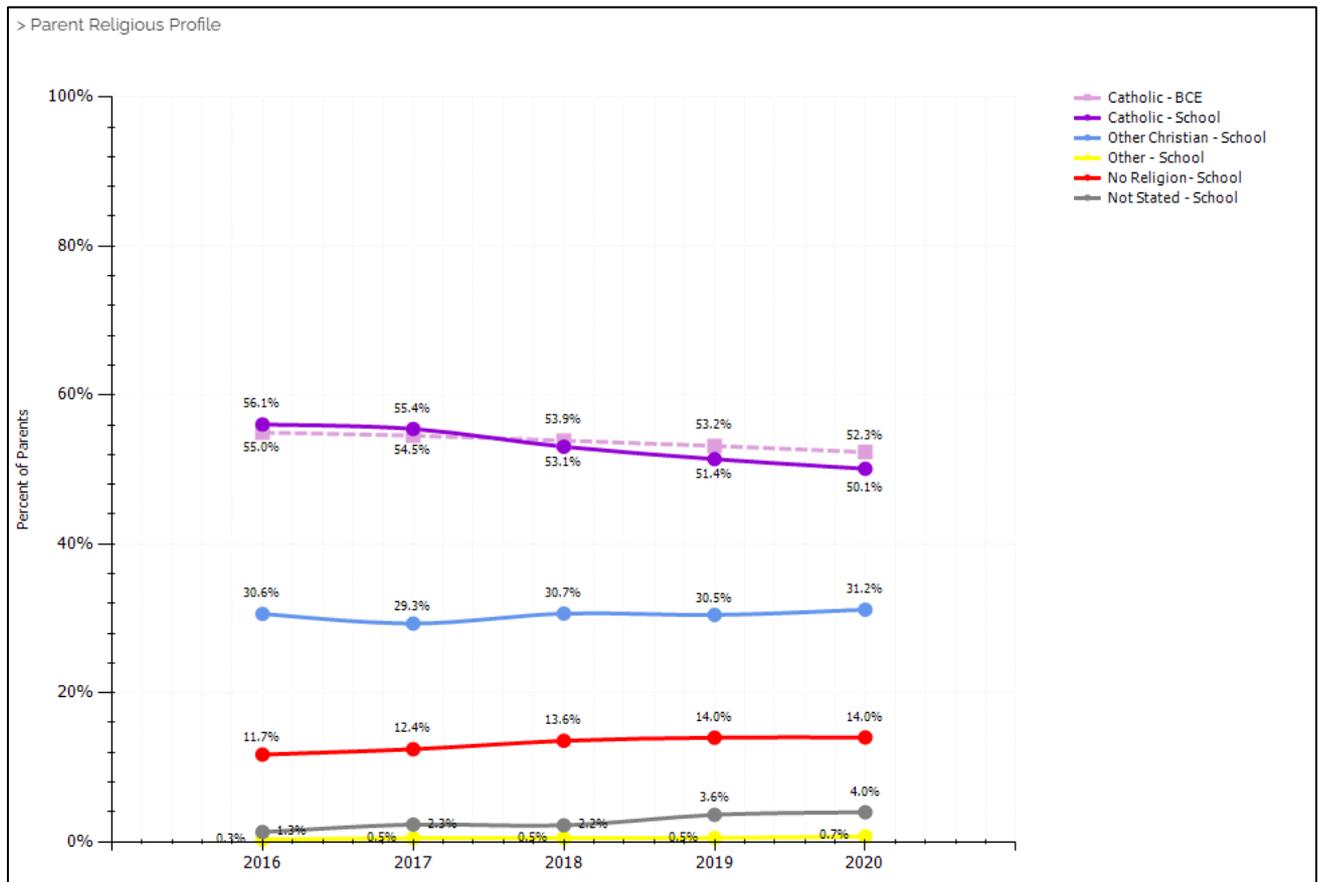
Student Religious Profile - By Year Level - 2022



Student Religious Profile

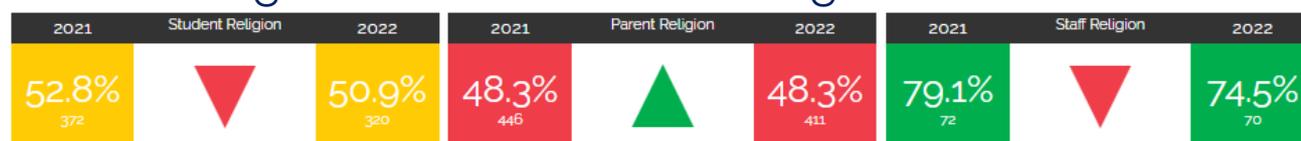


Parent Religious Profile



St Thomas More has seen a decrease in its Catholic enrolment over the last five years, while there is evidence of an increase in those identifying as having no stated religion. The religious profile of parents shows signs of a decline in Catholic parents, with evidence of an increase in other religious denominations and a trend toward an increase in no named religion. The St Thomas More community has families who are involved in the local parish through one of the four Churches at Tewantin, Sunshine Beach, Cooroy and Pomona, however Parish data would indicate that many do not take an active part in the worshipping community or have strong connections to Catholic traditions at a Parish level. There is, however, strong support of our Catholic Christian Ethos evident at St Thomas More and the Religious Life of our school is valued by many parents with particular support given to student engagement in social justice activities.

Student Religion Profile and Parent Religion Profile



Interestingly there has been a significant decline in the level of engagement with Sacramental Programs within the parish and as a result, engagement with the sacramental life of the parish. There has been a marked change in the decision-making of families regarding initiation into the Catholic Church, with many parents and children choosing not to engage in Sacramental programs during their years at our school, even when they have identified as Baptised Catholics. Parents also indicate at the time of enrolment that many are now leaving the decision to be Baptised as one their child can make in the future if this is something they desire for themselves in the future.

Some unique features of our school include:

- Our school site has a beautifully designed and developed school environment, with the St Thomas More Mass Centre and Chapel on site. The school is well-resourced in the areas of Curriculum resources, physical site resources and experienced staff.
- Religious iconography reflecting the Marist story is evident within the school grounds.
- Plans are in place for an outdoor prayer space and labyrinth adjoining the St Thomas More Centre Chapel space and junior playground space to be completed later in the year.
- Our school has connections with the Noosa District Catholic Parish and have developed a working relationship with our Parish Priest – Fr Jason Middleton.
- As a result of deep engagement with curriculum initiatives over time, learning and teaching in Religious Education is be viewed with the same rigor as other curriculum areas, with Religious Education leading processes in using inclusive assessment tasks, innovate practices and strategies that are age appropriate for teaching scripture.
- There have been some changes in school leadership over recent years.
- Demand for enrolment at St Thomas More has fluctuated over recent years and there has been a challenge in maintaining our four-stream school population. There is reasonable movement of families throughout the year, with families moving in and out of the community. There is stability on staff, although there has been some movement evident in over the last few years with the retirement of several long-standing staff.

As a school community, we acknowledge the importance of providing opportunities and experiences that will allow families to connect with the Catholic Christian story and have placed great emphasis on:

- Telling our school story each year to staff and students, providing a space for members of our community to connect to the stories of faith of our school patrons.
- Focusing on a Yearly theme connected to our Catholic Identity to guide the spiritual life of our school community. This is a constant part of our communication with staff, students, parents/guardians and the wider community.
- Communication of our Catholic Identity with parents and the wider community through our newsletter and intentional messages on our social media platforms.
- Ensuring parents are encouraged and welcomed to be part of class and school celebrations.
- Highlighting the importance of many religious artworks, symbols and icons throughout the school by sharing the story of each through celebrations and communication to parents
- Continuation of our two-week unit focusing on our school Charism at the start of each year. Common messages within this unit are shared within the school community to establish and celebrate school symbols and story to begin the school year. Over time this has helped to build a common language to share in prayer, school assemblies and as part of our PB4L program.
- Involving students in the planning and leading of significant celebrations – namely, weekly assembly, class, year level and whole school prayer and liturgies and social justice initiatives.
- Working in partnership with the Parish community for Sacramental preparation, support of Parish initiatives (Alpha program) and for school celebrations.
- Whole school formation planning for staff and students, evident within the Formation plan. This includes touchstones for each year level once per term to keep the importance of age-appropriate spiritual formation as our focus within the community.
- Making our school a place of welcome, hospitality and inclusion in our curriculum, religious life, decision making and the ways we work and learn as a community.



Teaching and Learning in Religious Education

Teaching and learning in Religious Education has always been valued highly at St Thomas More, with our staff committed to professional learning and providing quality teaching and learning experiences in religious education. Implementing the Religious Education Curriculum, based on a Reconceptualist approach, has provided some challenges for teachers. There is a sense of interest and energy in this space, however as part of a period characterized by many overall curriculum changes in our school, it has been important to ensure:

- Learning and teaching is responsive to the needs and religious backgrounds of students and the contemporary contexts for learning in the Religion classroom.
- Adequate time is allocated to planning in Religious Education as part of our curriculum planning days twice per term.
- One staff meeting per term is allocated to Staff PD related to the RE Curriculum.
- A consistent approach to planning/documentation is used throughout the school. The updated planning template includes embedded links which provide clear pathways to the RE curriculum documents and resources. This helps to keep clear line of sight and consistency when engaging in the planning process.
- The weekly staff information communication RE Section provides a reflection, RE curriculum support ideas, prayer and links to professional and personal spiritual learning activities.
- The educational focus of the teaching of religion is aligned with other curriculum areas
- Class timetables are reflective of mandated time for the teaching of Religion
- Assessment in Religious Education has the same rigor as other learning areas
- The diverse learning needs students bring to the religion classroom are catered for in inclusive way.

