

INTRODUCTION

“The task of handing on the faith to future generations is both the privilege and responsibility of the local Church. Its primary purpose is to bring young people to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Catechesis aims to draw people into discipleship. Discipleship must always involve not only a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, but a knowledge of Scripture, of what has been declared in the Creeds and defined by the Church.”¹

So Cardinal Hume would introduce the preface to the Curriculum Directory and this remains the context for contemporary RE in Catholic schools. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Church has reflected anew on its catechetical and educational mission both universally and nationally. Through her teaching at the Council, encyclicals and locally, the Church has reflected on its task of handing on the faith to the next generation and helping to form religiously literate young people. There is continuity between the four constitutions of the Second Vatican Council, the Catechism that was published in 1992, the Curriculum Directory in 1996, Diocesan Curriculum Maps in 1997 and this Curriculum Strategy. The first two articulate and reflect theologically on what we as a community have received and believe. The last three attempt to order them so that teachers can share them systematically and progressively with pupils. The four areas of study listed below provide the keys to the Catechism, Curriculum Directory and this strategy:

AREA OF STUDY	CONTENT	SOURCE
Revelation	God's Self-Revelation	<i>Dei Verbum</i> Catechism Part One: The Profession of Faith
Church	Communion of life in Christ	<i>Lumen Gentium</i> Catechism Part One: The Profession of Faith
Celebration	Living the Christian Mystery in worship and prayer	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i> Catechism Part Two: Celebration of the Christian Mystery Part Four: Prayer
Life in Christ	The search for holiness and truth	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i> Catechism Part Three: Life in Christ

Pupils have a right to receive authentic Church teaching and to have a curriculum that draws them into a systematic study of the saving mystery of Christ, which the Church proclaims². This strategy tries to secure the link between what the Church teaches and the classroom by supporting teachers'

short, medium and long term planning. The experience of inspections has shown us that pupils' understanding of the Catholic faith and tradition does not always grow commensurately with other subjects. The skills that they learn in other literary subjects can be applied to RE and pupils should be encouraged to investigate the faith with the same enthusiasm and rigour as other subjects. For RE is never simply one subject among many, but the foundation of the entire educational process. "The beliefs and values studied in Catholic RE inspire and draw together every aspect of the life of a Catholic school...Pupils have a right to receive an overall education which will enable them, in the light of the faith of the Church, to engage with the deepest questions of life and find reasons for the hope which is within them."³

In many Church documents, RE is described as the core subject. It must, therefore, be of a quality to engage pupils' intellect, heart and imagination. This strategy aims to provide a curriculum that will address all three and make RE enjoyable to study. In this way RE will remain a beacon of excellence and contribute significantly to the "catechetical task of the whole school." For some in the classroom, RE will be received as catechesis, deepening and enhancing their personal faith; for others it will be evangelisation, the first time that they will have been presented with the main truths of living faith. However, for all pupils it will be educational, covering a systematic study of Catholic faith and life. Although its educational focus will be formed and enhanced by the vitality of faith, the criteria by which the subject is assessed are educational⁴. To this end, in the months and years ahead RE must be resourced sufficiently to meet the breadth of this strategy.

Finally, to thank Fr. Jonathan Veasey, the co-authors of this Strategy and those who will use it in schools across the diocese. Through your combined ministry, the young Church will come to know more about their identity, purpose and fulfilment⁵ and be guided to that eternal moment where "hope and history rhyme"⁶.

Fr. Joseph A. Quigley
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¹ Cardinal Hume, *Religious Education: Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools*, December 1996, page 5

² Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, *Statement on Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, Low Week, 2000, paragraph 7

³ *ibid*, paragraph 4

⁴ *ibid*, paragraph 8

⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 282

⁶ Seamus Heaney