

NOTRE DAME PREP SCHOOL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

NOTRE
DAME
SCHOOL



Our Mission & Ethos

'We are all educators ...

Accompanying young people in their efforts to build their lives for today and tomorrow'
St Jeanne de Lestonnac, Foundress of the Order of the Company of Mary our Lady.

At Notre Dame we

Keep the flame alive
Stretch out a helping hand
Live up to our name
Serve in a way that's always new
Keep friendship among us.

Notre Dame Preparatory School is a Roman Catholic Independent School with a strong ecumenical tradition, respecting the faiths and cultures of all members of our community. Our mission is built on a 400-year tradition, strengthened by the presence of the Sisters of the Company of Mary Our Lady.

At the heart of the Company of Mary education is the commitment to extending a helping hand to those less fortunate, embodying the core principles of Catholic social teaching. This integral aspect of our mission emphasises compassion, solidarity, and justice, encouraging the Prep School children to recognise the dignity and worth of every individual.

At Notre Dame, our ethos aims serve as guiding principles that shape our community. We strive to **keep the flame alive** by nurturing our passion for education and service. By **stretching out a helping hand**, we embody our commitment to supporting those in need, reflecting our dedication to compassion and solidarity. We endeavour to **live up to our name**, embracing the values that define us and inspiring integrity in all our actions. Our goal to **serve in a way that's always new** encourages innovation and adaptability in our efforts to make a difference. Finally, we prioritize to **keep friendship among us**, fostering a spirit of unity and collaboration that strengthens our bonds and enhances our collective mission. Together, these aims empower us to create a vibrant, supportive community dedicated to making a positive impact.

We believe that fulfilment comes through the recognition and celebration of the nurturing of individual potential in all areas of endeavour:

- By emphasising personal, moral and spiritual development, based on Gospel values, enabling each member to become a valued participant in the life of the community.
- By striving for personal academic excellence, offering learning experiences which will challenge each pupil.

- By providing wide-ranging opportunities, seeking to identify and develop talents in artistic, cultural and sporting pursuits.
- By fostering a strong relationship between family and school.

In this way we seek to prepare young women for their role as responsible citizens of the wider world, following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

Notre Dame Preparatory School is a Roman Catholic School that welcomes pupils from all faith backgrounds and those who have no faith background. We teach values and beliefs from a Christian (Catholic) perspective. We follow the example and teachings of Christ and everything we do is inspired by the Gospel values. We strive for excellence in all areas of our work and cherish every child and member of staff in our care.

We strive to embed the Mission and the ethos of St. Jeanne de Lestonnac into all aspects of school life and throughout the children's learning experiences throughout their time in the Prep School. We are committed to providing pupils with a clear understanding of our beliefs. Religious Education plays an important and key role in our daily lives.

Aims of Religious Education at Notre Dame

- For children to grow in their understanding of the world and themselves.
- To give children explanations of the Catholic teaching in moral debates and dilemmas.
- To provide meaningful opportunities of liturgy and worship.
- To teach children and each other, by example, in the daily life of the school.
- To provide respect and protection for the individual which recognise uniqueness.
- To promote loving relationships exemplified in a care and concern for others.
- To foster positive attitudes of respect and politeness.
- To help children understand the needs, feelings and aspirations of others.
- To help children develop a personal faith.
- To provide a nurturing environment where every child feels secure and where children care, respect and value each other.
- To help children uphold the British Values of promoting tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions and to support them in acquiring an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures and faiths.
- To foster a safe, calm, happy and caring community of learners.

Religious Education

Religious Education lies at the heart of the curriculum and school life here at Notre Dame Prep School. Religious Education is a core subject and makes up 10% of a child's weekly education. Religious Education is planned, taught, assessed and monitored with the same rigour and enthusiasm as other core curriculum subjects.

We support the teaching of our Religious Education using a scheme called 'To know you more clearly'.

The framework has four structural elements:

Knowledge lenses which indicate what should be known by the end of each age phase. These are split into hear, believe, live and celebrate.

The 'ways of knowing' are the skills which develop as the children progress through their curriculum journey. These are split into understand, discern and respond.

Expected outcomes are set for each age phase and indicate what pupils are expected to know, remember and be able to do.

Curriculum branches are the way the programme of study presents its model curriculum. There are six half term branches for each half term which are the same in each year group.