Spiritual Formation opportunities

- Spiritual formation opportunities are reflective of staff needs and are guided by whole school Catholic Identity priorities and identified areas of need.
- Annual Development Goal setting at the beginning of the year provides a place for supportive conversations and resourcing to enable the achievement of individual spiritual formation goals. This process is provided for all staff members within the school and is followed up with a mid-year check-in to support with this process.
- One PD per term is allocated to Staff formation opportunities with topics being responsive to staff identified interests and needs.
- A Marist led Spiritual Formation Twilight based on the Marist theme each year is available for staff to engage in.
- 'In the Marist Way' is part of induction of staff into the school
- Optional PD opportunities exist for staff to engage in Spiritual formation opportunities at a school level. This includes our annual Spirituality Retreat, Champagnat week activities, Scripture based reading group and Lenten group.
- The three roles of the teacher are an important part of our staff conversations allowing the importance of witness, moderator and specialist to be language that the staff use and respond to as part of their own formation as a teacher in a Catholic school



St Thomas More School Motto, Vision and Mission

Over the past two years the school has engaged in a process of review for our school vision and mission statement. This process has included consultation with staff, students and parents, allowing all to have a voice in this process.

Motto - In truth and love

Vision

We are a faith filled learning community, called to witness the good news of Jesus Christ as we strive to create a better world.

Mission

Inspired by our Catholic story, we are an inclusive and welcoming learning community, educating and empowering young people in a spirit of truth and love as confident, active, and informed lifelong learners who celebrate and live their faith.

Values

The example of St Thomas More and St Marcellin Champagnat enable the vision, mission, and values of our school community:

As people of **Compassion**, we ensure dignity and justice in all relationships and nurture family spirit.

As people of **Wisdom**, we celebrate a love of work, allowing the spirit to inspire our minds so that we flourish with passion and creativity.

As people of **Integrity**, we are present to each other and authentic in our words and actions.

As people of **Hope**, we are inspired by the example of Mary, to celebrate our Catholic story and live our faith through action.

St Thomas More School is enlivened by the Vision of Brisbane Catholic Education which seeks to:



Marist Characteristics

The Marist Characteristics underpin the ways we work and learn in a school in the Marist tradition. In our school we interpret them in this way.

Presence

When we are present to each other we show that we care for one another and about each other's lives and experiences on a personal level. As we get to know each other we can seek to **establish relationships that are founded on love and care**. By being **attentive** and **welcoming** to each other we can promote **openness** and **trust** in our conversations and decisions.

Simplicity

Simplicity reminds us that our connections with others within our school community should be genuine and straightforward, allowing each of us to feel comfortable to say what we believe and to show that we believe what we say. Simplicity is linked closely to the 'Three Violets' of the Marist tradition - showing **honesty** before ourselves and our God, **humility** - patiently allowing the action of God to work through us and **modesty** - seeking to do good quietly.

Love of Work

Love of Work is inspired by St Marcellin Champagnat, a man of faith and vision. Helping students discover the **dignity of work** allows them to understand that work is a powerful means to **self-fulfilment** and can add greatly to our sense of **well-being**. By developing a love of work, everyone has an important role to play as a member of the wider community, to **co-operate** and recognise that the work they do helps to **serve** and **nurture** others in the school.

Family Spirit

As members of our school community we are called to develop values such as **warmth of welcome, acceptance, belonging, honesty, mutual respect and tolerance**. As we share successes and failures within our school family it is important that we continue to **believe in the innate goodness of each person** and always be ready to **trust, forgive** each other and prioritise **reconciliation**.

In the Way of Mary

As Marists, Mary is the perfect model for us as educators. Mary's life was a journey of **faith**. She knew the joys and trials of life and yet she was always **open to accept what God was asking her to do**. In her family, Mary and Joseph showed Jesus the **family love** and **unity** he needed to grow as a person. Mary showed a great **awareness of the needs of others** and a desire to always be a symbol of **wisdom, grace** and **strength** to others.



The Three Violets symbol

The Three Violets symbol is important as part of the ways we animate our Marist Charism at STM. It is a symbol used as part of the ways we treat others in our school and is included as part of class prayer experiences.



The Three Violets

The idea to use the three violets as a symbol was something St Marcellin developed himself and it has been part of our Marist tradition from the earliest days.

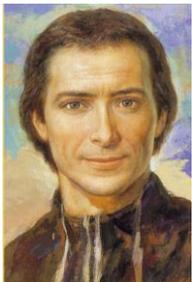
The type of Christian discipleship he wanted Marists to nurture would be underpinned by three basic spiritual attitudes: those of **humility, simplicity, and modesty.**

These are the heart of what it means to be a Marist.

For a **symbol** to represent all of this, Marcellin turned to the little flowers that grow wild in that part of France. These flowers are not ones that shout out through their colour, their size or their scent: they are small – tiny purple flowers scattered in green fields. But when discovered, they can be seen to have their own beauty, their own integrity, and their own quiet statement of who they are. And the fields are different, as a result.

Statement of Religious Character

In the footsteps of St Marcellin Champagnat and Mary, our Good Mother, and inspired by the writings of St Thomas More we aim to be a community who:



Respond to the teachings of Jesus through the Gospels

Recognise God's presence amongst us, through our distinctive Marist characteristics – Presence, Simplicity, Love of Work, Family Spirit and In the Way of Mary

Show Family and Community Spirit, Action for Justice and love for each other through deeds and actions, developing a strong community of faith, spirit and prayer

We strive to create quality, inclusive, life long learning opportunities for all

To embrace this very distinctive style 'we must love them (children) and love them all equally'. **(St. Marcellin)**





Our Vision for Religious Education

St Thomas More Catholic School shares and promotes the Vision for Religious Education articulated by Brisbane Catholic Education and the wider church. The vision includes the two dimensions of formation – namely, of students’ religious literacy and their religious faith.

‘The schools and colleges of the Archdiocese of Brisbane aspire to educate and form students who are challenged to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ and who are literate in the Catholic and broader Christian tradition so that they might participate critically and authentically in faith contexts and wider society.’

(Religious Education, Archdiocese of Brisbane Curriculum, P-12)

The *Vision for Religious Education* also appropriately aligns with the goal for learning and teaching as articulated in the Brisbane Catholic Education Learning and Teaching Framework.

As a Catholic Christian community, we educate all to live the gospel of Jesus Christ as successful, creative and confident, active and informed learners empowered to shape and enrich our world.

The *Vision for Religious Education* at St Thomas More challenges students to be a religious voice in the world. This vision invites us to engage in dialogue so that young people can be empowered to have a voice and to respond, so they can engage critically and authentically live their faith story. This vision is also lived through vibrant and engaging Religious Education that allows students to become active contributors to culture and to the world.

The Vision for Religious Education at STM aligns closely with our school vision which speaks of our school as ‘A faith filled learning community, called to witness the good news of Jesus Christ, as we strive to create a better world’. Religious Education at St Thomas More seeks to develop the religious literacy of students in light of the Catholic Christian tradition, so that they may participate critically and authentically in contemporary culture.

The teachings of Jesus Christ are at the heart of everything we do at St Thomas More. As a Catholic school, in the Marist tradition, we are inspired by the words of St Marcellin Champagnat to ‘love them all and love them all equally’ our vision is to develop students who, as lifelong learners, engage with a curriculum enriched by Gospel values that empowers them to make a positive contribution to the community by living out the values of Jesus

At St Thomas More we strive to educate our students to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ as creative, confident, successful and informed learners who feel empowered to share and enrich our world. We do this as we are a Catholic faith community that is challenged to authentically live and give witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the guidance of Mary, inspired by the Charism of St Marcellin Champagnat and guided by the wisdom of St Thomas More. The stories of our House Colour Saints – St Marcellin Champagnat, along with St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, St Francis Xavier and Nano Nagle also provide examples of how we are called to live.

We recognise that our Marist characteristics of Presence, Simplicity, Love of Work and Family Spirit, all done in the Way of Mary guide all that we do and underpin the vision and mission for our school community. These characteristics are at the heart of the ways we work and learn as a community and enable us to live our school mission and vision through our words and in our actions.

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 have 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 operates in a complex and ever-changing environment with our contemporary students being immersed in a global world. From an early age, our students are exposed to a range of values represented through diverse media. The impact of this is ongoing and ever-changing.

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. They come to our school as a place where they want their children to be part of a faith filled story that integrates learning and life.



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 using a spoken or sung Acknowledgement of Country.
- The creation of an Indigenous artwork mural with a local Gubbi Gubbi artist.
- Beginning the process of Developing a Reconciliation Education Plan
- 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 – language and images that remind us as a community, that we are called to prayer.
- Pastoral care in action through classroom pastoral parents, weekly breakfast club and a meal program for families to access in times of need.
- Reflecting on the 10 characteristics of Prayer as a guide for the prayer life of our school, evident in our weekly prayer focus and through the prayer sways.

