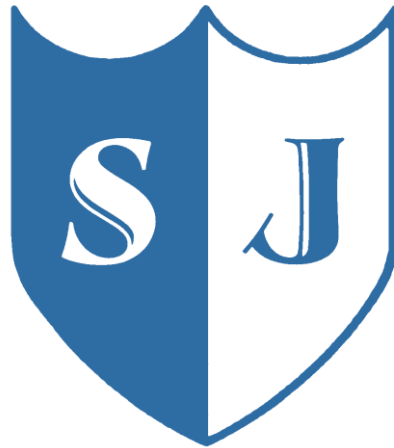


St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School



TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

2026-2027

Approved by: Full Governing Body

Date: September 2026

Next review due by: September 2027

Our Mission

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, we are committed to providing an exceptional Catholic education rooted in Gospel values. We seek to develop Christ-centred pupils with kind hearts, questioning minds, a thirst for knowledge and a hunger for justice. Every child is uniquely created in the image and likeness of God and is entitled to an ambitious, inclusive and high-quality education that enables them to flourish academically, spiritually, morally and socially.

1. Purpose and Principles

This policy establishes a shared understanding of excellent teaching and learning at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School. It provides a coherent framework for staff, leaders and governors and ensures that all pupils experience consistently high-quality teaching regardless of starting point, background or need.

Our approach is informed by:

- The teachings and values of the Catholic Church.
- Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction.
- Research into memory, learning and cognitive science.
- The Evidence Based Education Great Teaching Toolkit.
- The DISCERN model, which provides the school's agreed framework for lesson design, teaching and assessment.

We believe that learning is a change in long-term memory. Pupils learn best when new knowledge is carefully sequenced, linked to prior learning, explicitly taught, revisited over time and applied in meaningful contexts. Teaching must therefore focus on ensuring that pupils know more, remember more and can do more.

2. Our Vision for Teaching and Learning

At St Joseph's, the curriculum is the progression model. The purpose of teaching is not simply to engage pupils in activities but to ensure they acquire, retain and apply the knowledge, vocabulary, concepts and skills identified within the curriculum.

We believe that excellent teaching:

- secures ambitious knowledge for all pupils;
- builds strong foundations in communication, reading, writing and mathematics;
- develops rich vocabulary and disciplinary understanding;
- promotes independence, resilience and confidence;
- enables pupils to think deeply and reason effectively;
- removes barriers through adaptive teaching;
- prepares pupils for future learning and life beyond school.

Teachers maintain high expectations for every pupil, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND, pupils with English as an Additional Language and the most able. Adaptation should increase access to ambitious learning, never reduce the ambition of the curriculum itself.

3. The DISCERN Teaching Model

DISCERN is the agreed model for teaching and learning across all subjects at St Joseph's. Although developed originally within Religious Education, its principles reflect effective teaching, formative assessment, cognitive science and high-quality classroom practice and therefore underpin teaching across the curriculum.

Stage	Purpose
D - Dialogue	Activate prior knowledge, stimulate thinking and establish connections with previous learning.
I - Introduce Knowledge	'I do' - Explicitly teach new knowledge through explanation, modelling and guided instruction.
S - Scaffolded Support	Provide appropriate support, examples and guidance to ensure all pupils can access learning successfully.
C - Collaborative Conversation	'We do' - Enable pupils to rehearse, explain and deepen understanding through structured discussion.
E - Evaluate Understanding	Check understanding, identify misconceptions and adapt teaching before pupils move on.
R - Record Responses	'You do' - Provide opportunities for pupils to demonstrate and apply learning independently.
N - Next Steps	Reflect on learning, provide feedback and identify future learning priorities.

The DISCERN model closely aligns with Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction and reflects what research tells us about how pupils learn most effectively.

4. Evidence-Informed Teaching

Teaching at St Joseph's is informed by established research into effective instruction, memory and learning.

Research demonstrates that attention and working memory are limited. New learning is therefore presented in small, carefully sequenced steps and connected explicitly to what pupils already know. Teachers reduce unnecessary cognitive load, draw attention to key knowledge and provide opportunities for rehearsal, retrieval and application.