Autumn 1	Creation and Covenant
Autumn 2	Prophecy and Promise
Spring 1	Galilee to Jerusalem
Spring 2	Desert to Garden
Summer 1	To the ends of the Earth
Summer 2	Dialogue and Encounter

World Views

In the new RED (Religious Education Directory), when studying Branch Six: Dialogue and Encounter, children have an opportunity to learn about other faiths as outlined in the Directory. Children of other faiths in the school have the opportunity to share their religion with their peers and all children are able to have an understanding of what life is like for a child of another faith by the time they leave us.

Differentiation and Adaptive Teaching

We aim to encourage all children to reach their full potential through the provision of varied and adapted opportunities.

All pupils will follow the same programme of study, but work may be differentiated by task or by outcome, as appropriate.

Activities are planned to enable every child to succeed and flourish.

Tasks for more able pupils will be planned to challenge them, for example by providing more demanding questions, often with a more open-ended approach.

Teachers liaise with the SENCO team to provide adaptive teaching strategies for pupils with special educational needs.

Catholic Social Teaching at Notre Dame Prep

As a Christian, Catholic community our faith permeates all aspects of school life in accordance with our School Mission Statement, ethos and aims.

Life & Dignity of the Human Person:

We know that everyone is important and valuable, and no one is better than anyone else. At Notre Dame Prep, we know that we must always make everyone welcome. We live, love and learn by the teaching that 'we are all made in the image and likeness of God.' At its simplest level, our children know that we must treat others in a caring way because they were made by God too. Examples of this are woven into every aspect of life at Notre Dame Prep.

Call to Family, Community & Participation:

A community needs a soul if it is to become a true home for human beings. 'You, the people, must give it this soul' (St. Pope John Paul II). At Notre Dame, we know that we must treat our school community as we would our family, pouring our love, understanding and compassion into the way that we behave and treat others. We hold a number of events throughout the year that focus on this particular area of Catholic Social Teaching. These events include our annual harvest collection to support the local foodbank, fundraising for Macmillan Cancer Support, as well as various gatherings throughout the year where we invite family, friends and neighbours into school to be entertained by the school choir. Working alongside FOND (Friends of Notre Dame) we support our community and those in need. The Sisters of the Order of the Company of Mary Our Lady fundraise for those less fortunate throughout the year and the children are always involved with the Sisters' events.

Rights and Responsibilities: The Church has been clear in defining basic human rights which are founded on the dignity of the human person. However, the Church also recognises that one cannot have rights without responsibilities. At Notre Dame Prep we recognise that some people have what they need to live and some people don't. Jesus wants us to take care of each other. Our Student Council, Celebration of the Word gatherings, assemblies and Pupil Led Liturgies help us to really think about others and encourage us to help wherever we can.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable: This area of Catholic Social Teaching is about the emphasis which the Church places upon helping the poor and those who are vulnerable. We share what we have so that everyone gets some; we make sure the people who have the least get served first. In our school, we show care for those who have less than us – we gather together and make donations to charities which support those who need it most. We also believe in the united power of prayer and we pray for the poor and vulnerable and in need throughout the year.

The Dignity and Rights of Workers: The Dignity of Work is to be found in scripture and in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus himself worked as a carpenter before starting his ministry. Work is also seen as something which brings dignity to the human person and at our school, we work hard to equip all pupils with the skills for learning and life essential for working life. We explore dignity throughout the year through assemblies and talks.

Solidarity and the Common Good: Solidarity arises when we remember that we belong to each other. We reflect on this in a special way throughout the year at our Mass celebrations. Solidarity spurs us to stand side by side with our sisters and brothers, especially those living in poverty. At Notre Dame, we work together to help those who are most in need. In our school, we work together so that our community is good for everyone to live in. Actions we take to support this include supporting the elderly, the lonely and the less fortunate in our local community.

Care of God's Creation: The Church's teachings show that we have a duty to ensure that the gift of Creation is shared with all and used wisely and respectfully to ensure its protection both now and for the future. In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis has reminded us that the earth is our 'Common Home'. At Notre Dame Prep, we work hard to care for our environment by recycling as much as we can, keeping our school and local area free of litter, encouraging sustainability with the help of our Eco Club Warriors, visits to understand how our food is grown and the stewardship of our school gardeners who teach us how to care and look after for our beautiful gardens.