Ecclesial Context

At St Thomas More, an increasing number of students and their families are less engaged with the formal life of the Catholic Church. There has been a significant change in the engagement of families within the sacramental life of the church beyond school-based experiences. Consequently, for many students, the culture and language of our religious story is very reliant on our work at a school level.

To respond to this challenge, we seek to support students and their families in developing 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 assembly with a prayer focus led by classes, with all students having the opportunity to be included.
- Classroom sacred spaces to support class prayer rituals
- Class prayer boxes that contain a variety of class prayer resources
- As part of the Leuven Prayer Project – focusing on one of the 10 characteristics of prayer each week and exploring what this can look, sound and feel like at our school.
- Prayer kits and resources for significant events in our school calendar – Lent, Easter season, Champagnat week, Season of Creation, Advent
- Development of Scripture storytelling kits to support storytelling in classrooms.
- Year level liturgies for classes across the year
- Whole school Masses for school feast days and year level masses for Years 4-6
- Celebrations 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, staff briefing prayer, meditative prayer, Marist retreats and Marist prayer. Weekly staff meetings always commence with a prayer reflection.
- Making information about the school Religious Education program available to parents through: RE section in the newsletter, Class term newsletters/sways and term overviews, Photographs in weekly prayer sways.
- Throughout the enrolment and orientation process for Prep – (at interview, during school tours and information sessions) information is shared about our Catholic story, the Religious Education curriculum and the religious life of our school.



Educational Context

St Thomas More Catholic School values the academic rigor and expectation of Religious Education 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 with documentation recorded on the school portal with other curriculum planning documentation.
- Priority for Professional development focusing on the RE Curriculum for all teaching staff included with one staff meeting per term allocated for this.
- Exploring and implementing innovative and creative pedagogies to improve the teaching and learning of the Religion Curriculum –namely, focus on building teacher capacity in scripture, assessment capable learners in RE, use of strategies that are age-appropriate for the teaching of scripture throughout the school.
- Linking our Vision for Religious Education documents with high quality teaching and learning.
- 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 stories of our school saints.
- 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, Whole school Meditative prayer each week, whole school rosary during the month of October.
- Teaching of scripture in ways that build engagement and interest.
- Use of strategies that are age appropriate for teaching scripture
- Scripture reading group project to build staff capacity and interest in understanding scripture texts.
- Using the teacher background information from the Leuven Prayer project to inform and support teachers.
- Engaging with Sydney Jewish Museum – online courses
- Modelling meditative prayer strategies for staff at staff meetings
- Modelling meditative prayer within classrooms
- Responding to contemporary issues in meaningful, prayerful and active ways
- Allowing the Marist Charism to impact on our school wide 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.

Religious Education seeks to engage students in the critical, creative and responsible use of digital tools which is an important component of digital citizenship. This enables them to express their learning in Religious Education in rich and relevant ways and through social justice initiatives, connect with individuals and communities in a global context.

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 You tube clips to support the teaching of scripture in classrooms
- Use of online digital resources for staff theological development – The weekly staff information sway includes link to online learning opportunities.
- Use of Teams and One Note as an organizational tool for the delivery of the RE curriculum resources and curriculum and Sway and PowerPoint as tools with which to share and celebrate learning.
- Use of songs and hymns in more creative ways through purchase of site licenses for musicians – (Andrew Chinn, John Burland, Michael Mangan)
- RE Planning is organized and stored on the school portal with clear organization and ability for shared learning.
- Online spiritual formation opportunities for staff – Scripture Twilights, Scripture Reading group, online Marist formation resources and opportunities
- Assessment tasks that allow students to present their learning in a variety of ways using digital tools and programs.
- Use of sway as a tool to organize and provide learning and prayer opportunities
- OneNote and teams as a way of organizing curriculum and prayer opportunities
- Regular communication with parents using digital platforms – Sway, Facebook, Instagram
- Use of the BI tool to gather data relevant to the teaching of RE
- Accessing and sharing links to SPIRE online resources to support teachers – Ways to Pray Calendar, Catholic Identity Site, Online Curriculum resources.

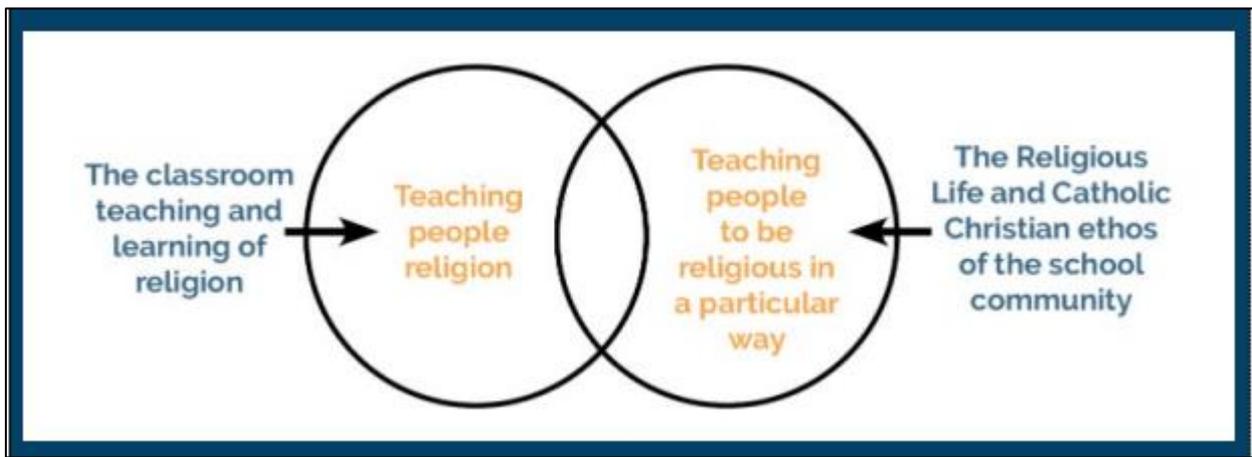


Curriculum Structure and Organisation

Model for Religious Education

At St Thomas More Primary School we give witness to the two dimensions of Religious Education - *teaching people religion* and *teaching people to be religious in a particular way*.

Our school Religious Education program recognises and supports the distinct and complementary nature of both dimensions of Religious Education, as conceptualised in the following Model for Religious Education. (*Religious Education Curriculum, 2013, P. 11*)



At St Thomas More, *teaching people religion* and *teaching people to be religious in a particular way* draws upon the Catholic Christian tradition in ways that are mindful of our local context, our school mission and vision and the Marist Charism.

Students develop a sense of the Sacred and the opportunity to learn how to be *religious in a particular way* by engagement with our Catholic Christian Story, through the lens of our Marist Charism and in how we ritualise and celebrate everyday events in rich and meaningful ways. As a community responding to the call to live its mission, we are challenged by the words of St Thomas More to live 'in truth and love'. This mission calls us to be a religious voice in the world and to live our lives based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

'Love of Work', one of our Marist Characteristics, challenges all learners to engage in opportunities for learning which enable them to reach their full potential. In a community where we strive to deliver quality education to all our students, the importance of *teaching people religion* by developing religious knowledge and skills ensures that the Religious Education classrooms engage and challenge students to articulate and express their faith in an authentic way.

Responding to the call to use the three roles of the teacher in Religious Education, we are reminded that in being a witness, specialist and moderator we have the opportunity to bring the model of religious education to life in the ways that we teach people religion and also in how we teach our students to be religious in a particular way through our word and action.

Beliefs about Learners and Their Learning

Foundational to the shared work of teachers at St Thomas More are the beliefs they have of the learners they serve. The BCE Learning and Teaching Framework (2012) explicitly articulates the beliefs and the responses that flow from these beliefs within schools in the archdiocese.

We follow the vision for Brisbane Catholic Education, which is to Teach, Challenge, Transform. This vision calls us to strive to educate the whole person and through our teaching, promote faith in Jesus Christ, the Gospel and the faith of the Catholic Christian community. We recognise that people search for and find meaning in lived experience and that learning and living are connected in the curriculum, we are inspired by the Holy Spirit to challenge those we educate to live in communion with God, others and the whole of creation in prayerful, sacramental, just, peaceful, inclusive and reconciling communities.

At St Thomas More, we believe that every learner is created in the image and likeness of God and inspired by the Spirit, responds with passion and creativity to life.

- Every learner seeks to find meaning in life and learning and, in the Catholic Christian Tradition, we find meaning in the person and teachings of Jesus to grow as pilgrim people.
- Every learner is a lifelong learner, with a desire to search for truth and do what is right, accountable for choices and responsible for actions.
- Every learner is in some respect, like all others, like some others, like no other and we respond creatively, flexibly and with a futures orientation to ensure dignity and justice for all.
- Every learner can achieve success in life and learning where diversity is valued, and shared wisdom contributes to decision-making that enriches and enlivens our world.
- Every learner brings to the learning experience their own richly diverse life journey to contribute to a community in communion, empowered by the Spirit to be at the service of others.

At a class and individual student level, at St Thomas More, the interests, religious backgrounds and learning needs of students inform the development of work units. Data retrieved from the BI Tool, Census Application and other sources has been used to inform planning decisions for learning.