Rosenshine's Principles underpin everyday classroom practice. Teachers routinely:

- review prior learning;
- present new material in manageable steps;
- provide clear explanations and modelling;
- ask questions to check understanding;
- guide practice before independent work;
- scaffold challenging learning;
- secure a high level of success for all pupils;
- revisit learning systematically over time.

Across all subjects, teachers promote "hard thinking" by requiring pupils to explain, justify, compare, reason and make connections between ideas. Learning activities are selected because they support learning rather than because they are engaging in themselves.

5. Curriculum, Inclusion and Classroom Practice

Strong foundations in language, reading, writing and mathematics are central to success across the curriculum. Teachers explicitly develop vocabulary, subject-specific language and oral communication in every classroom. Reading is prioritised as the gateway to the curriculum, while writing and mathematics are taught through clear modelling, deliberate practice and high expectations.

Adaptive teaching is an expectation for all staff. Teachers use ongoing assessment to adapt explanations, questioning, scaffolding and support in response to pupils' needs. Support is intended to build independence and confidence rather than create dependency. Additional adults are deployed strategically to maximise participation, secure understanding and remove barriers to learning.

Classrooms should be calm, purposeful and ambitious learning environments where relationships are characterised by respect, kindness and high expectations. Clear routines and consistent behaviour expectations enable pupils to focus fully on learning.

6. Assessment for Learning

Assessment is an integral part of teaching rather than a separate process. Its primary purpose is to improve learning through identifying understanding, diagnosing misconceptions and informing teaching.

Teachers regularly use:

- retrieval practice;
- questioning and class discussion;
- observation;
- independent work;
- hinge questions;
- multiple-choice quizzes;
- self-assessment and reflection where appropriate.

Assessment information should be used to make informed teaching decisions and improve learning rather than generate unnecessary workload or excessive data collection.

Hinge Questions

Hinge questions are a key element of formative assessment at St Joseph's. Positioned at a critical point in learning, they enable teachers to determine whether pupils have developed sufficient understanding to move forward independently. Effective hinge questions focus on key concepts, identify misconceptions through carefully designed distractors and require responses from all pupils simultaneously. The information gained informs immediate teaching decisions and ensures misconceptions are addressed before learning progresses.

Multiple Choice Quizzes

Low-stakes multiple-choice quizzes are used to strengthen retrieval, assess knowledge retention and identify misconceptions. Well-designed questions are closely aligned to curriculum content and provide valuable diagnostic information. Quizzes are used to inform teaching and curriculum development and should never be viewed as high-stakes testing. Patterns of responses across a class are often more valuable than individual scores.

7. Partnership with Parents and Carers

We recognise parents as the primary educators of their children and value the important partnership between home and school.

To strengthen this partnership, parents will be offered regular opportunities to engage directly with learning. Each term, classes will host "Learn with Me" lessons, enabling parents to experience teaching and learning alongside their child and gain a first-hand understanding of classroom practice.

The school will also provide parent and child workshops, curriculum information sessions and learning events throughout the year. These sessions will explain key aspects of our approach, including reading, mathematics, writing, Religious Education, the DISCERN model, retrieval practice and assessment strategies. Parents will be provided with practical guidance and resources to help support learning successfully at home.

By developing a shared understanding of how children learn, we create stronger partnerships which benefit pupils' achievement, confidence and well-being.

8. Professional Development, Monitoring and Impact

The school is committed to evidence-informed professional development and continuous improvement. Staff development priorities will focus on curriculum expertise, DISCERN, Rosenshine's Principles, adaptive teaching, assessment and effective use of cognitive science in the classroom.

The implementation of this policy will be monitored through learning walks, lesson visits, work scrutiny, pupil voice, curriculum reviews and professional dialogue. Monitoring is intended to support professional growth and improve outcomes rather than create unnecessary workload.

Successful implementation of this policy will ensure that pupils:

- acquire and retain ambitious knowledge;
- communicate confidently and effectively;
- think critically and independently;
- demonstrate resilience and positive learning behaviours;
- achieve highly across the curriculum;
- are prepared for the next stage of their education; and
- flourish as children of God within the St Joseph's community.

Policy Statement

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, we believe that every pupil deserves exceptional teaching every day. Through a rich curriculum, evidence-informed practice, strong partnerships with families and our shared DISCERN approach to learning, we will ensure that every child knows more, remembers more, achieves more and flourishes in faith and learning.