Our deep ecological concern for the environment and nature is a fundamental aspect of our community's mission, reflected in initiatives like Forest School and Eco Warriors. These programmes not only engage children in hands-on learning about sustainability and stewardship but also nurture a profound connection to the natural world. This commitment to ecological education is integral to our spirituality, aligning with Pope Francis's teachings in *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti*, which emphasise our shared responsibility to care for creation and promote a culture of encounter. By fostering a sense of wonder and respect for the environment, we empower our children to become active advocates for sustainability and guardians of our planet, recognising that our well-being is deeply intertwined with the health of the Earth.

Prayer & Worship

Prayer and reflection are part of the rhythm of our school day. We make time each day to come together to give thanks to God and to pray for our own needs and those of others providing an opportunity for all pupils to develop socially, morally and spiritually.

At Notre Dame we believe collective worship plays a fundamental part in the daily life of our school. It enables us to join as one community in prayer and worship.

We join in a range of worship forms, formal and informal, including Celebration Liturgy, Mass and Prayer through Song.

Children learn traditional prayers; compose and share their own prayers and we provide opportunities for personal prayer and meditation, including the use of Spiritual Journalling.

Each week pupils participate in Key Stage Celebrations of the Word, class-based pupil led liturgies, Key Stage hymn practices and whole school gatherings where we offer everything we have to God.

Pupils also have additional opportunities to join together in prayer, for example Rosary Groups in October and May and Stations of the Cross during Lent where they have opportunities to further grow develop and deepen their faith and understanding of religious education.

We follow the seasons of the Church's year and offer opportunities throughout the year for parents to join us in prayer. Parents are invited to Masses and assemblies throughout the year and also to the monthly Parent Prayer group led by the Chaplain.

Daily Prayer

Prayer is woven into the daily life of our school through individual, class and whole school liturgy.

Prayer takes place in the morning, before and after lunch and at the end of the school day. There is a strong pupil involvement, including the leadership of our pupil Chaplaincy Reps, in the preparation and presentation of prayer.

Pupils and staff are also given daily opportunities to reflect and pray quietly for their own intentions.

Classes have a specific prayer table in each classroom and display as appropriate to the Liturgical calendar and to what they are learning as part of their Religious Education lessons.

All staff meetings begin with a shared prayer and there are also weekly opportunities for staff to join in prayer and meditation.

Masses & Liturgies

Joining together as a school community to worship is a key part of the faith life of our school and we are supported in this by our visiting priests, including Father Stephen and Father Daryl and by the Sisters of the Company of Mary our Lady who regularly visit our school.

We celebrate Mass together at special points of the Church's year, joining with the parish to celebrate key feast days and holy days of obligation. We also mark key events in the life of the school by joining together as a whole school for Mass, for example for the Feast of St Jeanne and the Presentation of the Child Mary in the Temple. The 21st of November was instituted by St Jeanne herself and is celebrated in all of our sister schools throughout the world.

Pupils are made aware that the school is part of the Universal Order and of the Universality of the Catholic Church and that, as a school, we are in union with others throughout the world as part of a tradition that has been celebrated since the time of St Jeanne.

The children enjoy leading and participating in a range of liturgies, for example class-based liturgies, child-led whole school liturgies, our Harvest Service, our Nativity plays performed by KS1 children, our KS2 Nativity Service, our Holy Week Service and Reconciliation Services in Lent and Advent.

Parents and family members are always warmly welcomed and invited to come to school to celebrate Mass and assemblies on special days.

Our School Song- Hymn To St Jeanne

Our school song reflects our school ethos and aims and we proudly and lovingly sing our school song on special occasions throughout the year.

Verse 1

St Jeanne was our foundress, so many years ago
She started teaching girls in the town of Bordeaux,
Her vision still inspires us as we gather here to pray
A blessing on our school on this very special day.

Chorus: *St Jeanne, we honour you today, St Jeanne, we honour you, today
You lead us in our work, in all we do and say We honour you, today.*

Verse 2

The aim of our school is that every child might do
Their best in work and play, and all other actions too.
A greatness of their spirit and a warm and giving heart
At Notre Dame we learn that each child must play their part.

Verse 3 We stretch out a hand as St Jeanne taught us to do

To try and serve the world in a way that is new.
We look towards the future to see what it may bring;
Our hearts are full of joy as of our dear school we sing.

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