Teachers use this information to inform them, interpret the curriculum flexibly to meet the individual learning needs of students and to personalise their learning by:

- Adjusting the way in which students are taught and the means through which they demonstrate their learning.
- Using the extended general capabilities learning continua from the Australian Curriculum to adjust the focus of learning or to emphasise specific aspects such as higher order cognitive skills.
- Providing students with opportunities to work with content in more depth or breadth, e.g. use of One note to guide student learning
- Providing students with additional time and support; and drawing from content at different levels along the Prep to Year 10 sequence.
- Use of the requirement for diversity in assessment tasks required in the planning template.
- Consultation with specialist staff- e.g., STIEs, Speech Therapists, Indigenous Support workers to make adjustments and develop appropriate learning and teaching strategies to enable success. (This is evidenced in the examples of units of work included that clearly indicate adjustments for learners in the areas of teaching and learning and assessment of RE.)

Learners and Learning in the Religious Education Classroom

At St Thomas More we believe that each learner brings their own richly diverse life journey and story to the life of our community. Although just over half of our community are members of the Catholic faith, we are very aware of the religious diversity that exists amongst our students about religious practice and engagement with the Catholic tradition. This presents the challenge to foster a critical appreciation of one's own religious tradition, whilst building an empathetic understanding of the religious beliefs and practices of others.

The BCE Learning and Teaching Framework (2012) informs our beliefs about learners and learning at St Thomas More. Our school beliefs about learners and their learning impact on the teaching of Religious Education and are important considerations in the planning and teaching of Religious Education in the classroom setting.

We believe that all students are entitled to rigorous, relevant and engaging Religious Education Programs, drawn from the BCE Religion Curriculum P-12, that addresses their individual learning needs. Careful consideration is given to ways in which to activate the RE Curriculum using strategies that are age-appropriate for learning, particularly in scripture. Curriculum planning is based on the BCE Model of Pedagogy and demonstrates the importance of drawing on contemporary pedagogies to ensure that learning is open to all, is in alignment with the curriculum expectations and provides opportunities for students to be critical, inquiring and informed learners. Strategies that maximize learning are evident in RE Curriculum planning, along with the effective and expected practices that enable learning to be rigorous and engaging. Our planning template provides the opportunity for teachers to include the Whole, Part, Whole model as part of their planning cycle, with clear evidence of the Gradual release of responsibility when teaching RE. Focus on building capacity in the language of scripture has helped students have greater understanding and confidence when learning from scripture stories.



Our school Religious Education Program caters for the diverse needs of our students. Planning ensures that the RE curriculum can be accessed by all learners and that assessment opportunities provided allow students the opportunity to demonstrate their learning in different and varied ways.



To cater for the diverse needs of all learners it is essential that due consideration is given to the Curriculum content, The Cross-Curricula Priorities and General Capabilities evident in the Religious Education Curriculum. When designing learning and teaching opportunities in the classroom consideration also needs to be given to the diverse student needs, levels of development, previous life experiences and characteristics of learners at each age.

Learning and teaching at St Thomas More prepares students for global responsibilities to contribute positively to justice, peace and ecological sustainability. Our strong commitment to exploring ways that Laudato Si can inform and impact on the ways we live and work at St Thomas More has provided a way to invite all students to believe that they can have an impact on ecological sustainability at a local level. This has also provided wonderful leadership opportunities with our Year 4 students, stemming from their work in Religious Education, to lead and empower young people to make a difference in the world.



Student voice is an important part of our processes for teaching Religious Education and a strong priority has been placed on developing learning opportunities that are inclusive, innovative and challenging to learners. Student voice is also important within the work of Social Justice, with student led initiatives. We believe that we can educate students so that they can transform the world in communion, by nurturing the gifts and potential of each person, enacting shared leadership, and exercising a preferential option for the poor and the marginalized. Student led initiatives

in Catholic Missions, Caritas, through Project Compassion, Orange Sky Laundry and St Vincent de Paul provide a point of connection with Catholic organizations who are living the mission of God's love through word and action. Time is invested in knowing the stories of those in need and responding with care and compassion, with fundraising opportunities that are student led and engaging for the community.

As educators in a Catholic School, it is imperative that the needs of our learners are understood through a contemporary lens and valued so that pedagogies that support quality teaching and learning in Religious Education will enhance the learning experiences of students within our classrooms.

We are challenged to reflect on the 'Three Roles of the Teacher' to be witness to our students in who we are and how we live the Christian Story; to be specialists in our knowledge of the curriculum so that we can share the richness of this story in authentic ways, and to be moderators, who can provide a space for our students to engage in dialogue, connect their story and experience so that they can work toward interpreting the Catholic story.

As a Marist School the Charism of St Marcellin Champagnat plays an important role in telling the Catholic Christian story. Through the Marist Charism we are challenged to look to Mary as a model of faith and this is reflected in our school practices, celebrations and symbols. This focus provides a way in which the Marian face of the Church can be considered in our school practices and ways of working.



Learning and Teaching in the Religion Classroom

All students are entitled to rigorous, relevant and engaging learning programs in Religious Education that address their individual learning needs. Within the organisation of the Religious Education Curriculum there is the flexibility to cater for the diverse learning needs of all students within the school environment. Learning and teaching in Religious Education at St Thomas More is designed using the following considerations.

Prep – Year 2

Students in the early years of schooling have a natural curiosity about their world and have a strong desire to make sense of it. New learning in Religious Education can be constructed and reviewed by providing opportunities for interactions with others, experimentation, explicit teaching and practice and play within the learning environment.

- Use of simple language with accurate religious terminology
- Use of the senses to explore and demonstrate learning
- Learning experiences and opportunities that are open, flexible and engaging
- Opportunities for exploration, creativity and wondering
- Use of play to explore and develop religious knowledge and understanding
- Exploring Scripture storytelling in creative ways
- Integration of the arts and music in Religious Education
- Beginning with ‘what they already know’
- Use of non-presumptive language
- Development of a sense of reverence, quiet, stillness and prayer
- Scripture storytelling and play
- Meditative prayer experiences

The Religious Education Curriculum enables students in Prep – Year 2 to learn about Jesus’ life as a Jew, his family and friends, his teachings and actions. During the early years of school, students learn about God’s loving relationship with people and of all creation. They also learn about the ways in which communities of believers nurture their loving relationship with God, others and all of creation.

Year 3 -6

Students in Years 3-6 begin the process of understanding and appreciating different points of view and look for and value learning they see as relevant, consistent with their goals and purposeful. Students also draw on their growing experience of family, school and the wider community in their pursuit of learning more about their world.

- Use of social media and digital tools for self-expression
- Opportunities for reflection and prayer
- Use of scripture storytelling to engage deeply in the stories contained within their year level Religious Education curriculum.
- Living out faith experiences through social justice and action
- Deepening their knowledge of scripture using the Three Worlds of the Text
- Use of meta-cognitive processes to allow students to explain their thinking
- Connecting to real-world experiences

The Religious Education Curriculum enables students within Years 3-6 to engage in experiences of learning about different communities and the significance of the way that faith has been lived out and celebrated in these communities over time. Students have opportunities to become engaged with sacred texts and begin to understand how the writers shaped these texts for a particular purpose. They also learn about God as Trinity and the significance of Jesus’ law of love.

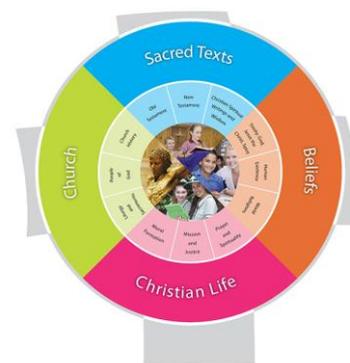
Teaching Scripture

In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to the person in a human way. To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words (Catechism of the Catholic Church n.109)

The study of Scripture in the Religious Education classrooms at St Thomas More a classroom has had as its focus to take the reader into the world of Jewish and Christian believers. To discover the author's intention, we believe the reader must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking and narrating.

At St Thomas More we acknowledge that Catholics do not read and understand scripture from a fundamentalist perspective. This is not the approach taken in the Catholic Church or in the religion classroom. Rather, the Catholic Church's understanding of Scripture accepts the Bible as the inspired Word of God and as the work of human authors who were conditioned by their time, place, culture and worldview.

The Religion Curriculum supports this view of teaching Scripture through the inclusion of core and supplementary texts for each year level. Texts are explored and interpreted through the framework of the Three Worlds of the Text.



Core texts are the prescribed Scriptural texts that are taught in depth at each year level. By exploring the Three Worlds of the Text, students will engage in;

A study of the world of the text (What is actually in the text? What type of writing is this text? Is there a particular structure of the text? Who are the characters in the text and what happens? ...)

A study of the world behind the text (What can we learn about the context of this text - the historical world of the human author(s); the cultural world of the time; the geographic considerations of the text; the community for whom the text was written...)



An exploration of the world in front of the text (What meaning does the text have for our lives today? What might God want to say to us through this text today? What might God want to say to me through this text today? What does the Church say to us about the meaning of this text?)

Complementary texts are Scripture texts that have been identified as relevant for particular concepts and appropriate for students at different year levels, with complementary texts not needing to be taught in the same depth as the core texts.



Teachers at STM have engaged with comprehensive professional learning opportunities to deepen their knowledge of Scripture and how this can be taught within the Religious Education classroom.

During planning there is a strong investment in the development of teacher background required to support teachers in the teaching of the core and complementary scripture texts. Professional development opportunities are ongoing and there is a great energy and excitement around the teaching of scripture at our school.

Several staff have been involved in the Early Years Scripture Research Project, enabling them to plan, trial and respond to new and innovative ways of teaching scripture in the classroom setting. The provision of rich learning opportunities for teachers has enabled the teaching of Scripture to be approached with a greater depth of understanding. A focus on resourcing has also enabled different ways of telling stories, asking questions and sharing teacher background information in age-appropriate ways.



COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

Collaborative planning of Religious Education is of high importance at St Thomas More, and time is allocated to ensure that all staff can be part of Religious Education planning experiences. At the beginning of each year time is taken to plan and revise the year level overview for the teaching of Religious Education for the year. These overviews are included as part of the Year level Curriculum overviews for the year, showing alignment, connection and identifying the importance of RE as a curriculum area within our school.

Year level teams meet as part of the allocated planning times with the Assistant Principal – Religious Education and other relevant key staff (Support Teacher Inclusive Education, Teacher Librarian, Curriculum Support Teacher) twice per term to develop units of work for Religious Education. One member of each team takes leadership of this role to work with the APRE to document and resource the ideas shared at the year level planning meeting.

This planning process assists teachers in developing a greater understanding of the Religious Education Curriculum for their year level and assists teachers in implementing a curriculum that ensures mandatory requirements are met and that there is continuity and comprehensive coverage throughout the school.



Evidence of Collaborative planning is shown by:

- Our school Scope and Sequence document is a ‘living working document’ that is updated each year. This document is reviewed to ensure that alignment is evident in the delivery and resourcing of the RE Curriculum. All Year levels have a Charism Unit to begin the school year. This provides an opportunity to build consistent language and understanding around school story and symbols as we begin the school year. The scope and sequence also include an Advent unit which is undertaken at the end of the school year, providing an opportunity to explore the stories that bring the Advent season to life.
- The teaching of Scripture is something the staff has shown interest and involvement in. Whole staff professional development in Scripture enables all teachers to be involved in rich conversations about the teaching of scripture.
- Modelling of Scripture storytelling by APRE – visiting classrooms to observe teachers using Scripture storytelling and sharing of resource kits to support this in classrooms.
- An important part of our Religious Education planning journey has been the development of a clearer understanding of assessment in religious education. Professional learning opportunities have enabled us to have a clearer understanding of the importance of having inclusive, equitable, varied and aligned assessment tasks for all students.
- Within our staff group there are many individuals who have a strong interest, passion and skills relating to the teaching of Religious Education. Sharing of their insights and ideas, followed by opportunities for planning and feedback has enabled new initiatives to develop, resources to be used differently and rich professional sharing to take place not only within year levels but also across different year levels.
- The use of the language of Strategies that Maximize learning has provided a platform for rich collaborative discussions, focused planning and creative opportunities for the learning and teaching of Religious Education.

COMMUNICATION TO THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Communication to the wider community about the teaching of Religious Education is an important priority at St Thomas More. This information is shared in several forms. Our school website enables parents and the wider community to have access to clear information about the teaching of Religious Education in our school context. Every effort is made to ensure that parents are well informed about the teaching of Religious Education at our school and that there are opportunities to engage in the Religious Education of their child.

Evidence of this communication:

- Religious education is an important focus as part of our school newsletter. The religious education curriculum is mentioned regularly, most significantly using examples of student work or engagement with a particular topic in religious education. Throughout the year, there are opportunities for parents to be informed of the organization of the curriculum and what is being covered at different year levels throughout the school.
- Our weekly school newsletter also communicates information about the religious life of the school, with particular attention to invitations to attend year level and whole school liturgical celebrations and assemblies.
- Prayer is included as an important part of our school newsletter – this is linked to our school focus for the week and helps to build connections between the Religious Education Curriculum and Religious Life of the School.
- Year level parent information nights and term curriculum letters highlight what is being covered as part of the teaching of Religious Education in classrooms. The use of Sway as a tool to organize information for this communication has provided a space where learning, photos and links to resources can be shared in a way that is engaging and easy for all parents to access on any device.
- Information about our school Charism is clear through our communication of our school activities. Parents are aware of our Marist Characteristics and how they impact on ‘what we do’ at St Thomas More. These are clearly evident through icons and words around the school. Explanation of these characteristics forms a regular part of our school communication to the wider community in the newsletter, through our enrolment package materials and on the school website. An example of this would be the information about the weekly virtue and how these impacts on the prayer life of classrooms and our school weekly assembly.
- The use of social media as a tool to inform, celebrate and share our Catholic Story has provided a wonderful tool that engages parents. Our focus on creating posts, short videos and invitations for parents to be involved has provided a way for regular and contemporary connection with families.



A Catholic view of Learning and Teaching

At St Thomas More our Religious Education Program is intentionally developed on the foundation of a Catholic theology and philosophy of teaching and learning. The Catholic view about learning and teaching is reflected in the two dimensions of religious education; the classroom learning and teaching of religious education and the religious life of the school.

At St Thomas More, the four key themes of Four key themes of Anthropology, Epistemology, Cosmology and the Catholic Christian Tradition are foundational to our Religious Education Program.

Catholic View of Christian Anthropology

We recognise each person is created in the image of God and emphasise the role as Jesus as teacher. It is Jesus' Spirit that infuses our whole curriculum with a hope-filled vision of life. Our Religious Education Program is characterised by inclusion, holistic and relational learning, and action in community. Our Marist story challenges us to 'love all students and to love them all equally'. This also reminds us of the inherit value of each student as a member of our school community. Providing opportunities for students to grow in their awareness of individuals in communities beyond our own that may need our compassion, care and support is another opportunity to enable students to recognise that Christ is present in all and we have a responsibility to share God's love through our word and action each day.



Catholic Perspective on Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with the 'act and nature of knowing.' Our perspective on epistemology orients a curriculum towards rationality, holistic knowing, knowing and living wisdom.

"A Catholic perspective on epistemology affirms that knowing is a holistic enterprise that embraces the intellect, emotions, imagination, experience and community and is not just an exercise of the mind or intellect" (Queensland Catholic Education Commission, 2008, p.9).



The Catholic tradition views the acquisition of knowledge as a lifelong and life wide enterprise. At St Thomas More our students are nurtured with the process of becoming life-long learners. Our school motto speaks of the 'education of the whole child' bringing into focus the importance of each child learning in ways that bring wisdom, understanding, challenge and promote a sense of wonder in the sacred. Our Religious Education curriculum provides opportunities for children to ask their own questions and allow this curiosity to build their capacity as learners and their wonder as part of their spiritual formation.

Catholic Understanding of Cosmology

Cosmology relates to how we understand our place in the universe and the choices we make to live within the integrity of creation. Through the elements of stewardship and sacramentality, we at St Thomas More are called to respond to questions like: *'What is our place in the universe?'* *'How do we live within the integrity of creation?'* As sacramental people we experience God's presence in their everyday world. As co-creators with God and, as stewards, we are charged with cultivating and caring for creation.



Laudato Si is providing a wonderful lens through which our Catholic understanding of cosmology can be explored in ways that are relevant and meaningful to the staff, students and the families of our community. Students are familiar with Pope Francis' messages of the ways we need to care for our common home and are responding in ways that challenge and inform our actions as a school community. This is an ongoing opportunity to engage our young people to understand cosmology in a simple and life giving way in the actions we choose in our own lives.

Catholic Christian Story and Tradition

As teachers within the Catholic Christian tradition we strive to live the BCE vision to Teach, Challenge and Transform. This vision is realised through everyday witness and through the learning and teaching that challenges and transforms the culture and the world in which we live.

At St Thomas More we value and recognise the personal narrative of each individual's experience, through an approach that engages the head, heart and hands. Each person's *my story* forms the fabric from which faith development and education in the Catholic Christian tradition develops from.

We recognise the communal experience and narrative of *Our Story*, which in turn is encompassed by the meta-narrative of the incarnate and transcendent expression of God in *The Story*.

Through this dynamic interaction between *My Story*, *Our Story* and *The Story*, individuals and communities at St Thomas More encounter and develop a capacity to engage with a new way of being and seeing, a new language and a living theology. This understanding of spiritual formation is at the heart of the work we do at St Thomas More.

Our commitment to staff spiritual formation is evident through time allocation for varied formation opportunities within the school year, both within the staff professional learning program and the invitation to attend optional, interest based professional learning.

Our school story is something we invite people to become part of when they enter our community. It is a story we refer to constantly in our communication, in the ways we live our vision and mission and in how we communicate with our students. It is a very present part of each day at STM.



A Reconceptualist Approach to the Religion Curriculum at St Thomas More Primary School

In the Reconceptualist approach, the classroom Religion Program becomes a primary arena for dealing with the critical religious issues and concerns of life. There are three key considerations for teachers using this approach: the *Avoidance of Presumptive Language, Teaching 'about' the Tradition and Powerful Pedagogies*.

Avoidance of Presumptive Language

In the teaching of Religious Education at St Thomas More, all efforts are made to avoid the use of presumptive language. As part of our planning conversations teachers acknowledge that assumptions should not be made about students' faith development based upon their religious affiliation. The language that is used is invitational and educational to engage students in the Religion classroom, allowing students who can readily identify themselves as Catholics to be affirmed by this approach and allowing students with the freedom to respond in ways that are meaningful to them. As part of our Leuven prayer project the notion of invitation has become something that has guided the prayer experiences of our school, allowing each student and staff member to participate in their own way and to bring their own story to the experiences of prayer and religious education lessons.

Teaching 'about' the Tradition

When we teach about the tradition it is important that respect and the opportunity to explore one's own religious experience is considered whilst allowing students to develop a critical appreciation of one's own religious tradition along with an empathetic understanding of the religious beliefs and practices of others. In teaching about the Catholic Christian tradition at St Thomas More, teachers are encouraged to provide a classroom environment that moves beyond simply being a place for transferring facts and knowledge, to a place of rich learning, dialogue, and critical thought.

At St Thomas More, teachers give witness to the values they place on their own personal religious beliefs, through the authenticity of the teaching processes they employ and by who they are as people of faith. Within the Reconceptualist Approach, teachers are challenged to build critical distance between themselves and the content they are teaching, to make available space for authentic dialogue, and to allow students the freedom to investigate, to inquire and to use their religious imagination. As a result of our participation in the Leuven Catholic Dialogue project there is greater awareness about the importance of authentic dialogue as part of the process of learning about the tradition and connecting this to the experiences of life.

Powerful Pedagogies

At St Thomas More powerful pedagogies are used to engage students with the richest resources of the Christian tradition. In the teaching of Religious Education the BCE Model of Pedagogy (2012), five practices of Focus, Establish, Activate, Respond and Evaluate are consistently embedded to ensure there is a common language for planning and reflecting on learning and teaching in the Religion classroom. Teachers establish clear learning intentions and success criteria; activating multiple ways of knowing, interacting and opportunities to construct knowledge, teachers

respond with feedback to move learning forward; and evaluate learning with students as activators of their own learning and act as resources for others.

An examination of the sample units and the Template for Planning in RE we use, demonstrates our support for the five practices which provide a common language for planning and reflecting on learning and teaching in the religion classroom: focusing on learners and their learning; establishing clear learning intentions and success criteria; activating multiple ways of knowing, interacting and opportunities to construct knowledge; responding with feedback to move learning forward; and evaluating learning with students as activators of their own learning and resources for others.

Entitlement to Learning – Powerful Pedagogies

The Religious Education Program at St Thomas More identifies and articulates how entitlement to learning within the Religious Education curriculum is reflective of a Reconceptualist Approach and is enabled through flexible structures, effective timetabling, and time allocation.

At St Thomas More Primary School, the Religious Education Program operates from an educational framework rather than a catechetical or shared Christian Praxis framework. The teachers of religious education avoid the use of presumptive language and making assumptions about student’s faith development, based on upon their religious affiliation.

Our Religious Education Program allows students to explore their own religious tradition, whilst exploring and building empathy and understanding of the religious beliefs and practices of others. Students are given opportunities to inquire about and investigate their own faith and develop a deeper understanding of the faith of others.

At St Thomas More our Religious Education Program uses the BCE Model of Pedagogy for the teaching of Religion. Our common language for planning and reflection on teaching and learning within the religious education classroom are based on these pedagogical practices;

Focus – developing and nurturing a focus on learners and their learning

Establish – clear learning intentions and success criteria

Activate – multiple ways of knowing, interacting and providing opportunities to construct knowledge

Respond – with feedback to enable learning to move forward

Evaluate – learning to enable students to be activators of their own learning, and resources for others.



Focusing on learners and their learning

While some students at this school come from families strongly connected to their local parish community and are literate in the Catholic Christian tradition, a growing number of our students enter the religion classroom with low levels of religious affiliation and at best a tentative familiarity with public expressions of Catholic life. Using a Reconceptualist approach, our religion teachers acknowledge the reality of students' lives, identifies learners' levels of thinking and builds on the attributes each student brings to the religion classroom. It incorporates a powerful questioning pedagogy, within the context of a community of thinking, that stimulates and supports genuine, active and authentic student engagement. The teaching of Scripture at STM has placed priority on the use of open-ended wondering questions, providing a space of critical thinking, challenge and an invitation for dialogue in response to scripture texts. Focus on writing and displaying thought provoking fertile questions and including 'questions that may assist students to gain meaning from the text' as part of our planning documentation, provide a ready reference for teachers.

Establishing clear learning intentions and success criteria

At St Thomas More, the starting place for the classroom religion program is the Religion Curriculum P-12. Religion teachers use the curriculum to create and make clear and visible the learning intentions and success criteria for all students. At the beginning of each school year, staff professional learning provides an opportunity to review the expectations of RE planning and documentation.

In these units of work, the rigour of our school's approach to learning and teaching in the religion classroom, drawn from the Knowledge and Deep Understanding and Skills of the P-12 Religion Curriculum document, takes account the capabilities and readiness of students, while at the same time ensuring a classroom that engages and challenges students. The existence of links within the planning template to all elements required for planning in Religious Education enable clear alignment, accurate information, and appropriate resourcing to be accessed easily to ensure that the intention of learning is in alignment with the Scope and Sequence unit overview.

Further, as indicated on the Planning Template and in the Checklist for Planning in the Staff Manual, time is made available to assist teachers to collaboratively reflect on the effectiveness of their planning, the strategies employed and the achievement of students within a learning and teaching cycle so as to inform the teaching and assessing learning of the unit in subsequent years

Time Allocation for the Teaching of Religion

Teachers at St Thomas More school follow the mandated requirement of Brisbane Catholic Education, which is that a minimum of 2.5 hours per week of religion teaching to be provided in primary schools within the Archdiocese of Brisbane. This equates to 92 - 100 hours per year, based on 37 - 40 available teaching weeks per year. Each teacher is responsible for developing a timetable that is reflective of the high priority religion classes have within the life of our school.

This information is communicated to teaching staff in the STM Staff Handbook and is revisited through the review of Weekly timetables from year level teachers. It is noted that this time does not include liturgy, prayer, hymn practice and other religious practices. At St Thomas More, the effective timetabling of religion classes is given high priority within the life of the school and is revisited as a matter of priority in line with the expectations of curriculum planning time allocations across the school.

Design Principles for Religious Education

The Religion Curriculum P-12 has been developed around four design principles: embracing a Catholic Christian Worldview; modelling a Seamless Curriculum; setting a clear Pedagogical Direction; and strengthening Alignment. These principles have been put into practice at St Thomas More through our curriculum planning and resourcing and have been enabled by professional learning opportunities to promote these principles.

Catholic Christian Worldview

In alignment with the content of the Religion Curriculum P-12, Religious Education at St Thomas More unambiguously reflects a Catholic Christian worldview that integrates faith, life and culture. Where possible, content embraces an ecumenical perspective and is responsive to the multi-faith context and reality of contemporary religion classrooms. Dialogue is an important component of the Religious Education program and providing opportunities for deep listening to seek to understand and learn more about the traditions and ideas from others allows students to have a broader Christian worldview when understanding what is being taught as part of the Religious Education program.

Seamless Curriculum

The Religion Curriculum at St Thomas More reflects the philosophy, content, focus, structure, academic rigour and assessment and reporting modes used in all other learning areas. As a school we have placed priority on the use of inclusive practices when assessing learning across all curriculum areas. These practices are seamlessly used within the RE curriculum, providing consistency and clarity with practices throughout the school.

Pedagogical Direction, including Line of sight

The pedagogical direction of the Religion Curriculum P-12 is consistent with the BCE Model of Pedagogy (2012) and draws significantly on John Hattie's research, Visible Learning (2009), and the visible learning and teaching story outlined in Visible Learning for Teachers (2012). The Religion Curriculum P-12 promotes inquiry learning, a learner centred pedagogical approach to learning and teaching, that aligns closely with the directions taken in the Australian Curriculum. Religious Education at St Thomas More is guided by the inquiry process, allows for the gradual release of responsibility in the learning cycle and deep engagement with students to guide their own learning.

Strengthening Alignment

Continuity in the Religion Curriculum is ensured within and between year levels, building on where students' learning in Religion is situated and leading onto where the students are heading in their learning. Conversations with staff highlight the importance of building a religious language that allows children to be confident, capable and enthusiastic to engage in Religious Education learning experiences. Scope and sequence documentation is available for all year levels to identify vertical connections throughout the year levels. The resources for planning guide provided for staff as part of the staff meeting notes instructions regarding referring to the scope and sequence, not only of the current year level, but of those they year before and after. There is also a clear focus on the line of sight in year level planning: Year Level Description, Achievement Standard and Content Descriptions as evidenced in the hyperlinked planning template used for RE.

Scope and Sequence Documents

The Religious Education Scope and Sequence document is a living ‘working’ document that continues to evolve and develop through the process of teaching and learning and whole school discussion and feedback. This document informs how the Achievement Standards and the Core Content Descriptors for each year level are linked to the everyday classroom teaching and learning of Religious Education. The content of the strands and sub-strands of the Religion Curriculum P-12 closely aligns with the components and elements of the Religious Life of the School P-12. This is evidenced in the attached Scope and Sequence documents for each year level which indicate where that alignment occurs in each unit of work.

The Scope and Sequence document clearly outlines the yearly progression through the Religious Education for each year level. It includes fertile questions that are linked to core content, mandated and supplementary texts, explicit prayer, the Religious Life of the School and our school’s Marist Charism focus.

The format designed for our Religious Education Scope and Sequence has been acknowledged by staff to be clear and easy to ready and understand. This framework, developed for Religious education has now been adopted by other curriculum subject areas as a format for Scope and Sequence development and planning.

Line of Sight Documents

The Line-of-Sight documents provide a clear focus for year level planning. These documents also provide evidence of the multiple opportunities’ students are given to demonstrate elements of the achievement standard at each level. The line of sight documents for religious education are included within the scope and sequence document and are also evident in the Year level line of sight documents across each year level which include all curriculum areas with alignment evident within this space. Year level planning folders containing the line of sight documents and the embedded links within the planning documents provide a way to ensure that all elements of the RE curriculum are included within the teaching of RE within the year. Both the Line of Sight and Scope and Sequence documents inform year level and class planning and allow for alignment with the pedagogical practices being used as part of learning and teaching at our school.

St Thomas More School - Religion Short Term Planning Cycle Year 1 - Unit 2		
Teachers: Jacqui Smith/ Maureen Curran, Liza Fitzpatrick, Tracy Flynn		
God's Presence and Action		
Biblical Themes: Care for creation, the symbolism of water, Jewish life and practice, discipleship, prayer		
Bible People: Abraham and Sarah, Noah, Moses, Joseph, David, Jesus, family of Jesus, John the Baptist, Zechariah and Elizabeth		
Bible Texts Types: Sacred Myths, covenant stories, poetry/song narratives, Gospels		
F O C U S	Fertile Question:	Focus: <i>Deep Learning</i>
	How is the story of Jesus remembered in the Church today?	Recognize the significance of prayer in Jesus' life and the lives of believers.
		Surface Learning
		Identify words, actions and symbols used in the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist to communicate God's presence and action.
Who are my learners in the Religious Education classroom?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have a varying range of experiences with faith within the home. • They have had access to a year of Religious Education in the school setting. • They have experience of the religious life of the school. • They typically enjoy symbols, rituals and scripture stories. • They have a connection to God and often look to the adults around them to guide them with this connection. 		
Links to: <i>General Capabilities</i> <i>UDL Strategies</i> <i>Cognitive Verbs</i>		
Cross Curriculum Priorities <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures</i> <i>Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia</i> <i>Sustainability</i>		
Connections to the Achievement Standard <i>Year 1 Achievement Standard</i>		<i>Core and Complementary Scripture Texts</i>
Students identify words, actions and symbols used in the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist to communicate God's presence and action.		The Baptism of Jesus (Introduction to John the Baptist) Mark 1:9-11 Matthew 3:13-17
		Religious Life of the School: Religious Identity and Culture – Understanding and using school symbols for ritual and liturgy –ICE1.3, ICS3.3

St Thomas More Sunshine Beach RE Short Planning Cycle – Year 1

High Quality Teaching and Learning

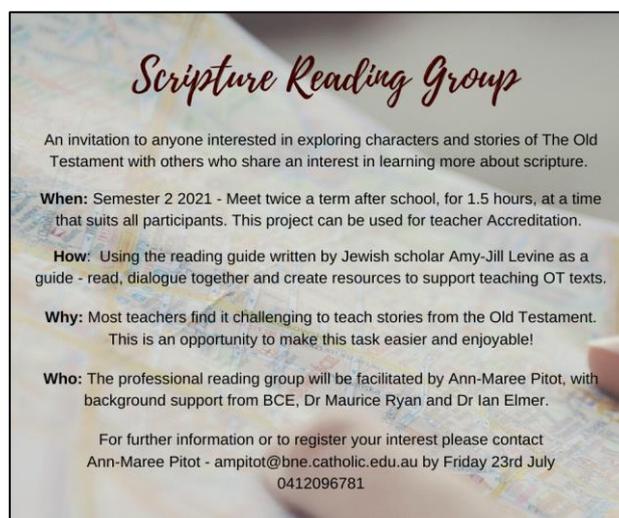
Accreditation Requirements

The delivery of a high-quality Religious Education curriculum across Prep – Year 6 teachers to be accredited to teach within a Catholic school. At St Thomas More, teachers have Accreditation to teach in a Catholic school and teachers of Religion have Accreditation to teach Religion in a Catholic School. Staff members who are new to our system and school this year currently have interim accreditation and are working towards the requirements for full accreditation. Accreditation requirements are clearly communicated to staff members at the beginning of each year to highlight their responsibility to maintain this accreditation. Details of the updated accreditation processes have been shared with staff in a staff meeting One-note, with details shared with all staff members for future reference.

Maintenance of Accreditation

As part of their professional learning, all staff are required to maintain their accreditation status by engaging in the required number of hours of professional learning every year to maintain Accreditation to Teach in a Catholic School and to teach Religion in this context. Timetabled opportunities are provided to ensure that all teachers have the resources to maintain these hours for teacher accreditation are provided within the school professional learning program within the year. This accreditation maintenance is supported by the following processes at STM:

- Commitment to provide adequate professional learning each year to support staff to meet their accreditation requirements to both teach in a Catholic School and to teach Religion in a Catholic School.
- Clear communication to staff at the beginning of the school year about the expectations for accreditation in a Catholic School.
- Provision of many opportunities and support to complete study – REAP, IFE and ongoing support to enable staff to complete these study requirements.
- Regular communication with staff providing links to online learning opportunities included in the RE section of the Staff News each week.
- Spiritual formation goal setting and review of these goals, with options for spiritual formation and PD to meet the requirements to teach religious education.



Scripture Reading Group

An invitation to anyone interested in exploring characters and stories of The Old Testament with others who share an interest in learning more about scripture.

When: Semester 2 2021 - Meet twice a term after school, for 1.5 hours, at a time that suits all participants. This project can be used for teacher Accreditation.

How: Using the reading guide written by Jewish scholar Amy-Jill Levine as a guide - read, dialogue together and create resources to support teaching OT texts.

Why: Most teachers find it challenging to teach stories from the Old Testament. This is an opportunity to make this task easier and enjoyable!

Who: The professional reading group will be facilitated by Ann-Maree Pitot, with background support from BCE, Dr Maurice Ryan and Dr Ian Elmer.

For further information or to register your interest please contact
Ann-Maree Pitot - ampitot@bne.catholic.edu.au by Friday 23rd July
0412096781

Teachers as Professional Learners

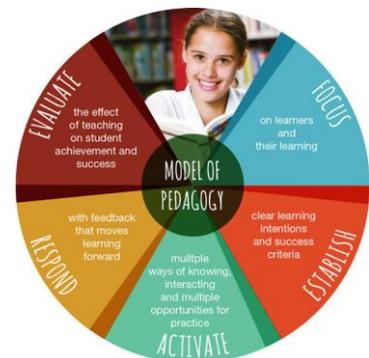
All teaching staff at St Thomas More engage in ongoing professional learning which focuses on enhancing individual and collaborative practices as well as the capacity to improve student learning. At St Thomas More teachers have regular access to relevant and engaging professional development to increase their capacity to teach the Religious Education Curriculum. Many of these opportunities for professional development arise from areas of interest and areas of need identified by the teachers themselves and are conducted at a local level. There are also many opportunities shared with staff that they may wish to undertake online or at another location. Online opportunities have greatly enhanced participation and engagement with learning around topics of interest for the teaching of Religious Education, in particular, the teaching of Scripture in the RE classroom.

Marist based staff professional learning opportunities allow teachers to strengthen their own faith and prayer life and are a unique feature of our school community. A yearly professional development calendar is designed to ensure that teachers are given appropriate support in the area of Religious Education and are kept up to date with new opportunities as they arise.

Each staff member engages in the ongoing process of consistency of teacher judgement, a key strategy for implementing the *Religion Curriculum P-12* and monitoring its effect on students' learning. This takes place as part of the regular cycle of moderation included within our term cycle. Through engagement with this process, within and across the school community, teachers are building greater capacity to understand the curriculum intent, identify evidence of student learning, determine, and develop appropriate pedagogical practices and moderate teacher judgements about student learning. They are also energised to include new ways and opportunities that are shared between those they share this process with as part of this professional judgement activity.

Powerful Whole School Pedagogies

St Thomas More continues to work to provide Excellence in Teaching and Learning based on BCE initiatives. Our curriculum planning is clearly aligned with the Australian Curriculum and our processes show strong evidence of the use of effective and expected practices to plan for and engage in learning and teaching across the curriculum.



The Religious Education Program at St Thomas More School is consistent with our whole school approaches to teaching and learning across the curriculum as articulated as part of our school vision of learning. Our Religious Education Program identifies and articulates powerful whole school pedagogies and is embedded in the BCE Model of Pedagogy to ensure continuity of learning for all students within and beyond the Religion classroom. Such connections enable the learning and teaching process in religious Education to be developed, communicated, supported and reviewed as part of established curriculum processes. The Religious Education Program is closely aligned with the three high yield strategies contained within the Delivering Excellent Learning and Teaching Strategy, enabling this to be included within learning walks and talks and the review and response cycle.

ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

At St Thomas More, assessment is seen as a critical aspect of the teaching and learning cycle. Emphasis has been placed on teacher professional development in the area of assessment to fully support the administration and collection of high-quality assessment pieces to demonstrate student learning and achievement in RE. Teachers plan collaboratively using the Brisbane Catholic Education's Religious Education Curriculum, enabling opportunities for rich conversations, feedback and clarity in judgment on student achievement demonstrated through work samples. An important part of the assessment cycle has been the annotation of work samples to provide additional information to tell the story the student's engagement, progress and achievement in the task.

Principles of Assessment

- Formative assessment in Religious Education is used to gather evidence of students' prior knowledge and experiences. This information guides teachers in their planning and delivery of lessons.
- Summative assessment in Religious Education is used to ascertain to what extent students have achieved the learning intention.
- Summative assessment opportunities should allow for children to demonstrate the extent of their knowledge beyond the stated requirements.
- Assessment is completed at regular intervals, with many teachers using technology as a tool to gather photographic evidence of student work and experiences and voice recordings of student conversations.
- The goal in Religious Education at St Thomas More is to ensure that Assessment is equitable, valid, accessible to all and flexible enough to allow all children to demonstrate their learning.

Tools for Assessment

- A variety of assessment tools are used within and across year levels to gather information and to provide opportunities for all students to access the assessment task. The unique learning needs of all children are of great importance in planning for and responding to these tasks.
- In Religious Education a range of information about student learning is gathered through observation, conversations, play, feedback sessions, small group work and independent activities.
- Assessment tasks are planned in collaboration with all within the year level team and form an integral part of the planning process.
- Teachers moderate work samples to ensure consistency of judgement in the teaching and assessment of Religious Education.
- A wide variety of modes of presentation are used to gather assessment data, allowing students to demonstrate their learning in age-appropriate ways and in alignment with other curriculum areas. This can include drama, art, music, using digital devices, written and illustrated work, oral presentations.

Effective Assessment

At St Thomas More assessing student learning is an integral part of the school classroom. It improves learning and informs teaching. It is the process through which teachers identify, gather and interpret information about student achievement and learning in order to improve, enhance and plan for further learning. Teachers at all year levels, as part of their planning, and teaching, employ the five key strategies for formative assessment, namely:

- Clarifying, sharing and understanding learning intentions and criteria for success
- Engineering effective classroom discussions, activities and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning
- Providing feedback that moves learning forward
- Activating learners as instructional resources for one another (peer feedback)
- Activating learners as the owners of their own learning (self-assessment)

Reporting

Student learning and progress is reported to parents twice per year as part of the SRS semester reports. Student learning in Religious Education is marked on a five-point scale. Although no comment is included in the Religious Education section of the report format, many teachers take the opportunity to include comments that are reflective of the student's engagement with Religious Education and the Religious Life of the School as part of this comment.

Work Samples

Student work samples are collected as a part of the reporting process, and are shared with parents as part of the parent interview process. A variety of work samples gathered throughout each unit provide a means to which there can be consistency in grading and reporting. Samples are collected and shared with teachers from other schools as part of a Consistency of Teacher Judgement process. Our school is developing a collection of assessment task exemplars to guide further planning and assessment in the teaching of Religious Education within year levels and across the school.

Schedule of Formal Reporting Procedures

Term 1 – Parent interview

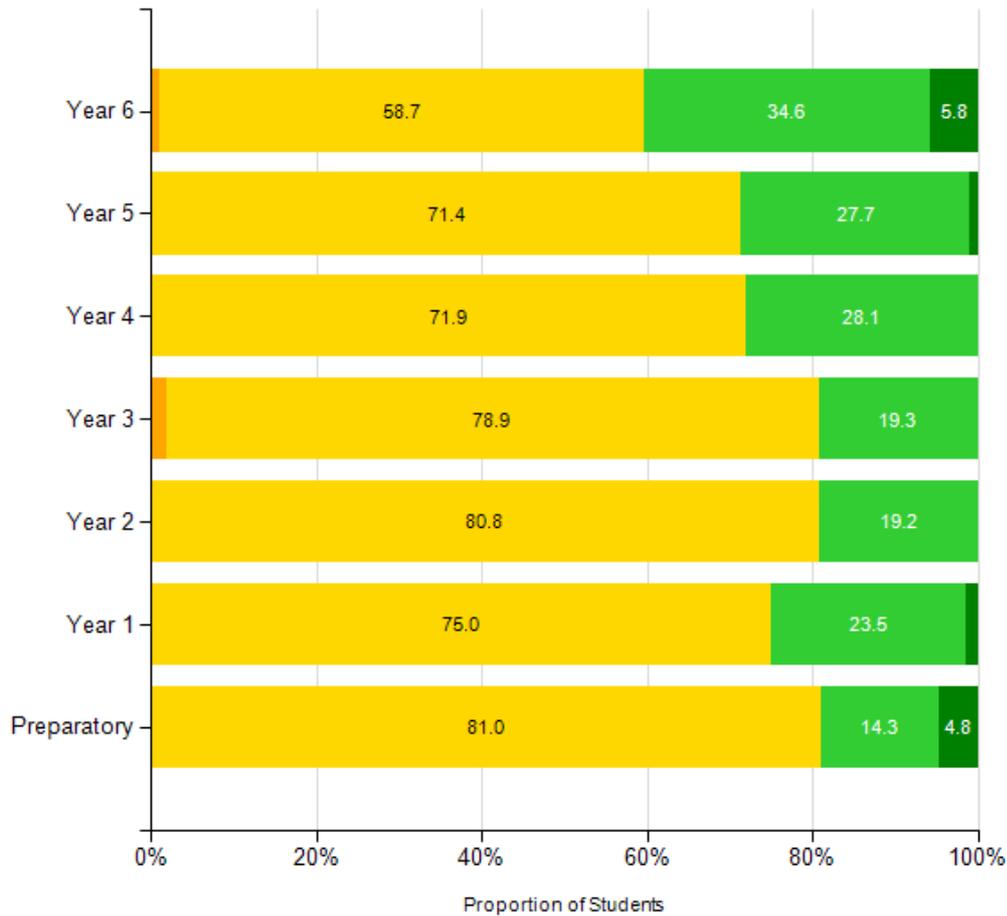
Term 2 – SRS Report Card

Term 4 – SRS Report Card



School Results by Year Level - 2021 Semester 1 - Religious Education

■ N/A
 ■ OLB
 ■ Well Below
 ■ Below
 ■ At
 ■ Above
 ■ Well Above



QUALITY RESOURCES

The Religious Education Program at St Thomas More identifies and articulates quality resources that are accessed to provide meaningful and relevant learning experiences for all students.

St Thomas More places a high value on quality resources to be used to enhance the learning experience of all students. The Religious Education budget is allocated to purchase a variety of rich resources that support quality learning and teaching. A priority has been placed on supporting teachers to gather quality teaching resources to assist them in the teaching of mandated Scripture for their class.

A strong priority for the Religious Education budget has been in the area of professional development in Scripture to help teachers assist students in their understanding of the Three Worlds of the Text in Scripture activities. With a 1:1 and 1:2 ipad program operating within different levels of the school, a strong emphasis has been placed on engaging and enhancing student learning in the digital world through the use of a variety of online resources such as;

- School RE Portal
- Bible Gateway
- BCE Ways to Pray Calendar
- Ipad Apps

Monitoring and evaluation

At St Thomas More, the process of planning and evaluating the effectiveness of assessment processes are part of the process of teacher planning. This review process takes into consideration the importance of assessment tasks showing evidence of the four principles of assessment. It is also important that there is evidence of close alignment between the achievement standard, success criteria and set assessment tasks. Throughout the process of assessment the challenge exists to provide tasks that enable students to demonstrate their depth of knowledge, understandings and development of skills.

Use of Learning Data

Student learning data is an important tool to help identify and articulate student progress at both a year level and class level. This data helps teachers at our school make informed decisions about curriculum planning for Religious Education. It also enables learning, teaching and assessment opportunities to be reflective of student progress and achievement and how this can be monitored in Religious Education.

Student learning data is used to inform year level teaching teams' decisions about curriculum planning, teaching opportunities and assessment processes. Teachers have the opportunities to meet regularly in their non-contact time to consider student data and to develop consistent processes across the year level. The process of monitoring student progress and achievement in Religious Education included professional dialogue with teachers through the annual intra and inter-school moderation process as part of consistency of teacher judgement.

As part of our focus on assessment, professional learning supporting teachers at our school to plan and implement for assessment that enables all children to demonstrate their learning using a variety of different media was used. Inclusive practices and adequate support to complete tasks enabled us to see student progress, as indicated in our data.

Annual Development planning and monitoring

Our annual school goals created as part of the cyclical review process provide another way that our school plan enables school data to be collated. This annual process enables relevant data to be collected and then used to inform and evaluate the way that the two dimensions of Religious Education are present at our school. At St Thomas More these goals provide a barometer to keep us on track and provide a way that future decision making and action can be informed.

Monitoring the Religious Life of the School

The Religious life of the school is an integral part of the life of our community. Scope and sequence documents for each year level provide a guide to the ways in which the religious life is covered as part of the curriculum. Plans exist for celebrations and events that highlight the Religious life of our school, and are clearly planned for and form part of the organization of the year. This information is available to staff as part of the yearly plan and assembly and liturgy plan and is communicated to parents as part of the 'what's on' section in the newsletter each week.

Validation of School Religious Education Programs

Each Catholic and ecumenical school is required to have a documented Religious Education Program designed in accordance with the *Religious Education Curriculum* and approved through an Archdiocesan validation process. Regular monitoring and review of the program and its delivery is aligned with approved cyclical review processes.

